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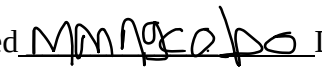
Media framing: How the South African media framed the country's participation in the United Nations Security Council between 2019 and 2020

A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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Declaration I, Mabutho MM Ngcobo, know and accept plagiarism (to use another's work and present it as one's own) is wrong. Consequently, I declare that this research report is my own unaided work.

Signed  Date: 15 March 2022

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Abstract

This study investigates how the South African media framed the country's participation in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), during its third term, as a non-permanent member from 2019 to 2020.

There was substantial negative media coverage by both the South African and international media on the country's human rights stance in the UNSC, during its first term as the UNSC non-permanent member from 2007 to 2008 under the administration of former President Thabo Mbeki, and again during the second term from 2011 to 2012 under former President Jacob Zuma's administration. South Africa was accused of discarding the human rights pillar of its foreign policy when it voted against the resolutions that condemned human rights violations in Zimbabwe, Myanmar and Syria.

When Cyril Ramaphosa took over as head of the ANC in 2018, he stated his intention to realign the country's foreign policy agenda with the government's commitment to human rights. However, no study has yet assessed the extent to which the media coverage of the government's performance at the UNSC under Ramaphosa's presidency was any different to the coverage of its first two terms at the UNSC.

This study used media framing analysis in eighty-two articles that were identified in seven online South African publications about the country's participation in the UNSC from June 2018 to December 2020. Self-structured open-ended interviews with three online publications were also conducted. The study finds that the four dominant themes identified in the media coverage – peace and security, human rights, African agenda, UNSC reforms and multilateralism – aligned with the government's priorities. It further goes on to suggest that the media framed South Africa's performance sympathetically, rather than contesting its public diplomacy narrative. It did this through relying on government sources in news articles, and by there being little contestation in perspectives among frame sponsors. There was no overall evaluation from the media on whether the government had recommitted to its human rights pillar of it foreign policy as it had stated it would do at the start of the Ramaphosa presidency. This study therefore tentatively suggests that overall, the media reporting on South Africa's performance in the UNSC was sympathetic towards the government.

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1. Introduction

When South Africa joined the UNSC for the first time, as non-permanent member in 2007, it still carried the prestige of being exemplary in the world over its peaceful transition from repressive apartheid regime to an inclusive democratic government under the leadership of the iconic freedom fighter Nelson Mandela in 1994. The expectation was that South Africa's foreign policy pillars such as human rights and the promotion of democracy were going to be its guiding light during its engagement in the UNSC. It is mainly for that reason why it attracted negative media coverage when it voted against the resolutions condemning human rights abuses in Myanmar and Zimbabwe during the first term in the UNSC and for refusing to condemn violence in Syria during the second term (Sarrao, 2011).

There were nonetheless positive achievements by South Africa during it first and second term in the UNSC. Unfortunately, those achievements were overshadowed by the negative media reports for not voting in favour of resolutions condemning human rights violations in Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Syria (Manku, 2017). In 2008, for instance, South Africa during its presidency in the UNSC played a pivotal role in the adoption of resolution 1809, which promote cooperation between the UN and regional organisations in the maintenance of international peace and security (S/Res/1809, 2008 April 16). During its second term in the UNSC between 2011 and 2012 South Africa spearheaded the adoption of resolution 2033 that was meant to further enhance cooperation between the UNSC and the African Union Peace and Security Council (Nganje, 2012). Furthermore, South Africa played a leadership role and significantly contributed to the work of the UNSC on African issues in various countries on the continent and in the conclusion of the UN peacekeeping mission in Timor-Leste (Munzhedzi, 2018).

The new administration under President Cyril Ramaphosa, who took over from former President Jacob Zuma in 2018, made some attempts to realign the country's foreign policy to its human rights pillar by establishing a ministerial review panel to assess South Africa's international relations. Its report acknowledged that "South Africa failed to live up to its earlier promise" and "that the country has not sufficiently played the role it was expected to play or should have played in engaging a number of international issues" (Daily Maverick, 2019 April, 17. p. 7). Speaking three months after Pretoria had re-joined the UNSC as a non-permanent member the then former Department of International Relations and Cooperation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu (2019a) said South Africa was going to, among other things, prioritize human rights. This was a signal of a policy shift by the new administration.

When Ramaphosa took over the presidency in 2018 the general sentiment in the media was that he was a breath of fresh air after former President Jacob Zuma administration, which in the media was framed as representative of grand scale corruption at the domestic level (Alence & Pitcher, 2019). Ramaphosa, himself was quoted by several media houses at the 2018 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland describing the Zuma administration as "nine wasted years" (*Polity,* 2019 January 24. p. 2).

Although former President Jacob Zuma was not the head of state when South Africa first voted against resolution condemning human rights violations in Mynmar and Zimbabwe, but his administration also received negative media coverage over matters pertaining to human rights on matters pertaining to international issues. This is due to some of the actions by his administration that were perceived to be contrary to the country's human right foreign policy pillar. Some of these include South Africa's refusal to vote against resolution condemning human rights violation in Syria, during its second term in the UNSC (Dirco, 2012 July 19) and for allowing former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who was accused of masterminding genocide in Sudan's Darfur region, to evade warrant of arrest by the International Criminal Court of Justice (ICC) when he was at the African Union summit in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2015. (Reuters, 2015 August 6).

In many of the news articles and opinion pieces about the announcement of South Africa's third return to the UNSC as a non-permanent member, the issue of human rights lingered on as a question on whether South Africa was going to redeem itself or commit the same mistake it did, during the first two terms in the UNSC. Shortly after South Africa was endorsed by the African Union (AU) to represent the continent in the UNSC as non-permanent member from 2019 to 2020 journalist Peter Fabricius (2018 February 22. para. 1) wrote an opinion piece for the Daily Maverick asking whether, "after two controversial previous terms, will South Africa vote differently at the UN under Cyril Ramaphosa?"

All of the above sentiments suggests that there was expectation from the media for the new administration to do things differently from the Zuma administration, which was accused of undermining the human rights pillar of the country's foreign policy and for being responsible for corruption at the domestic level (Alence & Pitcher, 2019a)

At this juncture, it is imperative to emphasize that the media is a powerful medium that can influence people's perception on any subject, through its framing of a reality (Druckman, 2007). The media can also determine "the fate of politicians and political causes" (Street, 2001.p31). In South Africa, the media, particularly privately owned commercial media, has often been accused by the governing party the

African National Congress (ANC) of being biased against it since 1994 (Sonderling, 2019). In recent years it has been accused of being biased against former President Jacob Zuma and those close to him (Grootes, 2014; Mbindwane, 2015).

When President Cyril Ramaphosa replaced the Zuma administration, which was associated with the grand scale corruption of state money and resources, he promised to do better than his predecessor on improving the economy and fighting corruption (News24, 2019 January 24). However, a few months later allegations of corruption linked to Covid-19 tenders to provide protective equipment worth R1,25 million rand, which was linked to the late husband of his former spokesperson Khusela Diko emerged (*IOL*, 2020 July 27). This attracted negative media reports on Ramaphosa's administration and a question mark on whether he was going to be another President whose administration is linked to grand-scale corruption. He thereafter suspended his spokesperson and signed a proclamation to pave the way for the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) to investigate corruption around the Covid-19 social relief funds, which were alleged to have been misused or stolen (De Villiers, July 28). These drastic steps by Ramaphosa seems to be influenced by the fact that he understood that if he was not seen to be taking drastic measures to curb corruption, he was likely to suffer the same fate as his predecessor, former President Jacob Zuma, whose administration was mainly described by the media as corrupt and inept (New York Times, 2018 February 14).

Although there is a research report by Ngcobo (2018) about how the media covered the announcement that South Africa was going to re-join the UNSC as a non-permanent member for the third time between 2019 and 2020, there is no extensive study that has been done on how the South African media covered the country's participation, during its entire third term in the UNSC. This study fills that gap by using media framing analysis to identify major themes and frame sponsors in the news articles and opinion pieces published by South Africa's online media on the country's performance in the UNSC under the administration of President Ramaphosa. This is meant to assess whether the media portrayed the government's participation in the UNSC in a positive or negative light and whether the human rights frame, which persisted during South Africa's first and second term in the UNSC, appeared again in 2019 and how the media reported about it.

This study is also assessing whether the news coverage or framing was in line with the country's stated foreign policy priorities to the UNSC or whether it was largely negative. Negative media coverage is detrimental to public diplomacy, which is a strategy that is used by countries to enhance their images in the international realm in order pursue foreign policy or to influence other countries (Signitzer &

Coombs, 1992). Negative media coverage also forces governments to spend more time and resources countering them, instead of focusing on their foreign policy priorities. As a result thereof countries try their best to avoid negative media coverage.

Interviews were also conducted with media houses that are part of this study to ascertain on whether they had any prior agenda in identifying opinion pieces that they published about South Africa's participation in the UNSC from 2019 to 2020. Opinion pieces are usually strongly worded because they reflect the views of the writer and are thus blatant in their bias in comparison to the news articles, which tend to reflect the views of the newsmakers or news sources (Miller, 2020). In some cases, publications may deliberately use certain writers of opinion pieces who are known to hold certain strong views on a particular subject to drive a particular narrative or to create a public discourse.

2. Research background and context

2.1. South Africa's shifting relationship with the United Nations

In better understanding South Africa's third return to the UNSC, including the criticisms it attracted from the media during its first two terms when it voted against resolutions that were condemning human rights violations in Mynmar, Zimbabwe, and Syria (Tryens-Fernandes, 2018 June 11a), which we shall talk about in details in subsequent chapters, the starting point is to look at the historical relationship between the UNSC mother body the United Nations (UN) and South Africa.

South Africa's relationship with the UN can be traced back to the late half of the 20th century in the aftermath of the second world war. South Africa is one of the fifty countries that founded the United Nations in 1945 (South African History Online, n.d.) and the country's then Prime Minister Jan Smuts is regarded as one of its architects. He even wrote the original opening lines of the preamble of the United Nations Charter and played a key role in putting together the UN Charter, including its mention of "human rights" (Dubow, 2008).

On the international stage in the United Nations, Smuts was promoting human rights, but back at home in South Africa, where he was the Prime Minister, black people, who were the majority, were denied basic human rights by his white minority government (Dubow, 2008). His government enacted numerous laws which were inconsistent with the values of human rights, to discriminate against black people (Marshall, 2000).

In 1946 the government of India brought the issue of South Africa's racial segregation policy to the UN (Malhotra, 1964) after Smuts' United Party government enacted the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946, popularly known as the "Ghetto Act". This Act was meant to prohibit Asians living in South Africa from owning land in certain parts of the country (SA History, n.d.). The then South African government under the leadership of General Jan Smuts tried to stop the matter from being deliberated at the UN General Assembly without success. In December of the same year (1946) the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 44(1) and declared that "the treatment of Indians in South Africa should be in conformity with the international obligations under the agreements concluded between the two governments and the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter" (SA History Online, n.d.).

South Africa's relationship with the UN started to deteriorate further when Daniel Malan's conservative National Party (NP), which won the 1948 elections, introduced the apartheid policy, which was meant to improve the lives of white people at the expense of the black people. Under the apartheid policy, a series of laws that were discriminatory against black South Africans were enacted, thus straining South Africa's relationship with the UN (SA History Online, n.d.a). These include, inter alia, the Industrial Conciliation Act, which was meant to ensure that certain jobs were reserved for whites (Kenny, 2020), the Population Registration Act, which made it compulsory for citizens to carry passbooks and the Group Areas Act of 1950, which forced black people to live far away from the urban periphery (Boddy-Evans, 2019). These apartheid laws were met with resistance from the liberation movements and anti-apartheid activists (Reddy, 1992).

In 1960 one of the anti-apartheid political parties, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) under the leadership of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe led a peaceful march against apartheid laws in Sharpeville. The apartheid police responded by brutally killing sixty-nine people who were part of the march. The graphic pictures of peaceful marchers being mercilessly killed by the apartheid police changed the world's view about the apartheid policy (Wheatley, 2020 March 20). On the 1st of April 1960, the UN Security Council discussed the Sharpeville massacre and acknowledged that South Africa's conduct might be a threat to world peace and security. It urged the South African government to review its apartheid policy and later passed a resolution condemning apartheid policy as a threat to international peace and security (UN, S/Res/134, 1960). Unfortunately, the National Party had promised voters that it was going to implement apartheid policy (SA History Online, n.db.). It had learnt from the demise of Smuts' United Party that domestic matters that directly affect voters should take priority over distant international matters. In the 1930s onwards the main issue in South Africa was a problem of poor whites (Fourie.n.d.). The NP was thus determined to continue with its apartheid policy, which was meant to improve socio-economic conditions of the white population especially the Afrikaans speaking whites, even if it meant defying the UN. It responded by banning the anti-apartheid political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) (Maota, 2017). The UN was left with no choice but to take tough measures against South Africa. In 1962, the UN General Assembly urged member states to take specific diplomatic and economic measures against South Africa. Furthermore, it also established the Special Committee against Apartheid, which became an official watchdog, ensuring that apartheid remained under continuous consideration in the United Nations (SA History, n.d.c).

In 1973 the General Assembly declared apartheid a crime against humanity after adopting the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (UN, 1973

October 23). It further declared that the apartheid government was no longer a true representative of the South African people. It went a step further and recognized liberation movements that were recognized by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as the authentic representatives of most of the South African people (Reddy, 1992). After the UN declared apartheid a crime against humanity it suspended South Africa's membership. From 1973 up to 1994, the relationship between apartheid South Africa and the UN was non-existent. South Africa was re-admitted to the UN in 1994 after holding a democratic election, which saw Nelson Mandela become becoming its President (SA History Online, n.d.d).

Since 1994

After the historic 1994 democratic election, South Africa was welcomed back to the international system, after almost three decades operating as a pariah state under the Apartheid government (SA History Online.n.d. e). It is actively participating in several UN agencies and conferences, including General Assembly sessions. Some of the notable roles played by South Africa in the UN include serving a four-year term in the presidency of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, being the vice-president of the UN General Assembly and chairing UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) (Cornelissen, 2006).

South Africa's re-entry to the UN has been marred by its controversial voting pattern when it voted against human rights resolutions during its first two terms as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2007 to 2008 and in 2011 to 2012 (Manku, 2017a). I will deliberate more on these in the subsequent subsections.

2.2. South Africa and the UN Security Council from 2007 to 2008

There was excitement from the South African government when the announcement was made in 2006 that the country was going to join the UNSC for the first time in 2007-2008 as one of the ten non-permanent member states. *The Independent Online* (*IOL)* (2006, October 16. para. 1) quoted an unnamed government official describing the announcement as an "opportunity of a lifetime". The then Foreign Affairs Department issued a statement, saying the country was, "privileged and honoured by its election by the general membership of the United Nations to serve on the UN Security Council." (Mamoepa, 2007. Para.1.).

In less than a month after South Africa had officially resumed its role as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2007, it sided with China and Russia in opposing a resolution condemning Myanmar's military regime over human rights abuse (*Economist*, 2007 February 1). Critics described the decision as inconsistent with the country's two fundamental foreign policy pillars namely, human rights and democracy. Again in 2008 South Africa, together with China, Russia, Libya, and Indonesia voted against sanctions being imposed on the then Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and his associates for human rights violations. It was a United States sponsored draft resolution that was supported by ten Council members, including one African state i.e., Burkina Faso (Bischoff, 2009). South Africa voted against the resolution, despite media reports, showing the Zimbabwe regime unleashing terror on the opposition, during the 2008 election and thousands of Zimbabwean refugees fleeing to South Africa (Muvingi, 2008).

Several online publications were critical of the South Africa's decision on Myanmar and Zimbabwe. The *Mail and Guardian* (2007, January 15. para. 1) wrote a headline titled, "decision on Burma (Myanmar) questioned". It used a Democratic Alliance (DA) spokesperson, South Africa's main opposition party, as the sole source, condemning the government for siding with China and Russia in voting against a UNSC resolution. *The Washington Post* (2007, January 13. para. 2) described the move by Russia, China, and South Africa as part of "a broader diplomatic effort to prevent the efforts to censure some of the countries particularly known for rights abuses, including governments in Belarus, Sudan and Zimbabwe."

