

## **SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN and its FOREIGN POLICY:**

### **EXPLORING THE INTERFACE**

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*Who are we?  
We are Africans,  
We are an African country,  
We are part of our multi-national region,  
We are an essential part of our continent*

*Being Africans, we are acutely aware of the wider world,  
deeply implicated in our past and present  
that wider world carries some of our inheritance.*

*We discover the country and the world.  
We live peacefully with neighbours.  
We have good friends in other societies.*

*We have welcomed people from distant lands  
Who have chosen to live among us.  
We value interdependence and reciprocity  
We feel hospitable.  
We are a community of multiple, overlapping identities,  
cosmopolitan in our nationhood.*

Extract from the vision statement of the NDP

*Our vision is an African continent, which is prosperous, peaceful, democratic, non-racial,  
non-sexist and united and which contributes to a world that is just and equitable*

Vision statement, Department of International Relations and Co-operation

*We are committed to promoting South Africa's national interests and values, the African  
Renaissance and the creation of a better world for all*

Mission statement, Department of International Relations and Co-operation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to anchor the debate entitled “*International Relations + Economic Diplomacy = Inclusive Regional Growth?*” this paper raises the critical question of the relationship between South Africa’s development imperatives and its foreign policy. Simply put, to what extent do the South African government’s foreign policy priorities support the implementation of its National Development Plan (NDP)? What is the role of foreign policy in realising Vision 2030?

Following the literature on resilience, our assumption is that policy-making is a process of learning about complex relational systems and adapting to them rather than imposing upon them from above. Viewed from this perspective, governing complexity is a process whereby failures or unintended outcomes can be seen as an inevitable part of that process and the key aspect is how failure is reflected upon to shape future policy-making.

South Africa's foreign policy is indeed conducted in the context of a domestic blueprint. The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and inequality by 2030. According to the NDP, South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society.

This paper determines whether there is convergence between the strategic objectives of the NDP and of South Africa's foreign policy. It does so firstly by examining the broad contours of the NDP and its visionary thrust. It then identifies features of the NDP that speaks directly to South Africa's international relations. The paper then turns its attention to the "strengthened" chapter seven of the NDP, entitled "Positioning South Africa in the World". This chapter seemingly offers a carefully-designed set of strategic objectives which, if implemented, will contribute directly to the over-arching objectives of the NDP, namely, poverty elimination and the reduction of inequality. The question is whether, or to what extent, the implementation of chapter seven allows for the realisation of these objectives. The paper examines South Africa's declared foreign policy as articulated by DIRCO, and then suggests the extent of convergence. The paper concludes with an assessment and recommendations.

## 2. THE NDP AT A GLANCE

According to the NDP, South Africa has the potential and capacity to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality over the next two decades. This requires a new approach – one that moves from a 'passive citizenry' receiving services from the state to one that systematically includes the socially and economically excluded, where people are active champions of their own development and where Government works effectively to develop people's capabilities to lead the lives they desire. The success of this approach is premised on:

- The active efforts and participation of all South Africans in their own development;
- Redressing the injustices of the past effectively;
- Faster economic growth and higher investment and employment;
- Rising standards of education, a healthy population and effective social protection;
- Strengthening the links between economic and social strategies;
- An effective and capable government;
- Collaboration between the private and public sectors;
- Leadership from all sectors.

The NDP contains detailed objectives and targets relating to the following thirteen themes:

1. An economy that will create more jobs;
2. Improving infrastructure;
3. Transition to a low-carbon economy;
4. An inclusive and integrated rural economy;
5. Reversing the spatial effects of apartheid;
6. Improving the quality of education, training and innovation;
7. Quality health care for all;
8. Social Protection;
9. Building safer communities;
10. Reforming the Public Service;
11. Fighting corruption; and
12. Enhancing social cohesion.

The plan identifies a decent standard of living as one that is characterised by certain core elements such as housing, water, electricity and sanitation, quality health care, employment, and adequate nutrition amongst others. The essence of the NDP lies in its pledge 'to alter the predestined life chances of the majority of the South African people', especially the youth, created by the apartheid legacy.