A question may arise, at this juncture, as to why South Africa found itself on the same side with Russia and China, during its first term in the UNSC as a non-permanent member state? In order to answer this question, one has to highlight the political dynamics within the UNSC. The UNSC is made up of 15 members states i.e. five permanent member states, which are Russia, China, US, France and Britain and the 10 permanent member states who are elected on rotational basis to serve for two years. There are tactical alliances within five permanent member states. China and Russia are known as P2, while the United States, France and Britain are known as P3 (Feltman, 2020). Russia and China tend to veto or vote against resolutions that condemn states for committing human rights violation within their territories because they emphasise the importance of sovereignty of states and see such resolutions as interference to the internal affairs of a sovereign state (Feltman, 2020a). It thus came as no surprise when Russia and China voted against resolution condemning human rights violation in Mynmar and Zimbabwe. At the same time China had close relationship with the governing elites in Zimbabwe in 2008. They saw Beijing as alternative to the West that was critical of the government of the Zimbabwean African National Union

– Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) (The Guardian, 2008 July 11). South Africa found itself on the side of the China and Russia because it was of the view that voting against the resolution condemning human rights violations in Mynmar was going to undermine attempts by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to find a solution on the situation in Mynmar (Dirco, 2007). With regard to voting against resolution condemning human rights violation in Zimbabwe South Africa told the UNSC that the parties in Zimbabwe were committed to dialogue and that it would be guided by the African Union (AU) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to allow it to facilitate dialogue among parties in dispute in Zimbabwe (Bischoff, 2009).

South Africa was caught between choosing other competing interest such as its priorities in the UNSC, diplomacy, historical ties and human rights pillar of its foreign policy, which the late former South African President Nelson Mandela said was going to be "the guiding lights of its foreign policy" (Mandela, 1993. pp 86-97a). It decided to overlook the human rights pillar of its foreign policy in favour of other competing interests and thus attracted criticism and negative media coverage (Manku, 2017). But what South Africa did is not uncommon in the international realm. At times countries overlook human rights when there competing interests (Manku, 2017a). In the case of South Africa and Zimbabwe, for instance, there are several other competing interests that may have played out such as historic ties and geopolitical locations as these two countries are neighbouring states. But critics and the media turned a blind eye on competing interest because they regarded human rights as sacrosanct. Fabricius and Donnenfeld (2018.para. 2) "Pretoria's vote against human rights shocked many South Africans and foreign observers who felt it had betrayed the human rights-first foreign policy legacy of Nelson Mandela. Conversely, Habib (2009) described South Africa's tenure in the UNSC as a betrayal of its noble past under the leadership of former President Nelson Mandela when human rights pillar was the cornerstone of its foreign policy positions.

2.3. South Africa and the UN Security Council from 2011 to 2012

When South Africa was elected again in 2010 to join the United Nations Security Council for the second time as a non-permanent member between 2011 and 2012 its main objectives were almost like those it outlined when it first joined the Security Council in 2007 to 2008and these were:

- To keep the African issues high on the agenda of the UNSC and offer our perspective on them;
- to strengthen cooperation between the UNSC and regional organisations especially the African Union;
- To ensure healthy working relations between the General Assembly and the UNSC;
- The prioritisation of diplomacy, mediation, the pacific settlement of disputes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding through inclusive dialogue and negotiations with the ultimate aim of supporting parties to achieve sustainable peace, national unity and reconciliation, and to ensure adherence to the UNSC mandate and prevent its abuse. (Nkoana-Mashabane, 2010. para.)

There are two notable incidents that were widely reported by the media about South Africa during its second term in the UNSC. These are South Africa's decision to vote in favour of a no-fly zone resolution 1973 when then Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi promised to unleash terror on those who were protesting against his regime, during the so-called "Arab Spring uprisings." (Kuperman, 2013). Although South Africa voted in favour of this resolution it later regretted its decision, saying it was not aware of a hidden agenda of regime change (Times Live, June 23). It accused the Western powers of abusing the resolution to topple the Gaddafi regime, instead of using it to protect the people of Libya (Fabricius, 2018a). From the outset South Africa wanted a no-fly zone resolution to deter Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi from unleashing terror to his people who were dissatisfied with his leadership. The Western superpowers, who had historical animosity with Gaddafi had other motives. There is now evidence that the no-fly zone had little to do with protecting civilians in Libya, but more to do with serving the interest of Western superpowers, which was regime change. CNN (2011, June 20), for instance, reported that NATO helicopter gunships killed civilians in public square. An expert on Libyan political issues Matteo Capasso argues that "the extent of the atrocities committed against civilian population by NATO force in Libya would have been described as genocide by Western media" if they were committed by the other side (Davidson, 2017. p. 55).

There was a mixed reaction at home on South Africa's decision on Libya with some approving it while others were saying the government should not have supported it (The Guardian, 2012 August 25). However, it should be noted that other African countries who were non-permanent members of the UNSC at the time, Nigeria and Gabon, both supported the resolution (SAII.n.d.). Most importantly, if South Africa did not vote for the resolution and Ghaddafi was not stopped from unleashing terror on his people it was going to be heavily criticized for undermining the human rights pillar of its foreign policy. The lesson from the no-fly zone resolution in Libya is that genuine human rights matters can be manipulated by countries in the UNSC to commit other human rights abuses and pursue the interests.

The "abuse" of a no-fly zone resolution by the Western powers had a great impact on South Africa in the UNSC. As a result, thereof it refused to vote in favour of a resolution condemning Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for human rights abuse and sided with China and Russia to block that resolution, saying it was a ruse to push for a regime change (Fabricius, 2018b). Nevertheless, South Africa attracted negative media coverage for not voting against human rights abuse in Syria and for backtracking after voting in favour of resolution 1973 in Libya.

2.4. South Africa and the UN Security Council from 2019 to 2020

South Africa returned to the United Nations Security Council for the third time from 2019 to 2020 after receiving over 180 votes (*News24*, 2018 June 8). Below are South Africa's priorities when it re-joined the UNSC from 2019 to 2020:

- The prioritisation of diplomacy, mediation, the pacific settlement of disputes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding through inclusive dialogue and negotiations with the ultimate aim of supporting parties to achieve sustainable peace, national unity and reconciliation,
- South Africa will actively contribute to achieving an Africa at peace by 2063 by pursuing and promoting Africa's goal of "silencing the guns by 2020", but also to promote and achieve peace in all the regions of the world,
- It will continue to promote effective partnerships between the UN and regional and subregional organisations,

- The country will promote the African Agenda, including highlighting the continent's priorities in the area of peace and security,
- South Africa will continue to work together with all the members of the AU and UN in pursuit of effective global governance, multilateralism and reform of the UN system,
- It will work towards improving the working methods of the UNSC to make it a more legitimate, representative and effective body (Dirco, 2018).

South Africa under President Ramaphosa's administration signalled a shift from the previous administrations that were accused of undermining the country's human rights foreign policy pillar over other competing interests in the UNSC. It established a ministerial review panel to assess South Africa's international relations. It acknowledged that South Africa failed to play a role it was supposed to play on international matters. Furthermore, the then former Department of International Relations and Cooperation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu (2019a) said South Africa was going to, among other things, prioritize human rights.

South Africa's third return to the UNSC is the main subject of this study which seeks to assess how the made framed its reporting on this event. Moreover, it also assesses whether the human rights frame, where it was used, was used to portray the government in a negative or positive light and on what basis?

3. Rationale and Significance of the study

There are several studies and scholarly articles on South Africa's participation in the UN Security Council, during its first two terms by various scholars. Nevertheless, there is still an existing gap in the scholarly literature because there is no detailed study that has been conducted on how the South African media framed the country's participation in the UNSC, during its third term. Media framing analysis is thus a potentially productive media theory that can be used to understand the media-generated perspectives of South Africa's performance at the UNSC. By using framing analysis in assessing how the South African media framed Pretoria's participation in the UNSC, this research provides a fresh perspective on the subject, which will contribute to the body of academic literature.

This research will also further deepen our understanding of how the South African media approaches international coverage, whether from the perspective of domestic politics or from an independent frame of analysis that is aligned with the country's foreign policy goals. This will thus enhance our understanding of the relationships between domestic and foreign news reporting.

Furthermore, the trends in international news reporting show that there is an overreliance on international news agencies such as Associated Press (AP), Agence Frence-Presse (AFP), Reuters and others in many newsrooms from developing countries (Li,1990). The collected data will reflect the coverage pattern on whether the domestic media constructed its frame for reporting or relies on the framing of foreign news agencies – which will further contribute to the body of the academic literature.

4. Literature review

Preliminary assessment of newspaper reports and scholarly articles about South Africa's participation in the UNSC during the first two terms suggest that there was more focus on the failure of the country to live up to expectations on human rights-related matters. There were, however, positive things that South Africa did, during the first two terms in the UNSC such as playing a significant role in the adoption of landmark resolution 2033 to strengthen cooperation between the UNSC and the African Union (Maharaj, 2012 January 13). Munzhedzi (2018a) studied the extent to which South Africa pursue the African Agenda in the UNSC between 2011 and 2012 using content analysis. He concludes that while there were some challenges, but South Africa showed remarkable leadership in pursuing the African Agenda (Munzhedzi, 2018b).

This study is looking at the media coverage of SA's participation in the UNSC during the third term between 2019 and 2020. I start this literature review by looking at the trends on the coverage of international news by both the local and international media and the relationship between the media and public diplomacy. I also review media framing and framing analysis and agenda-setting theory.

4.1. Research on the media coverage of international news

There is no consensus on what constitutes "international news" by media scholars. The starting point in this regard is to identify the actors in the international realm and these are state and non-state actors. State actors, as the name suggest, are countries and non-state actors are international organisations such as the United Nations and its agencies and International Non-Government Organisations (INGO), just to name some (Kan, n.d.). According to international relations scholar Hideki Kan (n.d.) actors in the international realm must have three features which are:

- Autonomous capacity to determine their purposes and interests;
- The capability to mobilize human and material resources to achieve these purposes and interests;
- Their actions should be significant enough to influence state-to-state relations. (p. 6)

The two entities i.e., South Africa, which is a state actor and the UNSC, Intergovernmental Organisation meet all three features and thus news about their interaction do constitute international news. In that regard research about how the media report on South Africa's participation in the international

organisation such as the UNSC, which involves interaction with other member states of the same entity or organization can be regarded as research on media coverage of international news.

Furthermore, the announcement that South Africa was going to join the UNSC for the third time and the subsequent statements that were issued by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation concerning the announcement, including the media coverage of such event falls under the ambits of public diplomacy which is an integral part of the international relations. States use public diplomacy to pursue their foreign policy objectives and the media is used as both source of information and to communicate the country's message to pursue its foreign policy position, which in essence is what public diplomacy is all about (Nye, 2010). Traditionally the target audience for the government message in public diplomacy is the foreign audience. For many years domestic audience has not been seen as relevant, including the non-state actors in public diplomacy. But in recent years there is a gradual acceptance that the domestic audience matters as well (Huijgh, 2019).

The most common aspect that is associated with research, regarding the media coverage of international news is the contestation between the media and the state as actors in the international realm. The state elites rely on the media as a source of information in pursuing public diplomacy to enhance their country's image to promote their foreign policies in the international realm (Hadian & Vadehi, 2009). In the early 1990s, when it became common for major events such as war to be covered live on international news channels such as *Cable Network News (CNN)* and the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, just to name some, there was a view that the media has power over state actors and that they can coerce them to act in a particular manner. As a result, the *CNN* effect theory came into being (Robinson, 1999). This theory suggests that the media has the power to coerce states to act in a particular manner in the international realm. What prompted the emergence of the *CNN* effect theory was the view that the extensive media coverage of the crisis in Iraq and famine in Somalia led to intervention by the United State to send its army to assist (Robinson, 1999). But in recent years there has been a growing body of scholarly literature suggesting that the media had limited powers in coercing state actors to act in a particular manner in the 1990s (Gowing, 1994). Some scholars argue that it was in fact the political elites who used the media to serve their interests during the 1990s humanitarian crisis (Livingstone & Eachus, 1995).

Conversely, there is also another growing body of literature that suggests that there is an ongoing contestation between the journalists or writers and the state elites (Wichgers, 2020). The contestation emanates from the fact that state elites such as diplomats regard the media as part of their public

diplomacy tool to enhance the image of their country to pursue foreign policy objectives or priorities (Nye, 2010). Conversely journalists particularly those from the liberal media do not want to be seen as lapdog of the state elites. They regard their role as that of a watchdog.

This study is also looking at the contestation between the media and the state text by identifying the major themes and whether they are largely positive, neutral, or negative towards South Africa's priorities to the UNSC. Frame sponsors used by the media will also be identified to find out whether government-aligned sources were dominant and how they were used in the text. The media uses sources to drive a particular point to pursue a particular narrative. It could be a narrative that is pro or anti-establishment.

There are also trends and patterns that are associated with international news coverage that have been identified over the years by various scholars researching this field of study that are generalizable in this study. One such trend is that countries and the elites from the Global North tend to dominate the international news coverage. Sreberny-Mohammadi et al (1985) conducted one of the most cited studies in international media coverage. The study looked at how foreign news was reported in twenty-nine countries using content analysis. He concluded that the news content in international stories was mainly about political issues and political role players from the north. Sreberny and Stevenson (1999) conducted follow up studies in the late 1990s and reached a similar conclusion that the countries from the North i.e., the United States and the Western European countries make a bulk of international news.

Another trend that is associated with international news, particularly about developing countries is that they often have conflict frames or negative issues. Weaver & Wilhoit (1981) and Wilhoit & Weaver (1983), compared two foreign news coverage patterns of Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) about developing countries. They concluded that their coverage was mainly about conflicts and related negative issues. In their updated study in Weaver & Wilhoit (1983) demonstrated that about 60 percent of all newswire stories had some form of violent conflict and related stories that are twice as likely to feature Third World countries compared with developed countries (Wilhoit & Weaver, 1983).

Furthermore, the preliminary assessment of news articles and opinion pieces on South Africa's participation in the UNSC during the first and the second term suggests that the focus was on controversial issues. South Africa, for instance, during its first two terms co-sponsored eighteen UNSC resolutions (SAIIA, n.d.) but there was very little or no media coverage for these. However, the moment it voted in favour of a controversial resolution on human rights matters in Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Syria

(Fabricius, 2018) there was a lot of interest in the media. Even some of the opinion pieces and news articles on South Africa's third term in the UNSC have thematic frames about its controversial voting pattern during the first and second term. Fabricius (2018. p. 1), for instance, wrote an opinion piece titled, "After two controversial previous terms, will South Africa vote differently under Cyril Ramaphosa?"

One of the factors that promote the usage of conflict frame is the lack of interest in international news from the local audience, in the opinion of editors. Siko (2014) conducted interviews with some local newspaper editors. They all concluded that it is difficult to sell international stories to the local audience unless if it is about controversy. The City Press newspaper editor, Mondli Makhanya, for instance, said, "You'll never sell your front-page story on foreign affairs unless it's the collapse of Zimbabwe". Conversely, former editor Mathatha Tsedu argued that international news are not worth it because they do not sell unless "…when there were horrendous chapters of Mugabe's rule, and with each tick, you would have huge increases" (Siko, 2014. p. 26). Due to the lack of interest on international news from the domestic audiences, accompanied by the lack of resources many domestic newsrooms tend to rely on the Western based news agencies such as AP, UPI, Reuters and FPA for international news (Li, 1990) because, among other things, they are cheaper to use, then sending journalists to other countries to cover international news. The overreliance on external media for international news by domestic media houses means that they have limited power when it comes to the framing of international news. It also means that the Global North based media has an upper hand in terms of influencing the Global South audience. It is mainly for that reason why this study is also looking at whether any of the seven online publications that are part of this study used international news agencies on South Africa's participation in the UNSC between 2019 and 2020, and if so, how they framed their reporting.

It is hoped that this study will be able to shed the light on whether some of the trends that are associated with international news reporting did play a role on how the seven online South African publications covered the country's third term in the UNSC and to what extent. If they did play a role that will suggest, inter alia, that the local media had limitations in constructing the framing of the country's participation in the UNSC in cases where the international news agencies are constructing the frames. Furthermore, the assessment of frame sponsors will also explain whether countries from the Global North and their actors, such as elites in government and non-international organisations were dominant and driving the narrative, as it is the trend in international news coverage.