Although government has adopted the plan, endorsement by larger society remains an issue. Nevertheless, Government charts the NDP's course towards implementation.

The implementation phase of the plan has been a process of prioritisation and sequencing arranged in three phases. The first phase commenced in 2013 followed by the 2014 – 2019 planning cycle, which will advance the goals of the plan. This will be followed by a series of five year plans to implement the remaining objectives of the plan.

The plan is being implemented in line with already existing activities and programmes of different government departments and various other government agencies. According to the NDP, Its integration into these existing activities and programmes is important because of the vital role that these structures play in transforming the vision of the plan into reality.

The plan also aims to serve as a conduit that merges and facilitates coherence and consistency in different departmental activities.

In the section below, the paper explores the NDP's engagement with international factors affecting the country.

### **3.THE NDP IN GLOBAL CONTEXT**

According to the NDP, South Africa's development is affected by what happens in the region and the world. Success will depend on the country's understanding and response to such developments. The plan discusses the following notable trends: global economic shifts, technology, climate change and African economic growth. Below, we capture the essence of these trends and impact on South Africa, as analysed by the NDP.

#### **3.1 A changing global economy**

Long term shifts in global trade and investment are reshaping the world economy and international politics.

Chief among these developments is the emergence of rapidly growing economies, particularly China, India and Brazil.

Urbanisation and industrialisation in China and India are likely to keep demand for natural resources relatively high for a decade or more. The emergence of more consumers in developing countries will broaden opportunities for all economies. As emerging economies increase their share of world trade and investment, the relative decline in economic weight of the United States, Europe and Japan will have concomitant effects on their political and military influence. This could lead to a reorganization of the international diplomatic and governance architecture, reflecting new centers of influence.

South Africa can benefit from rapid growth in developing countries that leads to increased demand for commodities and expanding consumer markets. At the same time the rise of emerging markets also increases international competition, placing downward pressure on the wages of low – skilled workers in tradable sectors.

Over the past five years, South Africa's exports to advanced economies have slowed in response to lower demand. In the medium term, South Africa has to respond to this trend by bolstering competitiveness and investment in high value-added industries and increasing the volume of mineral exports. Over the longer term, South Africa has to do

more to enhance competitiveness in areas of comparative advantage that can draw more people into work.

### 3.2 Africa's Development

The economies of many African countries have grown more rapidly over the past decade, significantly reducing extreme poverty for the first time in about half a century, and the continent has carved out a greater voice in global institutions. On the political front, democracy has made uneven headway.

South African growth also provides opportunities for South African firms and industries, which have contributed to development by investing in telecommunications, banking, mining, construction and retail.

Several structural weaknesses must be overcome if Africa is to translate rapid growth and higher demand for commodities into rising employment and living standards e.g. poor transport links, infrastructure networks, tariff and non tariff barriers, weak legal institutions and poor governance.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) faces hurdles related to infrastructure, trade barriers and governance. Several of South Africa's challenges such as water scarcity and its exploitation of low carbon energy from hydroelectric and other clean energy sources can only be addressed through regional cooperation.

### 3.3 Climate Change

Rising temperatures, more erratic rainfall and extreme weather events are likely to take a heavy toll on Africa, with an increased spread of tropical diseases and growing losses from droughts and flooding. Climate change has the potential to reduce food production and the availability of potable water, with consequences for migration patterns and levels of conflict. South Africa is not only a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions –it is also particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change on health, livelihoods, water and food, with a disproportionate impact on the poor, especially women and children. While adapting to these changes, industries and households have to reduce their negative impact on the environment. This will require far reaching changes to the way people live and work.

### 3.4 Technological Change

Science and Technology continue to revolutionise the way goods and services are produced and traded. As a middle-income country, South Africa needs to use its knowledge and innovative products to compete. South Africa needs to sharpen its innovative edge. This requires greater investment in research and development, better use of existing resources, and more nimble institutions that facilitate innovation and enhanced cooperation between public science and technology institutions and the private sector. The high domestic cost of broadband Internet connectivity is a major hindrance.