4.2. Public diplomacy and the media

Public diplomacy became prominent during the Cold war era when the United States of America (USA) and the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) were engaged in an ideological war to influence public attitudes toward their respective rival ideologies (Gilboa, 2008). The former US diplomat Edmund Gullion coined the term (Tuch, 1990). However, Cull (2006. p. 19) argues that the earliest use of the term public diplomacy can be traced back to 1856 in an opinion piece in the *London Times*, where it was used as "a synonym for civility in a piece criticizing the posturing of President Franklin Pierce." Public diplomacy may have been used much earlier than most scholarly literature suggests. In fact, Cull (2006) argues that the Roman Republic practised public diplomacy way back by inviting the sons of neighbouring kings to be educated in Rome.

Scholars and practitioners of international relations have utilised various definitions of public diplomacy. Frederick (1993.p. 229), for instance, argues that public diplomacy is "a government's process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies."
The above definition suggests that it is only the state actors in the international arena that employ public diplomacy to serve their interests, which may have been the case during the cold war period when public diplomacy was at its zenith. In recent years the international arena constitutes both state and non-state actors such as big Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). It is precisely for that reason Cull (2007, p. 12) avoids using the word government in his definition and says public diplomacy is "an international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public". Gilboa (2001) also distinguished between public diplomacy as practised by state actors and non-state actors such as NGOs and individual actors.

The primary objective of public diplomacy for any government is to enhance the image of their countries to the foreign audience in order to pursue and safeguard their national interests. The media is one of the tools for public diplomacy because of its reach, ability to generate public awareness and to set the policy and political agenda (Nye, 2010). Other scholars speak of media diplomacy as a standalone branch of diplomacy as opposed to it as a sub-branch of public diplomacy. The media is one of the most popular tools for pursuing public diplomacy but there are other means of pursuing public diplomacy such as participation in festivals and cultural exchanges of students, scholars and intellectuals (Gilboa, 2001).

Political elites are aware of the importance of the media in pursuit of public diplomacy and the difficulty to control them. Some countries have resorted to starting their own media houses. *C*hina, for instance, launched the *China Global Television Network* (CGTN) to foster its public diplomacy (Lim & Bergin, 2018 December 7) and Russia launched Russia today (Max, 2013) to almost do the same.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation has created the public diplomacy unit or a branch within the department to communicate South Africa's role and position in international relations at the domestic and international level. The public diplomacy unit has, among other things, created the 24-hour internet radio station called Ubuntu in addition to Ubuntu magazine, which is distributed to government departments, airport lounges. Ubuntu magazine is also available online. Other plans outlined by the department to pursue its public diplomacy in 2015 included the OR Tambo Month, promoted through three platforms, targeting the diplomatic corps, foreign policy, correspondents, analysts and commentators and think tanks. Ubuntu Diplomacy Awards were introduced to recognise South African industry leaders and eminent persons for their contributions to promoting South African interests and values (Dirco, 2015).

Furthermore, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation maintains that its broader focus is to promote the country's image through media statements and interviews with political principals (Dirco, 2015a). When an announcement was made that the country was going to re-join the UNSC for the third time as a non-permanent member the Dirco issued media statements outlining the number of objectives that it was going pursue in the UNSC such as promoting peace and security and enhancing close cooperation between the UNSC and other regional bodies (Dirco, 2018a). All the above engagements with the media by Dirco form the basis of public diplomacy.

The usage of the media by the government elites in pursuit of public diplomacy often leads to contestation between the two. This is because the government elites, as part of their public diplomacy strategies, want the media reports to reflect the policy positions of their governments and to report positively to enhance the images of their countries. The media practitioners, especially from the liberal media, see themselves as watchdogs and often strive to be independent of the influence of the government elites (Jurkowitz, 2020). In that regard, the major themes and frame sponsors or quoted news sources that will be identified in this study will indicate whether the media was critical or passive in it reporting. If the government sources are dominant with no other sources countering their arguments that would mean the media reporting was not critical towards the government. The identified major themes and frame sponsors will

also show whether the government elites were successful in their public diplomacy endeavour to use the media to enhance the country's image.

4.3. Media framing and framing analysis

According to Gamson and Modigliani (p. 147. 1987) media framing is "the central organizing idea that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them" for the news consumers or audiences. This definition is similar to that of Campbell (n.d.) who opines that in journalism, "frames are efficient ways to sort information and create stories. They connect journalists' work to the common understandings of our communities and the larger culture. They make facts meaningful. Frames create 'reality."

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson is regarded as the first scholar who introduced the framing concept in academia (Goffman, 1981). In his definition of the framing concept, Bateson used the analogy of a picture frame and a diagram. He argues that frame as a diagram includes elements within its jurisdiction and exclude those that are outside it and that frame as a picture is intended to organize the perception of a viewer by persuading people to pay attention to it and ignore what is outside (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015).

Journalists and opinion-makers use frames when framing their messages for their respective audiences as a "central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration*." (*Reese, 2001, p. 10*).* When journalist frame their stories they use, inter alia, framing devices (Van Gorp, 2007) such as the choice of words, metaphors, news sources, phrases and even images in reinforcing a particular selected reality out of a bigger reality.

There are competing interests in the framing of news between journalists and the frame sponsors or the sources of news (Van Gorp, 2007). Sources of news or frame sponsors such as government spokespersons and the private sector want to influence journalists to use positive frames and ignore negative ones to create a good public image. Conversely, journalists on the other side driven, by the journalism practice of striving for objectivity and the quest for more readership or viewership, are wary of only using positive frame sponsors in their framing of news articles.

More often media houses have an advantage over frame sponsors because they can decide which parts of a speech or statement by a frame sponsor, they will include in their news stories in reinforcing their reality. In other words, they have the power of deciding on what to write about in their publications. It is for that reason why other countries decide to control the media houses so that they can be able to control the media narrative.

Framing analysis serves as a tool used by researchers to identify frames used in the news articles (Goffman, 1974). This study thus uses framing analysis to, inter alia, identify emerging themes, the role of frame sponsors and whether the media coverage was largely positively or negatively framed.

The way the media framed South Africa's participation in the UNSC as a non-permanent member during the first and the second term partly influence this study. During South Africa's first and second term in the UNSC, there was a lot of negative framing following the country's failure to vote in favour of resolutions condemning human rights violations in Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Syria (Landsburg, 2012). Several news articles and opinion pieces were framed in a manner that portrayed South Africa as a country that was diverting away from the human rights pillar of its foreign policy. Even many of the news articles and opinion pieces about South Africa re-joining the UNSC for the third time had thematic frames about the country's "controversial" first two terms. James Hamill (2018), for instance, wrote in *The Conversation*:

> South Africa's foreign policy positions will be closely examined as it begins its third two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Its two previous terms in 2007-8 and 2011-12 – were not great successes. If anything, they diminished its global standing, due to its reluctance to censure a number of egregious human rights abusers (para. 1).

Media framing theory is closely related to agenda-setting theory. It is almost impossible to mention agenda-setting without mentioning media framing. McCombs (2005) argues that framing theory is just a more refined version of agenda-setting and thus refers to it as "second-level agenda setting.'' This argument is not without merit because Weaver (2007) opines that there is a relationship between agenda-setting and framing, but he asserts that they are not the same.

Nevertheless, many researchers disagree with the notion that framing is the extension of agenda-setting (Maher, 2001). The main difference between the two is that agenda-setting is about the relationship between the high coverage of certain aspects of reality and the priority that these realities take in the

audience's thinking. On the other hand, framing is about how the media framed its reporting on a particular subject, and of course, studies have shown that framing may have an effect (McCombs &Shaw, 1972). According to Price and Tewksbury, agenda setting looks at story selection as a determinant of public perceptions (Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Scheufele, 2000). A classic example in this regard is the much-talked-about study that was done by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which found that what was reported in the media at the time pre-occupied people's minds. In the following sub-section, I will review agenda-setting theory because it has evolved over the years from what it was in its early days in the early 1970s.

Understanding underlying factors that influence how the journalists or the media frame their reporting is important in this study as it enhances understanding on their reporting on South Africa's third term in the UNSC. It also improves our understanding on how researchers use frame analysis to make sense of the frames used by the media in their reporting.

In summary, media framing is the way journalists or writers frame reality. It is influenced by several factors such as the background of the journalist or writer, the editorial position of the media house he or she works for and journalism practice, just to name some. It is for that reason that they select and deselect certain aspects of reality to feed to a particular narrative.

4.4. Agenda-setting theory

There is a blurred line between media framing and agenda-setting as some scholars even argue that media framing is a mere extension of agenda-setting (McCombs, 2005). Nevertheless, many scholars argue that the two are simply two different theories as we shall show in this chapter.

Walter Lippman (1922) who is the pioneer of agenda-setting theory argues that the media formulate the reality to the minds of the public. In simple terms Lippman was in fact saying what the public think is important is a result of what they hear or read about in the media. This is the basis of the agenda-setting theory. Bernard Cohen who is also regarded as one of the pioneers of the agenda-setting theory, wrote a widely quoted dictum that the media, "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (Cohen, 1963, p. 13).

Nevertheless, the people who are credited for coming up with the name of agenda-setting theory and for showing its efficacy are Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972). During their much-talked-about

Chapel Hill study in North Carolina in the US in 1968 they found that what preoccupied people's minds at the time was what was salient in the media. That gave credibility to the theory. Several other similar studies on agenda-setting that have been conducted in various parts of the world have reached a similar conclusion (McCombs et al, 2007)

Just like most scholarly work, agenda-setting has been assessed and reviewed by various scholars. In recent years scholars like Shaw and Weaver (2009) argue that agenda-setting theory can be divided into first level agenda setting and second level agenda setting. First-level agenda setting, they argue, is about the transference of the salience of a particular issue from the media to the public mainly because of the exposure to the media that gives repeated attention to the issue.

Conversely, second-level agenda setting goes a step further from first level agenda and adds attributes to the issue or object. It attempts to encourage the public not only to think about the subject but how to think about it. This is in sharp contrast with Cohen's famous dictum that the media "may not be successful influencing the public how to think about a subject or object" (Cohen, 1963).

Both first level and second-level agenda setting are of relevance in this study on the basis that first-level agenda setting is about the media transferring the salience of a phenomenon or reality to the public. In the case of this study if the media, for instance, out of all realities about South Africa's participation in the UNSC decide to make salient its voting pattern, that in return influences the public to think about the voting pattern. That falls under first-level agenda setting category. If the media decide to move a step further and add attributes by looking at the particular aspect of South Africa's voting pattern such as its standpoint concerning its human rights foreign policy principle as it was the case during its first and second term in the UNSC, that falls under second-level agenda.

Agenda setting theory has been reviewed and even questioned by several scholars over the years as I outlined in the introduction. Gandy (1982, p. 266), for instance, argues that there's a need to go beyond the agenda-setting per se by looking at "who sets the media's agenda, how and for what purpose it is set, and with what impact on the distribution of power and values in society". This question triggered researchers to start looking at the sources of the media and their influences in building the agenda. While the agenda-setting is putting more emphasis on the role of the media to the public, the agenda building is asserting that the media does not operate in a vacuum as there are factors that influence its agenda-setting. According to Curtin (1999, p. 54) agenda building occurs when Public Relations "practitioners can obtain media placement of their subsidies, then they influence the media's agenda, which in turn can influence public opinion and the public agenda". Media houses rely on several sources in their agenda-setting

endeavours. These include, inter alia, members of the public, government officials, elites, and experts in various fields. Several studies have shown official sources are commonly used by the media during the agenda building process and even set the media agenda throw transference of the salience of the issues and attributes, which in turn influences the salience of issues and attributes to the public (Ragas, 2012).

The agenda building as a sub-concept of agenda-setting is also relevant in this study because it emphasizes the role of the newsmakers such as the government officials, experts and elites in setting the agenda for the media and to some extent the public. It is precisely for that reason that this study is also looking at whether the media reporting on South Africa's participation in the UNSC is in line with the government priorities that it outlined when it re-joined the UNSC.

Some scholars are now talking about the reversal of the agenda-setting role whereby the members of the public set the agenda for the media through social media (Brown et al, 2012). The advent of social media has made this possible where ordinary members of society can set the agenda. This has created a new phase of agenda-setting research. Some studies have shown that people, especially the young and technology savvy are increasingly relying on social media for information (Moyo, 2019). But some argue that the traditional media still has an upper hand because it is regarded as a credible source of news and information (Shehata & Dierf-Pierre, 2017). There is no doubt that agenda-setting will continue to evolve and be tackled from different vantage points as mass communication continue to be revolutionized by technology. Despite the differences in perspective between agenda-setting and framing, they are both relevant to this study. Agenda-setting, for instance, posits that what the media write about preoccupies the minds of the audience. The second-level agenda-setting on the other hand pushes the boundaries even further because it suggests that the media can decide what the public should think about by focusing on certain aspects of a reality. In this regard, when the media write about a certain aspect of South Africa's participation in the UNSC that according to second-level agenda-setting theory is likely to preoccupy the minds of the audience.

Agenda-setting has some relevance in this study because it seeks, among other things, to answer whether the media coverage of the country's participation in the UNSC was in line with the country's priorities. If the reporting was in line with the country's priorities in the UNSC that may suggest that the political elites played a huge role in influencing the media, during the agenda building stage.

Furthermore, if the media was able to focus on a particular aspect of South Africa's participation in the UNSC, which is the second level agenda, that may suggest that it was also able to influence the public not only to what to think about regarding Pretoria's participation in the UNSC but how to think about it.

There is, however, no consensus on the power of the media in influencing the audience on how to think about a phenomenon.

In essence agenda-setting is related to framing. Based on the findings on the seminal Chapel Hill study (Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) the media can influence the public on what to think about. Framing goes a step further because it presupposes that how the media frame or present news influences how the public should think about a particular issue. In the case of this study the media may decide to focus on particular aspect of South Africa's participation in the UNSC, which may influence the public on what to think about. Framing might select or deselect certain aspects which influences the public on how to think or process that information. In fact, some scholars like McCombs (2004) regard framing as part of Agenda-Setting hence some call it second-agenda setting.

5. Study objective and research questions

5.1. Study objective

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how the South African media framed the country's performance during its third term in the UNSC as a non-permanent member from 2019 to 2020, using online news articles and opinion pieces as primary data.

Furthermore, this study is also investigating whether there was an agenda that was pushed by the media in its framing.

5.2. Research questions

Main question

How did the South African media frame the country's performance during its third term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC between 2019 and 2020?

Sub-questions

What are the major themes that emerge from the online news articles and opinion pieces about South Africa's performance as a non-permanent member of the UNSC between 2019 and 2020?

Do these themes tell us anything important about how individual media outlets and the media in general viewed South Africa's participation in the UNSC?

Are there any discernible shifts in the framing of coverage over the period, and can any reasons be given for these shifts?

Does the media framing analysis suggest that any agenda was pushed by the media during South Africa's participation in the UNSC?
To answer these questions, I will consider whether the framing concurs or disagrees with South Africa's foreign policy priorities, the sources and how they are used, the criteria used by media houses in selecting authors for opinion pieces on the subject. I will assess whether the human rights frame, if it appears, is used to portray the government in a positive a negative or positive light and whether anything can be

suggested about the relationship between coverage of the South African government's performance at international forums like the UNSC and the media's coverage of its performance domestically, or whether international coverage is treated separately from coverage of domestic politics. Furthermore, assessment will be made on whether any of the seven South African online publications used international news agencies and how they framed their reporting on the country's participation in the UNSC.

6. Method

In conducting a study of this nature either news articles or opinion pieces can be used as standalone primary data. However, preliminary content analysis on South Africa's participation in the UNSC from 2019 to 2020 suggests that opinion pieces were longer and more insightful than news articles. But they give more voice to the views of the writer, while news articles tend to give sources space to express their views. To create a rich set of data both news articles and opinion pieces are used as primary data for this study.

Some studies use quantitative content analysis or computer frame analysis, while others use a text-based interpretative, qualitative approach (Maris, 2012). This study uses a qualitative approach to identify and assess themes from stories about South Africa's participation in the UNSC in each of the seven online publications, using keywords SOUTH AFRICA AND UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL and the name of the publications to conduct Google search. In some cases, years were added, during the search for articles in the seven online publications which are *News24, Independent Online (IOL), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), eNews Channel Africa (eNCA), Mail and Guardian, Eye Witness News (EWN)* and the *Daily Maverick*. Part of the reasons for the selection of these seven local online publications is because they were identified as the most trusted by Digital News Reports (2019) and that they are easily accessible.