As middle – income country South Africa has to compete on the basis of excellent products and brands, and effective entry into global distribution channels. This will require greater commitment to research and development and its commercialization, an efficient logistics platform and effective economic diplomacy. South Africa has to exploit its strength to increase its exports. If the economy is less competitive in one area, it will have to do better in others. The country’s comparative advantages include its mineral and natural resource endowments, a sophisticated financial and business service sector, proximity to fast growing African markets, high quality universities and a modern, productive agricultural sector. South Africa also has companies that are global leaders in sectors like civil construction. South Africa holds large global shares in platinum group metals, gold, diamonds, manganese, coal, iron ore and uranium. South Africa can benefit greatly from Asia’s growing demand for commodities. To do so means improving water, transport and energy infrastructure, and providing greater policy and regulatory certainty to investors.

Over the next several years the world economy is expected to grow at a modest pace. In these circumstances South African businesses need to think carefully about what they produce, for which markets, using what capabilities. As a small open economy, South Africa can develop niche products, for example, South Africa could be a global leader in manufactured goods and services for the mining industry.

Regional economic integration can boost economic growth in all countries in Southern Africa. The region has grown rapidly over the past decade, with strong performances in minerals, agriculture, tele-communications and tourism. Achieving economic integration requires identifying practical opportunities where cooperation can offer mutual benefits, investment in infrastructure, strengthening regional trade-blocks, lowering tariffs, and addressing non-tariff barriers, such as inefficient border posts.



The paper now turns its attention to Chapter Seven of the NDP, entitled “Positioning South Africa in the world”.

#### 4. CHAPTER SEVEN’S VIEW OF SOUTH AFRICA’S PLACE IN THE WORLD

The ‘strengthened’ chapter seven of the NDP suggests that in order to pursue and implement an effective foreign policy, which is linked to the country’s domestic priorities, South African decision-makers must be guided by eight key-points. These are: the national interest, Africa as a priority, strengthened multilateralism, improved human security, mutually beneficial trade, integrated foreign policy making, and prioritisation of new foreign policy themes such as science and technology, culture and education.

Following the identification of these eight key decision-making imperatives, the chapter spends some time on principles.

The chapter argues that South Africa’s evolving international engagement is based on two central tenets, Pan-Africanism and South-South solidarity. The chapter notes that Government’s international relations work must endeavor to shape and strengthen national identity; cultivate national pride and patriotism; address the injustices of past, including those of race and gender; bridge the divides in society to ensure social cohesion and stability; and grow the economy for the development and upliftment of all South Africans.

The paper notes that South Africa’s unique approach to global issues has in addition found expression in the concept of Ubuntu:

The philosophy of Ubuntu recognises that it is in our national interest to promote and support the positive development of others. Similarly, national security would, therefore, depend on the centrality of human security as a universal goal, based on the principle of Batho Pele (people first). In the modern world of globalisation, a constant element is and has to be our common humanity. We, therefore, champion collaboration, cooperation and building partnerships over conflict.

This recognition of our interconnectedness and interdependence, and the infusion of Ubuntu into the South African identity shape our foreign policy.

These concepts inform government's particular approach to diplomacy and shape its vision of 'a better world for all'. From this perspective, South Africa's national interest is not narrowly defined and includes the development and upliftment of its people; stability of the Republic and the constitutional order; growth and development of the South African economy; growth and development of Southern Africa; a stable and prosperous African continent; and a just and equitable world order.

Chapter seven advises that a high-level, high-impact task team should be convened to investigate South Africa's national interest. In addition, the identification and defence of strategic national priorities should guide research.

Intriguingly, chapter seven questions whether "Ubuntu" can serve as an anchor for guiding the country in conducting international relations. It asks the following three questions: Will it provide a strong identity around which South Africa's foreign policy and unique approach to international relations could be built? Can it provide the basis for an authoritative voice in global affairs? Does it reflect the nexus that binds the country's domestic affairs to its foreign relations?