The identified themes were compared and assessed whether they were in line with the country's foreign policy priorities in the UNSC between 2019 to 2020, which according to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation were:

- The prioritisation of diplomacy, mediation, the pacific settlement of disputes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding through inclusive dialogue and negotiations with the ultimate aim of supporting parties to achieve sustainable peace, national unity and reconciliation;
- South Africa will actively contribute to achieving an Africa at peace by 2063 by pursuing and promoting Africa's goal of "silencing the guns by 2020", but also to promote and achieve peace in all the regions of the world;
- · It will continue to promote effective partnerships between the UN and regional and subregional organisations;
- · The country will promote the African Agenda, including highlighting the continent's priorities in the area of peace and security;

- South Africa will continue to work together with all the members of the AU and UN in pursuit of effective global governance, multilateralism and reform of the UN system;
- It will work towards improving the working methods of the UNSC to make it a more legitimate, representative and effective body. (Dirco, 2018)

The identified themes were classified whether they were positive, negative or neutral to the country's foreign policy priorities in the UNSC. Those that were classified as positive were those that had a pro-government position or government sources only. Conversely, those that were classified as negative were those that countered the government position and the neutral ones were those that constituted both the pro and the anti-government position. Frame analysis was also utilised to identify frame sponsors to determine which ones were dominant and to find out if something can be read from them?

Researchers conducting frame analysis studies use either issue-specific frames or generic frames to identify media frames. The issue-specific frames are utilised to certain specific issues because they allow for greater specificity and detail, while "generic frames are broadly applicable to a range of different news topics, some even over time and, potentially, in different cultural contexts" (de Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, 2001, p. 108). They both have advantages and disadvantages and as a result, thereof each researcher, based on the needs of his or her project decide which one of the two methods or approaches to use. This study is thus utilizing the issue-specific frames because it is aimed at identifying the frames that appear in this specific study about South Africa's participation in the UNSC as a non-permanent member between 2019 and 2020.

Identifying themes and observing the extent to which the media framing concurs or disagree with the South African foreign policy goals is qualitative and thus requires a qualitative method to find answers. Qualitative framing analysis involves repeated and extensive engagement with a text to identify frames (Connoly-Ahern et al, 2008) which was done to answer the main and the sub-question of this study. Furthermore, an inductive approach was utilized to identify major themes, starting from the headlines to the end of all the articles that were identified. This means that the themes were identified while the research was conducted as opposed to the deductive approach where they are identified beforehand. This study is limited to analysing the text and thus the photographs that were identified were deliberately excluded. To measure the identified themes four of the five steps outlined by Tankard (2001) below were relied upon.

- Make the range of possible frames explicit;

- Put the various possible frames in a manifest list;
- Develop keywords, catchphrases and symbols to help detect each frame;
- Use the frames in the list as categories in content analysis. (Tankard, 2001)

Preliminary content analysis of South Africa's participation in the UNSC during its first two terms in 2007-2008 and 2011-2012 suggest that many news articles and opinion pieces were casting a negative light on South Africa over its position on the human rights matter. That was after it voted against resolutions condemning human rights violations in Myanmar, Syria and Zimbabwe (Tryens-Fernandes, 2018 June 11). In that regard, extensive engagement with the text was also done to determine whether the human rights frame or theme persisted during South Africa's last term in the UNSC and whether it was casting the government in a positive, negative or neutral light. Frame analysis was also be conducted to determine whether there were articles that were written by international news agencies. This was done to assess whether the international news agencies had any form of influence in the framing of SA's participation in the UNSC.

In qualitative studies, interviews are used to discover or interpret the meaning of facts or occurrences (Farías & Montero, 2005). Semi-structured interviews with representatives of three media houses that produced the most opinion pieces on South Africa's participation in the UNSC were conducted. This was done to investigate whether there was any prior agenda by the media in its framing. All the three respondents from the media houses preferred to answer questions in writing via emails due to their busy schedules and geographical barriers that prevented face-to-face interviews. The following questions were emailed to each of them:

- Why did you feel the coverage of SA's participation in the UNSC was important?
- Why did they approach a particular commentator to write about this subject? Or did the commentator propose the issues?
- Was time a factor on when opinion pieces should be published and why?
- In general, what issues do you think are important in terms of SA's international profile, and at the UN?
- Were resources a factor in terms of publishing articles about SA's participation in the UNSC?

The collected data was categorized by putting the dates of the interviews of each of the three participants, their names, and the media houses they represent, including their respective answers. This was done to make it easier to engage with the text during data analysis and just for record-keeping purposes. Since two of the three respondents preferred to remain anonymous, they will be referred to as Respondent 1,

Respondent 2 and Respondent 3 to ensure that the identities of the two respondents, who want to remain anonymous remain protected. No incentives were paid for the interviews and the confidentiality of the interviewees is guaranteed throughout the data collection process. The collected data is stored in a password-protected computer, which will be destroyed after two years.

The study is divided into two periods. The first period is from June 2018, which was the month in which the announcement was made that South Africa was going to join the UNSC as a non-permanent member up to December of the same year. The second period starts from January 2019, when South Africa officially joined the UNSC as a non-permanent member, up to December 2020, when its term ended. The rationale behind dividing this study into two periods is to track whether there was any discernible shift in the identified themes and frame sponsors.

For the purpose of this study, President Cyril Ramaphosa, cabinet ministers, South African ambassador to the UNSC, government officials and politicians from the governing party are referred to as governing elite frame sponsors because they form part of governing elites. Representatives of various countries and international organisations are referred to as international frame sponsors. Experts frame sponsors are professionals in various fields. Both news articles and opinion pieces are referred to as news articles.

7. Study limitations

The primary data of the study is limited to seven online news websites. This means that there is a possibility that there may be other stories on the same subject by other online publications that may not be captured. Future study studies may have to include more online publications and traditional media such as newspapers.

Interviews, which form part of the study, were conducted by the researcher with at least three media houses that produced the most opinion pieces, regarding the criteria they used in selecting them. The self-reported data in a qualitative study has limitations because it cannot be independently verified, and the data is limited by time constraints. Future studies will have to select more media houses to conduct interviews with, to gain more insight. Furthermore, the interviewees preferred written questions, instead of telephone or face to face interviews, due to their busy schedule which limited the number of questions and made it impossible to ask follow-up questions.

Lastly, the study is limited to how the media reported on South Africa's participation in the UNSC from June 2018 when it was announced that it will join the UNSC for the third time up to when it finished its term. Future studies will have to also consider studying whether the media influenced society in its reporting on the subject.

8. Findings

The research sets out to unpack how the South African media framed the country's participation in the UN Security Council by identifying, assessing, and analysing major themes and frame sponsors that emerge.

Furthermore, the themes are also assessed to determine whether it was largely positive or negative towards the government priorities that it set up when it re-joined the UNSC as a non-permanent member state for the third time and towards the country's conduct with regards to its human rights and democracy pillar of its foreign policy

The study is divided into two parts to discern possible changes. The first part assesses and analyses the articles that were published from the first of June to the last day of December 2018. The second part focuses on the articles that were published from the 1st of January 2019, when South Africa officially joined the UNSC, up to December 2020, when its term ended.

8.1. Media Coverage Overview

A total of eighty-two articles were identified from the period June 2018, which was the month in which the announcement was made that South Africa was going to re-join the UNSC for the third time as one of the ten non-permanent member states, up to when its term ended in December 2020.

Of the eighty-two articles that were identified a total of sixty-six were news articles and twenty-five were opinion pieces. This means the news articles were almost three times more than the opinion pieces.
The *Daily Maverick* and the *SABC* consisted forty-nine of the eighty-two articles that were identified. This means that the two published over half of the articles that were identified in this study.

June 2018 to December 2020	**No of Articles**
Articles Identified	82
News Articles identified	66
Opinion pieces identified	25
Daily Maverick and SABC	49
Other Publications	33

8.2. Media Coverage Overview June to December 2018

A total of twenty-nine articles about South Africa and the United Nations Security Council were identified in all the seven online publications that are utilized as data for this study, from June to December 2018. Of the twenty-nine articles that were identified, twenty-two were news articles and seven were opinion pieces.

Table 1

Publications	**News Articles**	**Opinion Pieces**
Daily Maverick	4	4
SABC	8	0
Mail and Guardian	2	1
IOL	2	1
EWN	2	1
ENCA	2	0
News24	2	0
Sub-total	22	7
Overall total	**29**	

8.3. Media coverage overview January 2019 to December 2020

During the period from January 2019 to December 2020, there were more articles than in the earlier period. This is not surprising considering that the latter period constituted twenty-four months, while the earlier constituted 6 months. Most importantly during the period 2019 to 2020, there were a lot of issues that South Africa took part in during its term in the UNSC, including taking the rotating presidency in October 2019 and in December 2020 (Dirco, n.d). It also participated in several resolutions and issued statements on several issues concerning its policy position and priorities in the UNSC.

Table 2

Online Publications	**News Articles**	**Opinion Pieces**
SABC	17	0
Daily Maverick	7	8
IOL	4	2
Mail and Guardian	2	3
News24	1	3
EWN	3	0
ENCA	1	2
Sub-total	37	18
Total	**55**	

A total of fifty-five articles were identified in all seven online publications and thirty-seven of these were news articles and eighteen were opinion pieces. This is a similar trend that we saw during the period from June to December 2018 where there were more news articles than opinion pieces.

The *SABC* published a total of seventeen news articles, which was the highest number in comparison to the six other online publications. There was no opinion piece among the articles that were identified from the *SABC*. The *Daily Maverick* published the second-highest number of articles. It had seven news articles, which were mainly in dept-feature stories and eight opinion pieces. This, as was indicated earlier, is not surprising because it has a contract with the Pretoria based Institute for Security Studies (ISS) to use its opinion pieces and feature articles by its experts. Although the Daily Maverick had fewer articles than the SABC it had more in-depth news articles and lengthy opinion pieces than any of the online publications that are part of this study. This gave it added advantage over other publications because its

articles went beyond the surface and considered the processes underpinning certain outcomes as we shall see when we do analysis. This is a similar trend that we saw during the period from June to December 2018, where there were more news articles than opinion pieces.

9. Themes Identified

The following major themes were identified which are peace and security, human rights, UNSC reform, African agenda and multilateralism.

10. Peace and Security Theme Overview

Peace and Security was the most dominant theme among all those that were identified in all the seven online publications about South Africa's participation in the UN Security Council. This is not surprising considering that the main mandate of the UNSC is to maintain international peace and security (UNSC.n.d.). Furthermore, peace and security was one of the Pretoria's priorities going to the UNSC and as a result, many government-aligned sources were quoted talking about it, which further contributed to its dominance.

A total of sixty-three peace and security themes were identified and over half of them were in the articles that were written from January 2019 to December 2020. The fact that more peace and security themes were identified during the latter period is not surprising because there were more articles on the subject during the period in question, largely due to many activities that attracted the media as can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Peace and Security Theme	**No of Themes**
June to December 2018	27
2019 to 2020	36
Total	**63**

From June to December 2018 the *Daily Maverick* had more peace and security themes than any of the seven online publications. It was followed by the *IOL*, where five peace and security themes were identified. All other publications constituted more than one of this theme, except the *eNCA*, in which only one theme was identified (see table 4 below).

Table 4

Peace and Security Theme June to December 2018	**No of Themes**
Daily Maverick	11
IOL	5
Mail and Guardian	3
News24	3
EWN	2
SABC	2
ENCA	1
Total	**27**

During the period January 2019 to December 2020 a total of thirty-six peace and security themes were identified, as can be seen in table five below. The *Daily Maverick* and the *SABC* constituted over half of this theme during this period, followed by the *Mail and Guardian.*

Table 5

Peace and Security Theme 2019-2020	**No of Themes**
SABC	9
Daily Maverick	10
IOL	5
ENCA	3
Mail and Guardian	7
News24	1
EWN	1
Total	**36**

10.1. Peace and Security Theme-Analysis

A total of forty-eight peace and security subthemes were found to be positive towards the South African government. Only four were found to be negative, while eleven were found to be neutral.

Table 6

Identified Theme Tones

Publications	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Neutral**
ENCA	4	0	0
EWN	3	0	0
SABC	9	1	1
News24	2	0	2
Mail and Guardian	7	1	2
IOL	8	1	1
Daily Maverick	15	1	5
Sub-Total	**48**	**4**	**11**
Total	**63**		

The articles that were classified as positive were mainly due to government-aligned sources talking about peace and security priority with no other source countering the government position. The extract below from the *News24* is an example of such articles:

> President Cyril Ramaphosa meanwhile expressed his gratitude to the UN General Assembly after the appointment, saying on Friday that he was "humbled".
>
> "South Africa's tenure will be guided by our commitment to resolve regional, global and international conflicts and promote inclusive growth as part of the effort to ensure a better Africa in a better world.
>
> "We are committed to addressing the root causes of conflict, including inequality and underdevelopment, and promoting inclusive political dialogue." (*News24,* 2018, June 8).

Opinion pieces usually constitute the writer's point of view. They may say positive or negative things, depending on the writer's position in relation to the subject. There were, however, more opinion pieces that were classified as positive towards South Africa under the peace and security theme. Below is an example of one such article by De Carvalho (2018 November 15) published by the *Daily Maverick:*

> By 1 January 2019 South Africa will be one of Africa's three representatives on the UN Security Council. The country can use this opportunity to actively promote more effective peacekeeping by the UN, while also repositioning itself as a troop-contributing country. (para.1)

It is common for the media houses to write more articles when a major event is about to happen or when it has just happened. In June 2018 when an announcement was made that South Africa was going to join the UNSC as a non-permanent member there was a high number of new articles and opinion pieces. It happened again in January 2019 when South Africa officially joined the UNSC as one of the ten non-permanent member states. Many of the articles continued using the government-aligned sources as sole sponsors, talking about the country's priorities going to the UNSC just like in the article below by Gerber (2019, January 2) that was published by the *Mail and Guardian:*

> South Africa's term will also be an opportunity for the country to work towards the African Union's goal of "Silencing the Guns" on the continent by 2020.
>
> Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Lindiwe Sisulu said on Tuesday: "The world is facing huge challenges, including rising unilateralism and widening geopolitical divisions. These challenges threaten our collective resolve to address global challenges of peace, security and development.
>
> "South Africa will thus utilise its tenure on the Security Council to promote the maintenance of international peace and security through advocating for the peaceful settlement of disputes and inclusive dialogue," Sisulu said. (para.1-3)

In between February 2019 to December 2020 the peace and security subthemes that were positive towards the government were mainly found in those articles that were assessing South Africa's performance in the UNSC, as can be seen in the article below that appeared on the *Enca:*

> Holding a seat on the Council undoubtedly entails readiness to shoulder global responsibilities. And on many occasions, particularly on African issues, SA has done remarkably well, assuming responsibilities on issues ranging from peace-making and peacekeeping to humanitarian intervention and economic help to neighbours. (*Enca*, 2019 October 27)

There were also those articles that can be classified as having a neutral tone on South Africa's peace and security theme. They would be talking about the South African position in the UNSC, while at the same time pointing out some of the challenges. The peace and security subtheme from the article below by Fabricius (2019, August 6) that was published by the *Daily Maverick* is an example of those that can be regarded as having a neutral tone:

> On the Sudan issue, South Africa found itself at odds with Russia and China again because they argued their usual position of non-interference in the country's internal affairs after the military seized power in the wake of popular protests that toppled President Omar al Bashir on 11 April.
>
> By contrast, South Africa and the two other African countries currently on the Security Council, Cote d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, strongly backed the African Union's Peace and Security Council in condemning Sudan's military junta for its unconstitutional seizure of power and suspending it from the AU.
>
> During debate on renewing the mandate of Unamid, Russia and China initially argued again that Sudan should be left to deal with the Darfur problem without external interference, while South Africa instead stood with Western countries in insisting that Unamid's presence should be extended because of the new and uncertain circumstances in Sudan created by the military's overthrow of Bashir. Russia and China, however, eventually supported the extension of Unamid's mandate. (para.13-15)

They were only four subthemes that were critical of Pretoria that were identified under peace and security theme, but they were not criticising its priorities going to the UNSC. They were criticising it on other peace and security related matters as can be seen in the opinion piece below by Fourie (2020 January 13) that was published by the *IOL*:

> On January 3 the United States of America (US) launched a so-called 'pre-emptive' missile attack in Iraq, killing seven persons. Among the fatalities were the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi commander, Abu Mahdi al Muhandis, both of whom were highly revered for neutralising the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and bringing stability to the West Asian region.