Having outlined its approach to values and principles, the chapter then focuses extensively on Africa. Its thrust can be summarised in the following five policy statements:

1. South Africa's political engagements on the continent should be informed by the necessity to uphold its founding values as a non-racial and non-sexist democracy, by its economic and security interests, as well as by international expectations of its role on the African Continent.
2. The strengthening of bilateral relations with all African countries is an essential contribution to continental efforts to build peace, security, prosperity and stability. Sustaining these must be a core objective of South Africa's foreign policy in Africa.
3. South Africa's policies relating to African integration must be based on an understanding of, and mutual concern for, common African values of respect, integrity and commitment to continental well-being. Deepening ongoing engagements with NEPAD and the AU is an enduring priority.
4. South Africa must continue its support for multilateral efforts to foster peace on the continent and to continue its support for continental efforts to sustain peace-building efforts. To achieve this, all government departments should engage with universities and research institutes both within the country and the continent.
5. South Africa's educational and research institutions should also be encouraged to

undertake vigorous academic exchange programmes with the rest of Africa.

The chapter also spends considerable time problematising Africa's attempts at integration. It notes that after years in gestation, moves by founders of the AU to reform the regional economy have stalled. Since the introduction of NEPAD as the AU's economic blueprint, little has been done to implement the reforms recommended by the document. What have been palpably absent, according to the chapter, are the building blocks for strategically broadening and deepening African integration. What seems clear is that the discussion on economic and political integration lies in intra-African trade and the influence of South Africa as a catalyst for greater unity. With these issues in mind, South Africa should aim to deepen the Continent's economic integration on three fronts simultaneously; regionally, continentally and globally.

Regarding Southern Africa, the chapter advises that a specially established government task team must immediately assess the following policy directions:

1. The economic rationale for a new regional economic bloc with specific consideration of the future of SADC and SACU and their possible unification into a single entity;
2. The relationship between institutions, processes and regional market dynamics;
3. The value and significance of the Tripartite Free Trade Area for the country's long-term future;
4. Greater macroeconomic and financial coordination in the Southern African region and on the continent; and
5. The identification of regional comparative advantages and their roles as catalysts for economic integration within a free trade area.

Chapter seven also focuses on international economic diplomacy.

In the view of its drafters, South Africa's economic diplomacy should adopt a holistic approach commencing from an international political economy perspective.

It points out that South Africa's economic diplomacy must address the economic and commercial needs to address our domestic priorities and cannot be compartmentalised into individual line-function role and responsibility of departments and sectors, including trade and investment, communication, marketing and branding tourism, science and technology cooperation.

It recommends -

In positioning the country, our missions abroad are our widest footprint and should be geared to act as the beachhead of our growth into new and emerging source markets.

It also addresses the question of skills and capacity:

DIRCO should add value to domestic programmes through its understanding of external relations and international partnerships and through its own political leverages in both bilateral and multilateral fora. While diplomats need general marketing and analytical skills, sectoral departments provide critical technical expertise in their areas of work and such complementarity is necessary.

The same argument is true for the private sector and the non-governmental organisation community.

The chapter also makes an explicit link between stability and development. It adopts the view that without peace and security (and democratic governance), no development is possible. It uses the human security paradigm to identify themes and issues in need of attention: poverty and inequality, both globally and nationally; cross-border crime, including human trafficking, organised crime syndicates, the proliferation of small arms, the spread of illegal narcotics, the rise of terrorism, piracy and the spread of counterfeit goods; pressures on natural resources, especially on both food and water and the impact of climate change; the voluntary and involuntary movement of people; and the spread of communicable diseases.

Chapter seven addresses the question of whether the country's organisational and intellectual diplomatic architecture is optimally designed to give effect to government's vision of creating a better world for all.

It recommends that government should embark on a strategic assessment of the country's diplomatic footprint across the world. The assessment of the cost and benefit of maintaining or expanding South Africa's 125 embassies, consulates and offices must be raised in the context of how each of these missions contributes to the achievement of our key domestic priorities.

It further proposes -

Our missions and structured bilateral engagements must, therefore, be oriented towards seeking opportunities for sustainable job creation, responsible trade and investment, and partnerships for health, education, crime prevention and rural development.