> While acknowledging that President Ramaphosa did convey condolences and condemn the attack a week later, the South African government's initial response was neutral; neither condemning the attack nor offering condolences to the mourning nations. The desperate effort to display our diplomatic prowess as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. (para.1-2)

Overall, as was shown in table 6 there were more peace and security subthemes that were positive on South Africa's peace and security going to the UNSC. There was also a substantial number of articles with this theme that were neutral and most of those articles were outlining the South African government position, while at the same time mentioning the challenges in implementing them.

There were only four subthemes that had a negative tone and were not specifically about peace and security as one of South Africa's priorities going to the UNSC. In that regard, it can be argued that peace and security subthemes that were identified were mainly positive towards South Africa's peace and security priority going to the UNSC.

11. Human Rights Theme Overview

Human right is one of the pillars or principles of South Africa's foreign policy (Dirco, n.d.), but it was not one of its priorities going to the UNSC (Dirco, 2018). It is also the only theme that was not part of South Africa's priorities going to the UNSC. It came into being because many writers were reflecting on South Africa's previous two terms when it was condemned for not supporting resolutions condemning human rights violations in Myanmar, Zimbabwe, and Syria (Manku, 2017b. Many of the articles with this theme were merely warning South Africa to avoid a similar scenario. A total of twenty-five human rights themes were identified and most of them during the period 2019 to 2020, as can be seen in table 7 below.

Table 7

Human Rights Theme	**No of Themes**
June to December 2018	8
2019 to 2020	17
Total	**25**

During the period from June to December 2018, a total of 8 human rights subthemes were identified, as can be seen in table below 8. More themes were identified in the *Daily Maverick* than in other publications that are part of this study. Two subthemes were identified in the *EWN* and one in the *IOL*, the rest of the publications had no human rights theme that was identified.

Table.8

Human Rights June to Dec 2018	**No of Themes**
Daily Maverick	5
SABC	0
IOL	1
ENCA	0
Mail and Guardian	0
News24	0
EWN	2

Total	**8**

From 2019 to December 2020 when South Africa officially joined the UNSC, seventeen human rights subthemes were identified (see table 5 below). This was a slight increase from the earlier period. The *Daily Maverick* was again dominant as it constituted nearly half of the human rights subthemes.

Table.5

Human Rights Theme 2019-2020	**No of Themes**
Daily Maverick	8
SABC	1
IOL	3
ENCA	2
Mail and Guardia	1
News24	2
EWN	0
Total	**17**

11.1 Human Right Theme Analysis

There were more human right subthemes that were neutral than those that were either positive or negative. Articles under this theme were mainly warning South Africa to avoid repeating the past errors when it voted against resolutions condemning human rights violations during the first two terms in the UNSC. There were no articles that were critical of government on matters pertaining to human rights, as was the case during South Africa's first two terms in the UNSC.

Table 9

Identified Theme Tones

Publications	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Neutral**
Mail and Guardian	0	0	1
ENCA	0	0	2
EWN	0	0	2
SABC	0	0	1
News24	0	0	2
Daily Maverick	3	2	8
IOL	1	0	3
Sub-Total	**4**	**2**	**19**
Total	**25**		

Most human rights subthemes that were identified between June and December 2018, particularly in the Daily Maverick, were pre-empting what South Africa was expected to do once it resumes its role in the UNSC. Most articles with this theme were warning South Africa to avoid acting inconsistently with the human rights principle of its foreign policy pillars as can be seen in the extract below from the *Daily Maverick* that was written by Fabricius (2018 June 8a).

> At a recent workshop on its likely third tenure on the Security Council, an African analyst advised the South African government to take this important lesson from its first two terms on the council – "don't suffer delusions of grandeur".
>
> He suggested that South Africa use its BRICS membership more strategically by leaving it to its fellow-BRICS members Russia and China – which have permanent seats on the Security Council – to handle controversial human rights issues.
>
> "Hide behind their vetoes and don't get involved on issues like Myanmar which you can't influence anyway," he proposed. (para.23-25)

There were also a couple of articles that were suggesting that South Africa was shifting from the past when it was criticized for acting inconsistently with the human rights pillar of its foreign policy as can be seen in the article below by Mbete (2019 July 5) that was published by the *News24*:

> South Africa's re-election to the Security Council under President Cyril Ramaphosa raised hopes of a return to the foreign policy of President Nelson Mandela and a stronger commitment to human rights. Though admirable, the fact is that the world has changed dramatically since the Mandela presidency which ended in 1999. (para.1)

There was also an article written by Singh (2019 January 22) for the *Daily Maverick* that was demonstrating that South Africa was indeed shifting away from the past when it was accused of acting inconsistent with the human rights pillar of its foreign policy:

> Following South Africa's eventual support for the UN General Assembly resolution condemning human rights violations in Myanmar last year, international relations minister Lindiwe Sisulu said this was a "demonstration of a new dawn in South African foreign policy" and a return to its "founding principles of standing against human rights violations". She said stability in southern Africa remained a key priority for South Africa. (para. 4)

Nevertheless, there were some two articles with the human right theme that were critical of South Africa's human rights record. The one was published by the *Mail and Guardian and* the other by the *Daily Maverick.* There were both about South Africa's failure to cooperate with the UN court to hand over a suspect in the Rwandan genocide:

> The chief prosecutor of a UN tribunal on Wednesday accused South Africa of failing to co-operate in the arrest of a fugitive sought over his role in the 1994 Rwanda genocide.
>
> "Since August of last year, my office has been seeking urgent cooperation from South Africa in relation to the arrest of a fugitive located on its territory," said Serge Brammertz, chief prosecutor of the UN's International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. (Mail and Guardian, 2019 July 18. para.1-2)

The *Daily Maverick* also published the article written by Fabricius (2020 December 19) about South Africa's failure to cooperate with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, which painted a negative picture about the country's human rights standing:

> The South African government has received a blistering public rebuke from an international war crimes prosecutor for allowing one of the worst perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide to escape from South Africa in 2018 and for continuing to frustrate international efforts to track him down.
>
> Serge Brammertz, Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), told the UN Security Council in New York on Monday 14 December that South African authorities had refused even to place Fulgence Kayishema, a fugitive from the tribunal, under provisional arrest, when tribunal investigators traced him to Cape Town two years ago. This was despite an international United Nations warrant for his arrest which all UN members were obliged to implement. Nor had Pretoria even placed him under surveillance. As a result, he escaped from South Africa a year ago and has yet not been found. (Fabricius, 2020 December 19. para.1-2)

South Africa's failure to respond on the matter raised in the above article did no justice to its quest to improve its prestige in the international arena after a poor showing in the previous two terms in the UNSC. In fact, the government's failure to comment on the matter may have prompted the writer to get a comment from the main opposition i.e., Democratic Alliance, which added to the negative tone in the article:

> Daily Maverick asked both the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and the Department of Justice and Correction Services for comment but after several hours neither had responded.
>
> Darren Bergman, the spokesperson for international relations and cooperation of the Democratic Alliance said: "Unfortunately, the Government of South Africa believes in loyalty before the Constitution. When it comes to international relations and cooperation the name has been misleading for years as we have been anything but cooperative to the likes of world organizations that we pay hefty membership fees to sit on.
>
> "We continue to embarrass ourselves and show that certain individuals' lives matter more than mass lives in hypocritical ways that leave the international community continuously confused and frustrated at us. This has an impact on tourism, foreign investment and long-term relationships." (Fabricius, 2020 December 19. para 8-9.a)

In the article published by the *Daily Maverick*, South Africa was also criticised by what Adam (2020, July 21) described as a "misguided policy on Syria" and was accused of supporting the Bashar Al Assad government whom the writer says is a totalitarian regime:

> Upon its election to the Council, it was hoped and expected that President Cyril Ramaphosa would seize the opportunity to restore South Africa's human rights-based foreign policy. The case of Syria has, however, unmasked South Africa's failings and its inability to maintain an independent foreign policy.
>
> While the South African statements at the UN have been consistent in affirming that there can be no military solution to the situation in Syria, the ambiguity of its policy is reflected in its continued support for the dictatorship of Bashar Al Assad in the name of sovereignty and territorial integrity.
>
> Statements by South Africa continue to lay culpability for the crisis at the feet of "non-state armed groups", while failing to acknowledge the complexities of the conflict and obfuscating the flagrant violations of human rights by the Syrian regime, Russia and their allies. (Adam, 2020 July 21. para. 3-5)

Most of the articles under the human rights theme that were neutral were warning South Africa to avoid repeating the past errors when it voted against resolutions condemning human rights violations during the first two terms in the UNSC. There was no article that was identified that was assessing South Africa's record on human rights matters, considering that this was a serious issue during the first two terms, in the UNSC. Those articles that were classified as negative were silent on Pretoria's previous two terms in the UNSC. They were focussing on separate human rights issues in which South Africa was found wanting. Although these articles did not find traction, they were very critical of South Africa and reflect badly on its image as tried to break away from the past. This calls for Pretoria to do an introspection on its conduct on all matters concerning human rights in order to avoid attracting negative media coverage which is not good for its image.

12. African Agenda Theme Overview

African agenda has been part of South Africa's priorities going to the UNSC during the first two terms UNSC (Dirco, 2006, 2010). It has also been part of its foreign policy principles since the country re-entered the international realm post-1994 election that marked the end of the apartheid government and the start of the democratic government (Landsberg, n.d.). It is thus not surprising that it was also part of South Africa's priorities during its third term in the UNSC. Throughout the years it has demonstrated its commitment to the African continent. Under former President Thabo Mbeki, South Africa played a prominent role in the formation of the African Union (AU), which was officially launched in Durban in 2002 (AU, n.d.). Pretoria also played a crucial role in the formation of the New African Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad), an economic development program of the AU, which was adopted in Lusaka, Zimbabwe in 2001 to accelerate economic growth and cooperation among African states (Nepad Kenya, 2010)

There are, however, concerns and resentment on the continent that South Africa wants to use the African agenda to play a sub-imperialism role, (*Mail and Guardian,* 2007). Critics point to its ambition of representing Africa as permanent members of the UNSC (*African News*, 2021) and the expansion of its multinational corporations such as Shoprite Checkers, DSTV, Vodacom and MTN (*New24,* 2018) as a testament to this.

A total of twenty-five African Agenda themes were identified and many of them were found in those articles that were published during the period 2019 to 2020. Overall, the *Daily Maverick* had more African agenda themes out of all the seven publications that are part of this study, followed by the *Mail* and *Guardian.*

Table 10

African Agenda Theme	**No of Themes**
June to December 2018	6
2019 to 2020	19
Total	**25**

Only six African agenda subthemes were identified, from June to December 2018. The SA*BC, IOL* and *Mail and Guardian* did not have this theme during this period.

Table 11

African Agenda Theme	**June to Dec 2018**	**No of Themes**
Daily Maverick		2
SABC		0
IOL		0
ENCA		1
Mail and Guardian		0
News24		1
EWN		2
Total		6

From the period 2019 to 2020 there was a slight increase in the number of African agenda subthemes that were identified, in comparison to the earlier period. A total of nineteen African agenda themes were identified and eleven of them in the *Daily Maverick.* Other than the *Mail and Guardian,* which had five African subthemes, most publications had 1. The *eNCA* did not have any, as can be seen in Table 12 below.

Table 12

African Agenda Theme	**2019-2020**	**No of themes**
Daily Maverick		11
SABC		1
IOL		1
ENCA		0

Mail and Guardian	5
News24	1
EWN	0
Total	19

12.1. African Agenda Analysis

Most articles with the African agenda subthemes were classified as neutral. They would outline the Pretoria position, while on the other hand mentioning the obstacles that the country would face in its attempt to pursue the African agenda. There were also eleven articles that were classified as positive on the basis that they only relied on governing elites frame sponsors.

Table 13

Identified Theme Tones

Publications	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Neutral**
ENCA	1	0	0
EWN	1	0	1
SABC	1	0	0
NEWS24	2	0	0
IOL	1	0	0
Daily Maverick	4	0	9
Mail and Guardian	2	0	4
Sub-Total	**11**	**0**	**13**
Total	**25**		

The issue of Western Sahara was one of the dominant issues under African agenda theme. Western Sahara is thin strip area bordering Morocco which its leading political party Polisario Front is fighting of its independence from Morocco (Independent Diplomat.n.d.). South Africa support the independence of the Western Sahara and wanted to use its third term in the UNSC to continue supporting its independence

from Morocco. Most articles on the issue of the Western Sahara had a sympathetic towards South Africa as can been in the opinion piece by Jean-Jacques Cornish (2018, December 12) that was published by EWN.

> The Saharawi people, living under Moroccan occupation for 43 years, will be grateful for having South Africa on the Security Council. Sisulu has promised South Africa will use its position to press for self-determination for Western Sahara. By implication, this means getting Morocco to quit the territory. (Cornish, 2018 December 12)

South Africa tried to pursue the course of Western Sahara in the UNSC, but it lost some of its battles as can be seen in the article below where the South African ambassador to the UNSC Jerry Matjila was not pleased with the position that was taken on Western Sahara to extend the mandate of the UN peacekeeping troops. The main issue that South Africa was not pleased with was the failure of the UNSC to condemn Morocco over what it called human rights violation and that the decision on the matter was mainly taken by the Western nations:

> South Africa has chided the United Nations Security Council for passing what it calls an unbalanced resolution on Western Sahara. With Russia and South Africa abstaining, the 15-nation UN powerhouse resolved to extend the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force in the country occupied by Morocco in defiance of the international community.
>
> Ambassador to the world organisation Jerry Matjila said South Africa had considered voting against the resolution drafted by a handful of European powers and the United States.
>
> It extends the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force in Western Sahara by six months rather than a year in the hope that that will pressure both sides to negotiate an agreement to the dispute that has raged since Morocco's 1975 invasion of the country (Cornish, 2018 December 12. para. 1-2).

In the opinion piece about the DRC matter, which was written by Fabricius (2018 June 8) and published by the *Daily Maverick*, South Africa is advised to lead the continent on this matter and not allow non-African countries especially France to take the lead on this one. In another opinion piece about the DRC that was written by Mbete (2019 July 5) and published by *News24* and *IOL*, South Africa is praised for being decisive and for playing a leading role against pressure from some of the Western countries that had an interest on the matter, including DRC former colonial master Belgium, which wanted Pretoria to add

its voice in delegitimizing the election results which saw Felix Tshisekedi elected as the DRC president. South Africa's position was supported by its BRICS partners, China and Russia, who are also permanent members of the UNSC:

> Western members of the Security Council, especially Belgium and France, unsuccessfully sought South Africa's support to take a strong position against any possible fraud in the results. South Africa refused and aligned itself with the Southern Africa Development Community that favoured the formation of a DRC government based on the results released by the electoral authorities.
>
> China and Russia were aligned with South Africa in viewing this as an internal and sovereign issue that required no further involvement from the Security Council. In the event, Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in as President on 24 January 2019 and was recognised as the legitimate head of state by Council members. (Mbete, 2019 July 5. para. 19-20a.)

South Africa mirrored the position of the SADC region which the DRC is a member, but the African Union held a different view. It wanted the DRC election body to hold its announcement before the AU delegation is dispatched to that country, but after SADC and Pretoria congratulated the new President, it abandons its position and follow the SADC lead (Smit, 2018 June 18).

Another topic that received a lot of attention under the African agenda is the role of South Africa in uniting the African countries that are non-permanent members of the UNSC, namely Niger and Tunisia. Gustavo de Carvalho et al (2020, October 23) wrote an opinion piece published by *Daily Maverick* where he urged South Africa to play a leading role on this one to ensure that matters about the continent are addressed accordingly in the UNSC:

> In the short term, South Africa needs to show its commitment to strengthening African voices on the Security Council, even after the country is no longer a member. Engaging with all council members in its exit strategy may allow for greater continuity on key common priorities. The country is already working with Kenya on passing the baton in 2021.
>
> Following the European model, where incoming and outgoing members make joint statements in a period of transition, the three elected African states (A3) on the Security Council – South Africa, Niger and Tunisia – should adopt a similar approach. This means the A3 should already

> be including Kenya – which replaces South Africa in January 2021 – in its joint statements until December 2020. (De Carvalho et al, 2020 October 23)

In the same opinion piece, there is acknowledgement from the writer that South Africa lived according to expectation and united the A3 on some of the matters about the well-being of the African continent:

> The consensus among the three African members (the A3) has historically been weak and difficult to achieve. But South Africa brought the A3 (which includes Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea) together in a strong, unified position on Sudan. Together the three states advocated that the UNSC follow the PSC decisions on Sudan. (Carvalho et al, 2020 October 23)

Peter Fabricius (2019, August 6) also wrote an article on the same subject for the Daily Maverick where he was praising South Africa for taking the lead in uniting the A3:

> The analysts commended South Africa for uniting the three African countries on the Security Council – SA, Cote d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea – into a bloc that had increased its leverage, especially on Sudan.
>
> They urged South Africa to use its seat on the Security Council to strengthen collaboration between the council and the African Union, a major aim of South Africa's first two terms on the Security Council. (Fabricius, 2019 August 6a)

There were also other matters on the African agenda theme such as the political situation in Zimbabwe and Burundi which were classified as neutral. But these two matters did not feature most or thoroughly exhausted as was the case with the three above highlighted matters.

The African agenda was the only theme that had no negative tone that was identified in it. Most articles with this theme had either a positive tone or neutral one. This can be interpreted to suggest that the media was sympathetic to Pretoria as no article was too critical of South Africa. There were, however, more articles with neutral themes where the position of South Africa would be stated and followed with what it was likely to face in its attempt to pursue the African agenda especially on matters pertaining to the independence of Western Sahara from Morocco and on the DRC. Where South Africa was seen to have done well was uniting the A3 to speak with one voice on matters pertaining to the continent.

The question though would be how long this unity will hold, considering that there are also disagreements among African countries on some of the issues pertaining to the continent. The issue of Western Sahara is one example. South Africa's position is that it should be given independence from Morocco, while the Ivory Coast, which was part of the A3 in 2019 was sympathetic to Morocco (Smit, 2018 June 18).

13. Multilateralism Theme Overview

There are various definitions of multilateralism in the international relations scholarship, but in simple terms multilateralism refers to the relationship between three or more countries to pursue a common (Keohane, 1990). The main objective is to discourage unilateralism where one superpower takes unilateral action that may negatively impact other countries. It gives voice to developing countries from the Global South to have a say on matters of international importance such as global warming, peace and security to name some.

South Africa hold the view that multilateralism is key in addressing some of the global challenges because it discourages unilateralism and gives even smaller countries a greater say in international affairs. It is from that basis that multilateralism has been part of South Africa's foreign policy principles since the dawn of democracy in 1994 (Dirco, n.d.). It is also on that basis that it wanted to use the UNSC to promote multilateralism (Dirco, 2018), especially on matters pertaining to the promotion of international peace and security which is the main objective of the UNSC.

A total of sixteen multilateralism subthemes were identified in the SEVEN online publications that are part of this study and many of them were identified during the period between June and December 2018. This is a major shift from the previous themes which had more themes during the latter period.

Table 14

Peace and Security Theme	**No of themes**
June to December 2018	10
2019 to 2020	8
Total	**16**

The *Daily Maverick* constituted seventy percent of multilateralism subthemes that were identified during the period from June to December 2018. The *SABC*, *IOL* and the *Mail and Guardian* each had one theme. No multilateralism theme was identified in *News24* and the *EWN* had no multilateralism theme.

Table 15

Multilateralism	**June to December 2018**	**No of Themes**
Daily Maverick		7
SABC		1
IOL		1
ENCA		0
Mail and Guardian		1
News24		0
EWN		0
Total		**10**

There were fewer multilateralism subthemes that were identified during the period from 2019 to 2020 in comparison to the earlier one. Even the *Daily Maverick,* which usually has a high number of themes identified in its articles had only 4 during this period, followed by the *IOL*, which had only two.

Table 16

Multilateralism Theme 2019-2020	**No of Themes**
Daily Maverick	4
SABC	0
IOL	1
ENCA	1
Mail and Guardian	0
News24	0
EWN	0
Total	**6**

13. Multilateralism Theme Analysis

As can be seen in table 17 below there were more multilateralism subtheme that were positive towards Pretoria. A total of seven were neutral and there was no theme with a negative tone that was identified.

Table 17

Identified Theme Tones

Publications	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Neutral**
Mail and Guardian	1	0	0
ENCA	1	0	0
EWN	0	0	0
News24	0	0	0
IOL	2	0	0
SABC	1	0	0
Daily Maverick	4	0	7
Sub-Total	**9**	**0**	**7**
Total	**16**		

Most articles under multilateralism theme that had positive tones were those that were identified during the period June to December 2018. They were mainly found in those articles that relied on government sources who were reacting to the announcement that South Africa was going to join the UNSC as a non-permanent member. The sources linked to the government would be quoted saying that they will promote multilateralism, which was part of the government priorities going to the UNSC as can be seen in the extract below from the *IOL* news article which quoted Lindiwe Zulu, who at the time was the head of the ANC International Relations and the *SABC* one where President Cyril Ramaphosa was used as a frame sponsor:

> "We remain deeply concerned about the emergence of unilateralism and its attendant threat to an international rules-based system. The ANC reaffirms South Africa's commitment to enhance co-operation between the United Nations and all other multilateral organisations in matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law," Zulu said. (*IOL*, 2019, June 8)

> President, Cyril Ramaphosa says South Africa will use its time as a member of the UN Security Council to promote multilateralism. The President was speaking to our US Correspondent Sherwin Bryce-Pease, at the conclusion of the G7 summit in Canada a short while ago. He says South Africa will also use its position to promote Africa's interests to the world. (*SABC*, 2018, June 10**)**

The *Daily Maverick* is the only publication where articles with neutral tones were identified. An as was the case in many of the articles that were classified as neutral a government position would be outlined in some cases government source would be utilized as a frame sponsor and a source with a counter argument or even a possible obstacle that Pretoria would likely to encounter would be outlined, as is the case in the article below:

> Clashes with the unilateralist Trump administration seem inevitable but South Africa will have to take heed of the recent warning by US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley, that her government might cut off foreign aid to countries that consistently vote against the US at the UN. This was after calculating that South Africa was one of the ten countries which most often voted against Washington. (Fabricius, 2018 June 8b)

The multilateralism theme was mainly because of the government-linked sources that were quoted talking about multilateralism as one of the country's priorities going to the UNSC. It is on that basis that this theme was more prevalent during the period from June to December 2018. Only six multilateral themes were identified during the period from 2019 to 2020 and most of them were identified in the *Daily Maverick* articles.

14. UNSC Reform Theme Overview

There were fewer subthemes under the UNSC reform theme that were identified. In total eight subthemes were identified, and many of them were found in the articles that were published during the period from June to December 2018.

Table 18

Peace and Security Theme	**No of articles**
June to December 2018	6
2019 to 2020	2
Total	**8**

During the period from June to December 2018 the *SABC* and the *IOL* had two UNSC reform subthemes that were identified in their articles. Only one was identified in the *Daily Maverick,* which was unusual because in most other themes it was dominant.

Table 19

UNSC Reform June to December 2018	**No of Themes**
Daily Maverick	1
SABC	2
IOL	2
ENCA	0
Mail and Guardian	0
News24	0
EWN	1
Total	**6**

From the period 2019 to 2020 only two peace and security subthemes were identified and were all found in the *Daily Maverick*. The rest did not have the UN reform theme.

Table 20

UNSC Reform 2019-2020	No of Themes
Daily Maverick	2
SABC	0
IOL	0
ENCA	0
Mail and Guardian	0
News24	0
EWN	0
Total	**2**

14.1. UNSC Reform Theme Analysis

The reformation of the United Nations Security Council is the issue that has pre-occupied South Africa for a long time. Long before it joined the UNSC as a non-permanent member for the first time in 2007 it has been among the countries from the continent that has been vocal about the UNSC reformation. It holds the view which is also supported by the Africa Union that Africa needs to have a permanent member in the UNSC (AU, n.d.) as opposed to the current scenario where it is represented by three non-permanent members on a rotational basis. It, nevertheless, does not look like Africa and South America will have permanent member status in the UNSC any time soon.

The issue of the UNSC reform continued to be part of South Africa's priorities in the UNSC, as was the case during the first two terms. Unfortunately, there were not many articles with this theme as can be seen in the table above, but there were more positive themes that were identified in the few articles with this theme and only two were neutral. The was no article with a negative tone that was identified, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 21

Identified Theme Tones

Publications	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Neutral**
Mail and Guardian	0	0	0
ENCA	0	0	0
EWN	0	0	1
NEWS24	0	0	0
IOL	2	0	0
SABC	1	0	1
Daily Maverick	3	0	0
Sub-Total	**5**	**0**	**2**
Total	**7**		

In almost all the previous themes, in most cases, the positive ones were because of the government-aligned sources that were talking about government priorities, going to the UNSC. It was also the case as well under UNSC reform theme, as can be seen in the *IOL* articles below:

> Africa must be better represented in the United Nations (UN) Security Council, whose "current composition does not reflect the world in which we live," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa argued Tuesday at the UN General Assembly.
>
> The Security Council has five permanent members, a legacy of the Second World War (China, United States of Africa, Great Britain, France and Russia), and ten other rotating members who are elected for two-year terms. *(IOL*, 2020, September 30)
>
> "We are very confident of South Africa's performance and significant contribution during its tenure as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. We were very happy to hear the President [Cyril Ramaphosa] also speak about the need for reform of the Security Council. In fact, he laid out and reiterated the position of the African Union on our expectations as Africa. The reform of the Security Council is long overdue," said Hamadziripi. (*IOL*, 2018 June 7)

As was indicated in the introduction no negative tone was identified under UNSC reform theme. As has been the case in other themes, the articles with a neutral tone would constitute both the position of the

South African governing talking about the UNSC reform as its priority and a counter view as can be seen in the extracts below:

> South Africa plans to use its 2-year term to reassert its desire for a more permanent position at the table. “There should be permanent African representation. I think we definitely need Security Council reform, we’ve got a 20th century UN struggling to deal with 21st-century problems and the victors of the Second World War are still dominating that body,” says Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect Simon Adams.
>
> However, changing more than 70 years of Council rules is easier said than done. “Talking about UN reform as a priority for any new incoming non-permanent member is sort of what everybody says. Yet it doesn’t actually happen, and I suspect that it probably won’t happen in this case,” says World Policy Institute Fellow Jonathan Cristol. (*SABC,* 2018 June 7)

The fact that the South African government also acknowledges that pursuing UNSC reforms is not an easy task may have contributed to fewer UNSC reform themes.

> Twenty years of discussions on the reform of the Security Council have yielded no movement towards a more representative and inclusive Security Council. We believe the time has come for the broader UN membership to heed the overwhelming call for Africa to obtain at least two permanent seats, with all the prerogatives of permanent membership, as well as five non-permanent seats, as embodied in the Common African Position as espoused in the Ezulwini Consensus on the comprehensive reform of the Security Council. (Monyela, 2019 October 16)

There is no news article or opinion piece that was identified under UNSC reform on how Pretoria faired in pursuit of its objective of reforming the UNSC, during its third term. This may suggest that it is either Pretoria did not engage in more activities about the UNSC reforms, or the media failed to cover such events. But the most convincing view is that South Africa struggled to pursue the UNSC reforms. This is because Clayson Monyela (2019 October 16), the spokesperson of the International Relations and Cooperation Department, acknowledges that transforming the over eighty-year-old organization will be a mammoth task, as stakes are extremely high.

15. Conclusion

The peace and security theme was the most dominant one out of all the major themes that were identified. A total of sixty-three peace and security subthemes were identified. This is not surprising, considering that the main objective of the UNSC is to restore and promote global peace and security (UNSC.n.d.). In that regard matters of peace and security are often high in its agenda.

Except for the UNSC reform and multilateralism, most themes were identified from 2019 to 2020. This can be attributed to the fact it was the time when South Africa was participating in the UNSC and there were more articles in comparison to the earlier period. A total of fifty-five articles were identified between 2019 and 2020 in comparison to the twenty-nine that were identified between June and December 2018.

Most of the themes that were identified were largely positive towards the South African government and its priorities in the UNSC. This is mainly because many articles were relying on government sources as frame sponsors and many of these government-aligned sources were quoted outlining the country's priorities in the UNSC. Furthermore, there was no contestation among frame sponsors.

Nevertheless, there were at least two negative articles that were identified under the human rights theme and in both articles, there were no governing elite frame sponsors. In one of the articles, attempts were made by the writer to solicit the South Africa government position on the matter that it was criticised for, but it refused to comment. The writer ended up using the opposition party criticising the government, which gave the article and the theme a more negative tone against Pretoria.

16. Frame Sponsors

Framing relies on several factors such as the ideological thinking of a journalist, the publication's editorial policy position and sources of news that journalists relied upon to produce news stories (Shoemaker and Reese 2013).

There is often a contestation in the text between the journalist and the frame sponsors. Frame sponsors can have power over journalists in frame building because journalists rely on them as sources of information. Conversely, Journalists can also have power over the frame sponsors because they "operate as gatekeepers who can control the visibility of frame sponsors" (Soroka 2012). There is, in fact, a growing body of literature suggesting that sources or frame sponsors have an important impact on the media agenda and that journalists also have a strong influence on the political agenda (Wichgers et al, 2020).

Most frame sponsors that were utilised in the media articles about South Africa's participation in the UNSC were government officials and governing party elites. This is line with several studies that suggest that the governing parties and government officials tend to have more access to the media (Gerth & Siegert 2012). The second most used frame sponsors were ambassadors from various countries, and individuals representing international organisations such as the UN agencies.

17. Identified frame sponsors from June to December 2018

The governing elites frame sponsors are dominant in all themes that were identified in the articles that were published from June to December 2018. They constitute over a half of the forty frame sponsors that were identified during this period. They were followed by the international and expert frame sponsors. There was one opposition party frame sponsor that was identified during this period, as can be seen in table 22 below.

Table 22

Frame Sponsors June to December 2018	**Identified Frame Sponsors**
Governing Elites Frame Sponsors	23
International Frame Sponsors	9
Experts Frame Sponsors	7
Opposition Party Frame Sponsors	1
Total	**40**

17.1. Governing Elites Frame Sponsors

The governing elites frame sponsors were mainly used in reaction to the announcement that South Africa was going to re-join the UNSC for the third time as a non-permanent member, during the period from June to December 2018. They were often quoted talking about how they felt in reaction to the announcement and what the country was planning to achieve at the UNSC. The article below from the EWN by Jean-Jacques Cornish (2018 June 8) is a classic example of many articles that were found during this period:

> President Cyril Ramaphosa says South Africa is humbled and honoured to be elected one of five countries to serve as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. He says South Africa will use its two-year term on the UN powerhouse to advance African interests and

> resolve regional, global and international conflicts. This is the third time South Africa has been elected as a rotating member of the UN's top body. (Cornish, 2018 June 8)

The governing party elites were also used as frame sponsors in several news articles where they were also mentioning some of the country's priorities in the UNSC:

> The ANC has welcomed the third election of South Africa as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
> "This is a victory for peace and an opportunity to address the root causes of conflict. This further ensures that inequality and underdevelopment are addressed as well as allow for the promotion of inclusive political dialogue," ANC international relations sub-committee chairwoman Lindiwe Zulu said on Saturday. (Enca, June 8)

The dominance of certain frames does not always mean that they control the narrative because it also depends on the perspective from which a story is told. Often journalists strive to be objective in their reporting and use frames to simplify news for their audience, but in the process, they are influenced by several factors such as their own views, perceptions, and the position of the news organization they work for (Goffman (1974). In this regard the governing elites were dominant and playing a huge role in driving the narrative. There is no evidence from the text suggesting that the media was hostile against the government and its priorities going to the UNSC.

17.2. International frame sponsors

The international frame sponsors were the second most used frame sponsors during the period from June to December 2018. Most of them were quoted congratulating South Africa, while others were quoted urging Pretoria to use its UNSC membership to support their agendas and policy positions. Palestinian ambassador to South Africa, for instance, is used as a frame sponsor in the Mail and Guardian article (Pather 2018, September 11) where he's pleading with South Africa to use its UNSC membership to help in finding a solution to the Middle East crisis.