In conclusion, the strengthened chapter seven of the NDP suggests that success will hinge on the ability of government to coordinate all sectors that are involved in foreign policy. All this will require the harmonisation of trade, foreign policy, and defence and security frameworks with an eye to pursuing a policy, which is both robust and imaginative.

We now turn our attention to a brief examination of government's foreign policy priorities.

## **5. THE FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION (DIRCO)**

In the foreword to DIRCO's current strategic plan, Minister Nkoane-Mashabane notes "Our struggle for a better life in South Africa is intertwined with our pursuit of a better Africa in a better world. Our destiny is inextricably linked to that of the Southern African region. Regional and continental integration is the foundation for Africa's socio-economic development and political unity, and essential for our own prosperity and security. Consequently, Africa is at the centre of South Africa's foreign policy. Our country must therefore continue to support regional and continental processes to respond to and resolve crises, strengthen regional integration, significantly increase intra-African trade, champion sustainable development and opportunities in Africa...".

This statement crisply encapsulates the strategic drivers of the South African government's foreign policy. South Africa maintains a Pan-Africanist and South-South international relations orientation with a particular role as African stabiliser and developer.

In terms of implementation, DIRCO works according to Annual Performance Plans and its APP for 2014 -2015 sets the basis and direction for the implementation of the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) for the period 2014 to 2019, which in turn is informed by the NDP's 2030 Vision and trajectory.

The Department's APP 2014-2015 is premised on its current Strategic Plan of 2013 – 2018, and taking into account the MTSF 2014-2019 and the Twelve Outcomes to which all government departments must align themselves to and duly implement. As the APP notes, the Delivery Agreement for Outcome 11, which focuses on international relations and is entitled, "Creating a Better South Africa and Contributing to a Better and Safer Africa in a Better World", is of particular importance as it forms the strategies and actions of the Department.

DIRCO's work is structured along five budget programmes (Addendum A below contains a costing). These are:

1. Administration
2. International Relations. Under this programmes the key priorities are:
  - Enhanced African Agenda and Sustainable Development;
  - Strengthen the Political and Economic Integration of SADC;
  - Strengthen South – South Relations;
  - Strengthen Relations with Strategic Formations of the North;
  - Participate in the Global System of Governance;
  - Strengthen Political and Economic Relations.
3. International Cooperation
4. Public Diplomacy and State Protocol
5. International Transfers.

Reading DIRCO's regular (and detailed) policy statements, reports, and plans – which have remained relatively consistent over time – there is no doubt that Africa occupies center stage in the conduct of South Africa's foreign policy. This focus also shapes the country's approach to international relations. For example, DIRCO's current APP outlines the following priorities and action steps:

- Strengthen the African Union (AU) Commission;
- Develop agenda 2063 and the post 2015 African Common Position;
- Implement the AU/New Partnership for Development infrastructure programmes contained in the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, the Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative and the North- South Corridor;
- Promote regional peace in Africa;
- Support negotiations on the Tripartite free Trade and Area and the Southern African Customs Union for the purpose of advancing regional economic integration;

- Establish The South African Development Partnership Agency. It will focus on African development priorities.

The APP also remains concerned with broader international relations themes:

- Reaffirm South Africa's commitment to Human Rights;
- Promote the NDP's development agenda through South Africa's membership of UN ECOSOC;
- Remain committed to the UN Conventions on Climate change;
- Prioritise bilateral relations as the cornerstone of South Africa's international relations;
- Continue to advance multilateralism through UN governance processes, the BRICS and IBSA Alliances, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

## 6 Assessment

Our question at the beginning of the paper was to what extent the South African government's foreign policy priorities support the implementation of the NDP? What is the role of foreign policy in realising Vision 2030?

There is much positive in the NDP regarding the role of foreign policy – or how South Africa ought to conduct its international relations – in support of the over-arching objectives of the plan. It wisely identifies a number of global drivers of change that policy-makers, implementing agencies, and the public at large should be sensitive to. This section of the NDP resonates with research on global change conducted by experts in the field, and if anything, the NDP ought to keep this section 'alive' – by adjusting and adding to it according to the dynamics of global affairs.