> Dajani said he hoped the South African government would use its seat to advocate for peace in the Middle East, as well as in the rest of the world:

> “Soon, South Africans will occupy [a seat] as a member of the Security Council and surely, they will play a constructive role for building peace,” he said. (Pather, 2018 September 11)

Ambassadors from the SADC region were also used as frame sponsors, reacting to the news that South Africa was going to re-join the UNSC for the third time. In the IOL article below, for instance, DRC ambassador to South Africa and dean of the diplomatic corps Bene M’Poko is quoted asking South Africa to prioritize peace and security during its term in the UNSC:

> My advice to South Africa would be to concentrate on two issues, just like we do in the context of SADC, first it's the peace and security issues and other issues like the reform [of the UN Security Council] will come later. These issues will take time. What's urgent is the peace and security - without which we cannot move forward. Once we are working on peace and security, let's embark on programmes of economic development, especially the agenda 2063 of the African Union," he said. *(IO*L, 2018 September 14)

In the same article published by IOL (2018 September 14a) the Zimbabwean ambassador to South Africa David Hamadziripi was also used as a frame sponsor talking about the role played by Pretoria in maintaining peace and security on the continent. But contrary to the view articulated by the DRC ambassador to South Africa, Bene M’poko, who suggested that Pretoria should just focus on peace and security and forget about the UNSC reforms the Zimbabwean ambassador emphasize the importance of the UNSC reforms:

> "We are very confident of South Africa's performance and significant contribution during its tenure as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. We were very happy to hear the President [Cyril Ramaphosa] also speak about the need for reform of the Security Council. In fact, he laid out and reiterated the position of the African Union on our expectations as Africa. The reform of the Security Council is long overdue," said Hamadziripi.

None of the identified international frame sponsors were critical of South Africa, especially the ambassadors to South Africa. This is understandable because ambassadors often use a polite approach in their engagements with other countries (Cultural Relations, n.d; Taib, 2022). However, this does not mean diplomats or ambassadors do not use an impolite approach, they do, especially if there are hostilities between their countries. It depends on the situation, but under normal situation they use polite language as was the case in this regard.

17.3. Experts frame sponsors

A total of seven expert frame sponsors were identified during the period from June to December 2018. Most of them were quoted offering advice on what South Africa should and should not do during its third term in the UNSC. Some reflected on South Africa's controversial voting resolution on human rights matters during the first and second term in the UNSC, warning that it should not commit the same mistakes again as can be seen in the article below by Ebrahim (2018 June 1) published by *IOL*:

> South Africa's third entry into the UNSC is a positive move in light of the major setbacks under former President Jacob Zuma. South Africa should use this golden opportunity to revive the African agenda, ensuring focus on forgotten conflicts in the DRC, Burundi, and Central Africa, as well as the never-ending Palestinian question," Dr David Monyae, Co-Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Johannesburg has said. (Ebrahim, 2018 June 1)

The fact that there were not many experts frame sponsors does not mean that the expert perspective was lacking. Many of the in-depth articles and opinion pieces that were published by the Daily Maverick were written by experts in the international relations field from the Institute of Security Studies which they have agreement with to use their articles (*Daily Maverick* website.n.d.). Other publications relied on their own journalists and regular freelancers who can be regarded as experts in international relations field as they have covered the subject quite extensively over the years. Some of them, like Shannon Ebrahim, who at the time of the study was *IOL* Foreign Editor and Brook Spector from Daily Maverick are often used as experts on radio and television news to analyse international relations issues.

17.4. Opposition Political Party Frame Sponsor

There was only one article during the period from June to December 2018 where the opposition party, which is the Democratic Alliance was used as a frame sponsor. The opposition parties are often critical to the establishment and the DA is no exception. In the earlier article where it was first used as frame sponsor it was not critical of the government. It was in fact calling upon the government to do better on human rights issues than it did during the first two terms:

> The Democratic Alliance (DA) says South Africa's election as a non-permanent member of the United Nation's Security Council is a positive step towards Africa's representation on the global stage. DA Spokesperson in International Relations Stevens Mokgalapa says the government's voting on the council must reflect South Africa's commitment to human rights, adding that his party will keep an eye on the country's voting patterns. (*SABC,* 2018 June 8)

South Africa's voting pattern on human rights resolutions and media reports that linked the Zuma administration to the massive looting of state resources, which became known as the state capture may have influenced the DA's non-hostile position to the new administration. It wanted to give it chance to avoid repeating a similar mistake in the UNSC under the previous administration. But the DA made it clear that it was not giving the ANC-led government a blank cheque on matters pertaining to human rights because it emphasized that it was going to "keep an eye on the country's voting patterns" (*SABC*, 2018 June 8). The DA did keep its promise and even became critical on government when it was found wanting on the issue of human rights, as we shall see in one of the articles that were identified during the period 2019 to 2020.

18. Identified Frame Sponsors from January 2019 to December 2020

The governing elites frame sponsors were still dominant during the period 2019 to 2020 as was the case during the previous period between June and December 2018. They consisted almost half of all the frames that were identified between 2019 and 2020. The international frame sponsors were again the second most used frame sponsors as was the case during the first period. There were only two frames by experts and two representatives of NGOs as well as one from the opposition party.

Table 23

Frame Sponsors 2019-2020	**Identified Frame Sponsors**
Governing elites Frame Sponsors	33
International Frame Sponsors	26
NGOs	3
Opposition	1
Experts Frame Sponsors	2
Total	**65**

Table 24

Frame Sponsors June to December 2018	**Identified Frame Sponsors**
Governing Elites Frame Sponsors	23
International Frame Sponsors	9
Experts Frame Sponsors	7
Opposition Party Frame Sponsors	1
Total	**40**

18.1. Governing Elites Frame Sponsors

Some of government frame sponsors that were identified during the period 2019 to 2020 especially during the month of January were mainly reflecting the country's priorities on what it wanted to see happening in relation to its role as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. These frame sponsors were mainly quoted talking about matters pertaining peace and security and the UNSC reforms, which were part of the country's priorities that it wanted to pursue in the UNSC. Many of them had governing elites as frame sponsors as can be seen below in the extracts from *News24 and IOL* articles below:

> Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Lindiwe Sisulu said on Tuesday: "The world is facing huge challenges, including rising unilateralism and widening geo-political divisions. These challenges threaten our collective resolve to address global challenges of peace, security and development.
>
> "South Africa will thus utilise its tenure on the Security Council to promote the maintenance of international peace and security through advocating for the peaceful settlement of disputes and inclusive dialogue," Sisulu said. (Gerber, 2019 January 2)

> Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Lindiwe Sisulu, said the world is facing huge challenges, including rising unilateralism and widening geo-political divisions.
>
> "These challenges threaten our collective resolve to address global challenges of peace, security and development. South Africa will thus use its tenure on the Security Council to promote the maintenance of international peace and security through advocating for the peaceful settlement of disputes and inclusive dialogue.
>
> We will continue to encourage closer cooperation between the UN Security Council and other regional and sub-regional organisations particularly the African Union. We would further wish to emphasise the role of women in the resolution of conflict. This, during our time on the Council, South Africa will ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed into all Security Council resolutions in line with UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security," she said. (*IOL*, 2019 January 3)

Few months after South Africa had official joined the UNSC, the focus became more on issues that were discussed at the UNSC, as opposed to earlier period where the emphasis was on what it was expected to do. In the extract from the *Mail and Guardian* article below, for instance, the South African ambassador was utilised as a frame sponsor asserting the South African position in the UNSC, regarding the independence of Western Sahara from Morocco:

> He appealed for support for Western Sahara's people, drawing a parallel with his own country for which international solidarity "brought down the repressive system of apartheid".
>
> South Africa is a supporter of the Polisario Front, the movement seeking a referendum on independence from Morocco for the north African territory. (Landry, 2019 April 30)

Overall, the tone of governing elites frame sponsors was largely positive towards the South African course. This comes as no surprise as they are representing the government and were thus unlikely to say negative things about it.

18.2. International Frame Sponsors

International frame sponsors constituted representatives of various countries and international organisations. Most of these frame sponsors were in support of South Africa's role in the UNSC while others were putting pressure on South Africa to prioritise their interests. However, there was one frame sponsor that was very critical of South Africa in the *Mail and Guardian* (2019 July 18) article, which was titled, "South Africa not- co-operating in arresting of genocide suspect – UN court":

> The chief prosecutor of a UN tribunal on Wednesday accused South Africa of failing to co-operate in the arrest of a fugitive sought over his role in the 1994 Rwanda genocide.
> "Since August of last year, my office has been seeking urgent cooperation from South Africa in relation to the arrest of a fugitive located on its territory," said Serge Brammertz, chief prosecutor of the UN's International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. (*Mail and Guardian,* 2019 July 18)

The *Daily Maverick* also carried the same article. It was much more critical of South Africa than the *Mail and Guardian* article. What perhaps made it even more critical is that it also had a frame sponsor from the

main opposition political party, the Democratic Alliance, which is known to be very critical of the government and the governing party. There was no frame sponsor from the South African government. According to the article, the government officials refused to comment on the accusations:

> "Despite a UN warrant calling for Kayishema's immediate arrest, South African authorities did not provisionally detain him or put him under any surveillance to prevent his escape." (Daily Maverick, 2018 July 18)

There are several paragraphs in the article where Brammertz is used as a frame sponsor in the *Daily Maverick*, further painting South Africa as untrustworthy in handling the matter of the suspect in the Rwandan genocide:

> "So we were surprised to be informed that because Kayishema had been granted refugee status in South Africa, he could not be handed over to the Mechanism. This excuse was withdrawn months later, replaced with a new argument that South Africa lacked a legal basis to cooperate with the Mechanism.
>
> "After sixteen months of intense negotiations, in December 2019, South Africa finally submitted the UN arrest warrant for execution, which a local magistrate approved. However, by then, Kayishema could no longer be found. It is important to note that my Office has reliable information that Kayishema was present in South Africa as late as October and November 2019, so merely weeks before South Africa reported in the Security Council that the arrest operation was unsuccessful.
>
> "Little has improved since. A year ago, after the failed arrest, my Office submitted an extensive request for assistance detailing information we required to continue the pursuit of Kayishema. Yet our request still has not been satisfactorily answered.
>
> "Two months ago in October, it was agreed that my Office would send a technical team to Pretoria to finally receive the requested material. The foreign affairs and justice ministries convened several joint meetings with responsible officials.
>
> "But the Department of Home Affairs, which has responsibility for key information, did not attend as scheduled. My Office was then again requested to send last week another mission to specifically meet with the Department of Home Affairs and receive outstanding documents. To

> our great surprise, on the last day of the mission, Home Affairs representatives informed us that Kayishema's refugee file and fingerprints do not exist. This is difficult to understand." (*Daily Maverick*, 2018 July 18)

Besides the international frame sponsor that was used by the *Daily Maverick* and *Mail and Guardian* in the above articles was hostile, most of them were largely positive towards South Africa as was the case during the period from June to December 2018. This is because most international frame sponsors were mainly people who were representing their respective countries as ambassadors, while others were representing international organisations. Many of these are diplomats who were using a typical political language that is often associated with diplomacy.

18.3. Opposition Party Frame Sponsor Analysis

During the period from June to December 2018, the opposition party adopted a wait and see approach. It was not as critical of the governing as it has always been. However, from 2019 to 2020 its tone changed. It became critical of the government in the article about South Africa's failure to cooperate in helping the UN to arrest a suspect in the 1994 Rwandan genocide as can be seen in the quotation below of Darren Bergman, the spokesperson for international relations and cooperation of the Democratic Alliance:

> "We continue to embarrass ourselves and show that certain individuals' lives matter more than mass lives in hypocritical ways that leave the international community continuously confused and frustrated at us. This has an impact on tourism, foreign investment and long-term relationships." (*Daily Maverick*, 2018 July 18)

There was no comment from the South African government on these very serious allegations. The two articles perhaps would not have been as worse as they were if they had a frame sponsor from the government giving the country's perspective to counter the negative narrative or accusation that Pretoria protected a man that was accused of genocide. This is not good for the country's image, considering the native framing that often accompany the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Fortunately, for the South African government only two publications carried the story other publications decided to ignore it. It is possible that it was not a deliberate decision for other publications not to make a follow up in this story, but that contributed to limiting the number of articles that were critical of South Africa, during its third term in the UNSC.

18.4. Experts Frame Sponsors

During the period from 2019 to 2020 experts and the NGO frame sponsors constituted four frame sponsors. As was the case during the first period the experts were mainly providing an assessment on what they expected from South Africa in the UNSC. There was an article by the *Daily Maverick* (Fabricius, 2019 August 6b) where various experts were quoted giving their overall assessment on what South Africa had achieved during a few months in the UNSC. I decided to put them in sequence because they offer a comprehensive and insightful assessment of South Africa's performance in the UNSC from the expert's perspective. Below are some of the extracts of the assessment by experts:

On the Venezuela and DRC:

> The foreign policy experts said South Africa's votes on the crises in Venezuela and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during SA's first three months on the council had raised concerns about the coherence and independence of its positions. (Fabricius, 2019 August 6b)

On the Sudan coup de 'tat:

> On the Sudan issue, South Africa found itself at odds with Russia and China again because they argued their usual position of non-interference in the country's internal affairs after the military seized power in the wake of popular protests that toppled President Omar al Bashir on 11 April.
>
> By contrast, South Africa and the two other African countries currently on the Security Council, Cote d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, strongly backed the African Union's Peace and Security Council in condemning Sudan's military junta for its unconstitutional seizure of power and suspending it from the AU. (Fabricius, 2019 August 6b)

On women issues:

> The analysts also felt that South Africa could raise the country's profile further by playing a more prominent leadership role on the Women, Peace and Security agenda which is playing a growing role in UN affairs. It includes a strong push for women to play a much greater role in peace

> efforts as well as the need for far stronger measures to protect women from sexual violence during conflicts. (Fabricius, 2019 August 6b)

On pushing the African agenda:

> The analysts commended South Africa for uniting the three African countries on the Security Council – SA, Cote d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea – into a bloc that had increased its leverage, especially on Sudan.
>
> They urged South Africa to use its seat on the Security Council to strengthen collaboration between the council and the African Union, a major aim of South Africa's first two terms on the Security Council. (Fabricius, 2019 August 6b)

The analysts that are quoted in the above extracts were merely giving their assessment on how South Africa was doing in the UNSC and what it should and should not do. They were invited by the government itself, which suggest that there was a commitment from the authority to avoid negative media coverage and criticism that it received during the previous terms in the UNSC. In their assessment, as we have outlined, they were not too negative nor too positive. They were just giving fair assessment, and in parts where they were criticizing, they were constructive.

18.5. NGOs Frame Sponsors

There were only two local NGOs frame sponsors that were identified and were not saying anything negative no positive about the country's priorities in the UNSC. But some of what they were saying, as can be seen in the article below by Ebrahim (2020 December 1) published by the *IOL*, were part of the country's priorities going to the UNSC such as the issue of injustice in the international politics, which is partly due to unilateralism, which is the anti-thesis of multilateralism, one of the South Africa's priorities to the UNSC:

> Reverend Frank Chikane, a long-time supporter of the rights of the Palestinians and representative of the World Council of Churches, said: "Poor and weaker nations are forced to comply with international law, while rich and powerful countries are not." (Ebrahim, 2020 December 1)

The other voice from the NGO is Reverend Musa Sono. He was quoted in the SABC article in which the then Dirco Minister Lindiwe Sisulu was talking about South Africa's participation in the UNSC where Chinese ambassador to South Africa offered bursaries to South African students. Reverend Sono was quoted thanking the Chinese ambassador, which was something not related to the country's priorities in the UNSC. Overall, there was no NGO that was critical of South Africa and its priorities that it wanted to achieve in the UNSC. If anything, Reverend Chikane was sympathetic and supportive to the government, while the other NGO source was silent on South Africa's participation in the UNSC. The fact that only two NGOs were frame sponsors, out of over eighty-two articles means that they were not properly represented.

19. Conclusion

The governing elite frame sponsors were the most dominant frame sponsors out of all the frame sponsors that were identified. During the period from June to the first two months of January 2019, there were often quoted talking about the country's priorities in the UNSC. From March 2019 to the end of the SA's term in the UNSC the governing elites were talking about what South Africa was doing in the UNSC.

The international frame sponsors were the second most used frame sponsors. Many of them were ambassadors from various countries and were supportive of South Africa to such an extent that some would advise South Africa on things that it should and should not do in the UNSC. There was only one international frame sponsor that was critical or hostile to South Africa. It was Serge Brammertz, Chief Prosecutor of the UN's International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. He was used in the *Mail and Guardian* and *Daily Maverick* articles heavily criticising South Africa for not cooperating in bringing to justice a suspect in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Conversely, the experts were the least utilized frame sponsors and were dominant during the period from June to December 2018. In most cases, they were quoted talking about what was expected of South Africa going to the UNSC. They were also cautioning South Africa not to undermine its human rights pillar of the country's foreign policy. The fewer number of experts is, however, covered by the fact that many of the writers of the opinion pieces about South Africa's participation in the UNSC are experts in their themselves.