The 'strengthened' chapter seven of the plan similarly contains valuable pointers for the NDP's stake-holders. Its biggest strength lies in its articulation of a philosophical position and approach to world affairs that cuts beyond the chapter's original economic determinism. Africa and its people cannot merely be treated as a market and as consumers. South Africa's intervention in Lesotho, for example, is not driven merely by a desire to secure its economic interests. It is also inspired by a commitment to peace-

making in order to bring about sustainable democratic solutions to the problems of governance. As we have seen above with the examination of DIRCO's strategic drivers, chapter seven is neatly complemented by these policy and planning templates of our foreign policy-makers.

However, the NDP and chapter seven contains a number of shortcomings that reduces its value as an implementing tool in aid of achieving the expected reduction in poverty and inequality by 2030.

The most serious obstacle in operationalising chapter seven of the NDP is the 'finding' that South Africa is unclear in its expression of regional interest. The chapter suggests that there is no clarity regarding this and related issues. It proposes task teams to conduct deep research on a range of critical issues.

Below, we repackage these key problematics in the form of questions that might focus the debate for tonight (and in months to come):

1. How do we understand our national interest?
2. How do we understand our role in Southern Africa?
3. What is South Africa's role in 'the rise of the South'? What can it learn from the developmental experiences of emerging economies, and in turn, what lessons can it offer?
4. Is the South African diplomat geared to effectively and efficiently conduct economic diplomacy in support of the country domestic priorities?
5. Are South Africans clear about the economic orientation and models they want to pursue in addressing poverty and inequality – both domestically and regionally?
6. Are foreign, defence, trade and related policies being harmonised to allow for an integrated international relations role and orientation and in particular, a holistic Africa policy?
7. What is the quality of engagement between policy-makers and the non-state sector (civil society, academia, media, the private sector) in shaping, conducting, and assessing the country's international relations?

It is clear that the NDP / Foreign Policy interface needs additional work. This is a positive view. The NDP and the manner in which South Africa conducts its foreign policy must be dynamic interpretations and responses to the challenges of governing complexity. The NDP talks of 'policy making in a complex environment' and so the groundwork has been laid and can be used to undertake a further iteration of the expected role of DIRCO and



associated agencies – in cooperation with non-state actors – in shaping and implementing the NDP. The six questions above needs to be addressed fairly rapidly if the NDP is to be guided by a foreign policy and international relations vision that is at the same time implementable. On all these ‘outstanding’ issues, there is a fairly robust literature, informed by theory and practice and written by expert analysts, available for interrogation. Much of this can be conducted and managed by the envisaged South African Council on International Relations – an idea awaiting serious implementation. In the meantime, the WSG/Tambo Foundation debate series will contribute to ongoing engagements shaping these aspects of our national agenda.

## Addendum A

### ***SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF DIRCO's 2014/15 BUDGET***

<b>PROGRAMME</b>	<b>BUDGET- Medium-term expenditure estimate 2014/15 in Rand million</b>
Administration	1 396.3
International Relations	2 810.2
International Cooperation	466.4
Public Diplomacy and Protocol Services	317.2
International Transfers	744.3

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Professor Anthoni van Nieuwkerk holds an MA in political science from the University of Johannesburg and a PhD in international relations from Wits University, Johannesburg. He has been research-active from the early 1990s, contributed to the ANC's post-1994 foreign policy, and has pursued an academic career in teaching, training and policy analysis from 2000.

He worked as research director at the *Institute for Global Dialogue* and the Wits School of Governance (previously known as the *Graduate School of Public and Management Development* at Wits University), where he is currently based, and from where he leads the *Centre for Defence and Security Management*. He is an NRF-rated scholar and holds the position as Assistant Dean (Research) for the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management at Wits.

Anthoni publishes widely on foreign and security policy, has participated in several scenarios development exercises, and has broad experience with advising African policymakers on foreign and national security policy processes and frameworks.