South Africa has several registered NGOs and political parties, but they were only two local NGO voices and two from the same opposition party, which is the DA. This means that the voice not directly linked or aligned to the South African government were not properly represented and that the governing elites and international frame sponsors were overly represented as frame sponsors in the articles about South Africa's participation in the UNSC.

20. Interviews with three Media houses *Daily Maverick, News24* and *IOL*

This study, among other things, seeks to determine what was their intention behind using opinion pieces that they used on South Africa's participation in the UNSC between 2019 and 2020.In an attempt to answer this and other related questions three media houses that wrote the most opinion pieces were identified and these are *Daily Maverick,* which had a total of twelve, followed by the *Mail and Guardian* which published four. Both the *IOL* and *News24* published three opinion pieces each.

The publications that published the most opinion pieces were approached for an interview which are the *Daily Maverick, Mail and Guardian, News24* and *IOL*. None of the contacted two individuals from the *Mail and Guardian* was interested in taking part in the study. Three respondents from the *Daily Maverick, News24* and *IOL* were interviewed. Since two of the three respondents preferred to remain anonymous all the three are not called by their names, throughout the study. This is meant to protect the identity of those who don't want their name to be mentioned.

Table 25

Publications	**Opinion Pieces**
Daily Maverick	12
Mail and Guardian	4
IOL	3
News24	3

All the three respondents said they either approached writers to write opinion pieces about South Africa's participation in the UNSC for their publications and in some cases the writers would approach them.

> It's usually a mix of the two and this goes for almost every topic - writers either approach us or we approach them. If it is a hot button topic, we will often look for experts or know of experts who we can ask to write for us. Conversely, experts with something to say on any topic will often ask us if they can send in their opinion for consideration. Newsrooms are staffed by journalists who know a bit about everything, except for beat reporters, who will specialise, hence we will outsource specific topics to people who have studied and have an intimate knowledge of the topic at hand. (Respondent 3, 2022 March 05)

Respondent 2 (2022, March 5) says they also used a similar approach to that which is used by Respondent 3. In addition, Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 said that financial constraints have made their publications not to be able to pay writers. This may have played a role in preventing their publications to publish more opinion pieces about South Africa's participation in the UNSC.

> The shortage of resources was a constraint as we used to have a sizable budget to pay for opinion pieces, and we also had a stringer at the UN in New York, but just prior to SA's tenure on the UNSC, we had to notify all contributors and stringers that we were no longer able to pay for their articles, and hence most were unable to write for us anymore. (Respondent 3, 2022 March 5)

On whether the time was a factor in publishing opinion pieces about South Africa's participation Respondent 1 (2022, March 5) said it depended on whether there was something relevant at the time. This means that there had to be something that they felt was worth to write about. Often media houses tend to look at the relevance of a topic before publishing an opinion piece. The responses of Respondent 2 and Respondent 3 were also similar to Respondent 1.

All the three respondents did acknowledge that opinion pieces are by nature not objective because they represent the views of a writer. But they submit that opinion pieces published by their respective online publications about SA's participation in the UNSC were fair.

> By definition, an opinion piece is not meant to be objective; it is supposed to be one person's or one organisation's viewpoint. such pieces should not, of course, be filled with random comments, wild conjectures, or personal attacks. (Respondent 1, 2022 March 5)

> Journalism's objective is for fairness, while objectivity is subjective to whoever's opinion is being weighed up. I think our opinion pieces have been fair as it weighed up the context and history of the topic as well as looking at reasons as to why African countries and SA's participation merits greater inclusion. (Respondent 2, 2022 March 5)

> I would say that the op-eds did tend to be fair and objective as usually they were sent to me to consider for publication as the Group Foreign Editor, and I always tried to ensure that the op-eds we published had balance, and on controversial issues that we gave equal space to opposing views. (Respondent 3, 2022 March 5)

The fact that all the three respondents argue that the opinion pieces that were published by their respective publications were fair does not necessarily mean they were balanced. It just simply means they were properly argued, and that evidence was provided in the argument. However, the assessment of the frame sponsors that were used in the articles suggests that the governing elites and international frame sponsors made almost two-thirds of the sources that were used. Conversely, the NGOs and opposition party constituted just less than five of one hundred and five frame sponsors that were identified. In that regard, it is difficult to argue in favour of the view that suggests that the opinion pieces were balanced, while critical domestic voices such as the NGOs and opposition parties were not properly represented.

The frame analysis of the eighty-two identified articles suggests that they were largely sympathetic towards the administration of President Cyril Ramaphosa. This was boosted by the dominance of the governing elite frame sponsors, which were almost half of all the frame sponsors that were identified and were often quoted talking about the country's priorities in the UNSC. The international frame sponsors, who were the second most used after governing elites frame sponsors, were largely sympathetic to the government. In essence, most of the identified frame sponsors, apart from one opposition frame sponsor and one international frame sponsor, were largely sympathetic towards South Africa and its priorities to the UNSC.

20. Summary

The main objective of this study was to explore the major themes that emerged in the South African media reporting about the country's participation in the UNSC and the frame sponsors used. The identified themes were compared with the country's foreign policy priorities to the UNSC, which are outlined in section six of this study, to assess whether they were compatible.

The findings indicate that the media reporting reflected the country's foreign policy priorities to such an extent that four of the five major themes that were identified, which are peace and security, African agenda, multilateralism and UNSC reforms, were part of South Africa's priorities going to the UNSC.

Table 26

Themes	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Neutral**
Peace and Security	48	4	11
African Agenda	11	0	13
Multilateralism	9	0	7
UNSC Reforms	5	0	2
Human Rights (Not part of SA Priorities)	3	2	8
Total	**76**	**6**	**41**

As can be seen in table 26, above most of the themes were largely positive on South Africa's priorities to the UNSC. They were mainly reflecting the government priorities to the UNSC. What also transpired is that the negative themes that were identified, were not countering the SA's priorities to the UNSC. They were reflecting on different matters that happened to be classified under peace and security and human rights themes, as can be seen in the extracts below from an opinion piece that was criticising South Africa's position on the Iran crisis:

> On January 3 the United States of America (US) launched a so-called 'pre-emptive' missile attack in Iraq, killing seven persons. Among the fatalities were the head of Iran's elite Quds Force,

> General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi commander, Abu Mahdi al Muhandis, both of whom were highly revered for neutralising the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and bringing stability to the West Asian region.
>
> While acknowledging that President Ramaphosa did convey condolences and condemn the attack a week later, the South African government's initial response was neutral; neither condemning the attack nor offering condolences to the mourning nations. The desperate effort to display our diplomatic prowess as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. (Fourie, 2020 January 13)

The above extract brings us to the issue of trends in the international news coverage. In the literature review of this study, it transpired that the domestic media tend to be less interested in international news unless if there are conflict frames **(**Weaver & Wilhoit 1981; Wilhoit & Weaver 1983). The above opinion piece with conflict frame suggest that no matter how hard South Africa may try to tread careful to avoid negative media coverage, but the media will always find one or two stories with conflict frame and publish them. Furthermore, there was only one news article by the international news agency that was used. In that regard we can argue that the external media influence was limited, but it cannot be ruled out completely because journalists and editors do read news articles and opinion pieces by international news agency. In that regard if there was influence of the international news agencies it was indirect and subtle.

In terms of the frame sponsors out of one hundred and ten frame sponsors that were identified, fifty-six were governing elites frame sponsors, while the international frame sponsors were thirty-five. The expert frame sponsors were nine, while the NGOs and opposition were only four. Most frame sponsors that were used can be classified as elites on the basis that they are made up of individuals representing institutions or countries. There were no frame sponsors of ordinary people with no affiliation to any institution or organisation Several studies have shown that the media tend to use elites such as experts and government officials rather than ordinary people (Campbell, 2004). One of the contributing factors is that governing elites have the resources to send press statements and to call media briefings. Furthermore, most governments have dedicated spokespersons, who are often contacted and used by the media as frame sponsors. Nevertheless, this study suggests that the media in future should consider increasing non-government sources such as NGOs and experts when it comes to articles about South Africa's participation in international organisations such as the UNSC.

Preliminary assessment of previous articles on South Africa's participation in the UNSC during the first and second term shows that there was a substantial number of articles that were critical of South Africa's

voting pattern when it voted against a resolution condemning human rights violations in Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Syria. The influence of domestic issues cannot be ruled out. There was substantial negative reporting on grand scale corruption, which became known as the state capture that was linked to former President Jacob Zuma (Alence & Pitcher, 2019). During the country's third term in the UNSC under President Cyril Ramaphosa there was a shift from a largely negative tone towards the government on human rights matters, during the Zuma years, to a sympathetic one as can be seen in the extracts from the opinion pieces by Mbete and du Toit below published by The Conversation and The Daily Maverick, respectively:

> South Africa's re-election to the Security Council under President Cyril Ramaphosa raised hopes of a return to the foreign policy of President Nelson Mandela and a stronger commitment to human rights. (Mbete, 2019 July 4b)

> Saying that a council seat provides an excellent platform to show South Africa's commitment to good governance and human rights is not just a matter of lofty principle. It is a practical necessity that should underpin Pretoria's economic diplomacy strategy and President Cyril Ramaphosa's daunting task of rescuing the economy from the disastrous effects of the Zuma presidency. A seat on the Security Council comes at just the right time to resuscitate South Africa's global brand. (Du Plessis 2019 April 9)

It can thus be argued that the media houses followed the government agenda on matters pertaining human right issues rather than setting their own, as they did when reporting on the Zuma administration. This can be attributed to the fact that there was no serious incident of contestation between South Africa's priorities to the UNSC and the country's human right pillar of its foreign policy. Another thing that this study seeks to do is to ascertain whether there was any prior agenda by the media in deciding on opinion pieces that they published on South Africa's third term in the UNSC.

Interviews were conducted with three respondents from different online publications that are part of this study. There was an acknowledgement from the three respondents that the opinion pieces they published were fair. However, the major themes and frame sponsors that were identified suggest that there was an overreliance on government sources. The identified themes also confirm the trends in the media that ordinary people are not often used as frame sponsors. Often writers would rather rely on official sources who are easily accessible and often speak with authority on the subject. In this respect the media reporting

can be regarded as passive. This appears to confirm a more sympathetic approach to domestic politics in which the media aligned themselves with the government agenda.

Given the antagonistic reporting on the South Africa's performance at the UNSC seen in the Zuma period, the reliance on government sources can be seen as a victory for the government's public diplomacy. Successful public diplomacy relies on the media to share information and to pursue their foreign policy objectives (Nye, 2010). However, the fact that they were fewer than five domestic voices that were not directly aligned to the government that were identified in the articles means that there was lack of balance in the usage of sources or frame sponsors.

Several studies have shown that there is an overreliance on international news agencies in the coverage of international news (Li, 1990). The South African media is no exception. As the interviews suggested, financial constraints are one of these reasons. In most cases, the publications that use international news agencies credit them by keeping their names on articles. The frame analysis conducted in all eighty-two articles shows that there was only one article that was written by an of the international news agencies, which was AFP. It was published by the Mail and Guardian. The article was about South Africa's failure to co-operate with the office of the UN's International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals in the arrest of a suspect in the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Mail and Guardian, 2019 July 18). The fact that there was only one article by an international news agency, out of eighty-two articles that were identified, may have something to do with the fact that the media had easy access to sources of information on South Africa's participation in the UNSC, as has been shown in the frame sponsor analysis. This therefore means that there was very little direct external media influence in the framing of the articles about South Africa's participation in the UNSC. However, journalists and editors do read articles by the international media. In some instances, this they may indirectly influence the framing of their articles but that is the subject for another research. The fact that there was only one article extracted from the international news agency suggests that in the case where the domestic entity such as the South African government is participating in important international organisation like the UNSC, the media is less likely to rely on international news agencies as sources of information, compared to other areas of international news. Part of the reason for that is that there is always easy access to sources on the subject which would be the government representatives, experts and opposition parties. Therefore, issues about South Africa's performance in the UNSC should be considered a separate category of international news in that it operates in different way to other forms of international news that does not directly involve a domestic entity.

Furthermore, the findings of the study show that there were fewer articles on South Africa's participation in the UNSC in five of the seven online publications that are part of this study, in comparison to the two, which are the *SABC* and the *Daily Maverick*. Various reasons can be attributed to this, such as a lack of financial resources. There was acknowledgement from Respondent 2 and Respondent 3 (2022 March 5) during interviews that they would have liked to publish more opinion pieces on South Africa's participation in the UNSC but could not because they could not afford to pay writers. Conversely, the *SABC* is a public media and is required by law to play a developmental role (*SABC*.n.d.) and it also has a dedicated correspondent in New York at UN headquarters. In that regard, the *SABC* may have felt that the coverage of South Africa's participation in the UNSC was an important part of its mandate. The *Daily Maverick*, unlike the commercial media that tend to heavily rely on advertising revenue, relies on grant funding from various organisations through its Inkululeko Non-Profit Company on top of advertising revenue. On top of that, it has a working relationship with the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) to use articles by its writers (Daily Maverick, n.d.). The above-mentioned issues played a role in enabling the SABC and the Daily Maverick to publish more articles about South Africa's participation in the UNSC.

21. Conclusion

The main question that this study seeks to answer is what are the major themes that emerged during South Africa's participation in the UNSC between 2019 and 2020 in seven online publications, which are *Mail and Guardian, News24, SABC, Daily Maverick, IOL, EWN* and *eNCA.* The study was also looking at whether the identified themes were largely negative or positive towards the government's priorities in the UNSC.

A total of eighty-two articles were identified. Out of these, twenty-five were opinion pieces and sixty-six were news articles. From these eighty-two articles five major themes were identified, which are peace and security, African agenda, Multilateralism, the UNSC Reform and human rights. Most of the identified themes were largely positive to South Africa and its priorities to the UNSC.

This study seeks to also determine whether the media had any prior agenda in choosing opinion pieces that they published on South Africa's participation in the UNS'. Interviews were thus conducted with the representatives of three media houses that published most opinion pieces on the subject. All three respondents opined that the opinion pieces published by their respective online publications were fair. But the assessment of the identified themes and frame sponsors suggest that the media coverage was sympathetic towards the government. Many of the articles heavily relied on governing elite frame sponsors articulating the country's priorities to the UNSC and there was no heavy contestation among the frame sponsors pertaining the country's priorities to the UNSC in 2019 and 2020. What also transpired during the interviews is that financial constraints disallowed some publications to publish more opinion pieces on the country's participation in the UNSC. This means that they would have been more than eighty-two articles about the country's participation in the UNSC if it was not for financial constraints.

The preliminary assessment of the articles that were published during the first two terms of South Africa's participation in the UNSC suggests that there was a substantial number of articles that were critical on South Africa's decision to vote against human rights resolutions on Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Syria. However, during the third term of South Africa's participation in the UNSC, there were only two that were critical of South Africa's human rights standing, out of the eighty-two articles that were identified. These two articles were about South Africa's failure to hand in a suspect in the Rwandan genocide, but other than the two articles none of the identified articles, themes and frame sponsors questioned the

country's standing on matters pertaining to human rights. This is a major shift from the first two terms when South Africa's human rights standing was questioned due to several articles that were negatively framing it for voting against some of the human rights resolutions.

The sympathetic media coverage of South Africa's participation in the UNSC under President Cyril Ramaphosa cannot be divorced from the domestic coverage. In 2018 when Ramaphosa took over the Presidency he was portrayed by the media as a breath of fresh air after the Jacob Zuma administration, which was associated with grand-scale corruption at the domestic level and of acting inconsistent with the country's human rights foreign policy pillar, during the country's second term in the UNSC, at the international level (Alence & Pitcher, 2019). What may have also added to the media's sympathetic tone in the coverage of the country's participation in the UNSC is the fact that Ramaphosa and his then International Relations and Cooperation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu gave an assurance that the country under his leadership was going to be guided by the human rights pillar of its foreign policy in its engagement with the international community (*The Conversation* 2019, February 18; ISS 2018 November 23; Sisulu, 2019). The media by accepting that this was going to be the case and by not providing an overall assessment on whether South Africa was guided by the human rights pillar of its foreign pillars in its engagement in the UNSC also suggest a sympathetic attitude to the new presidency.

Just like any other study, this study has limitations. Online search has some limitations and as a result, there are two articles that were published by *News24* were only showing the headline and were thus not used as part of this study. The interviews with media houses representatives were limited to five written questions and representatives of the *Mail and Guardian* were not interested in participating in the study. Furthermore, the study is limited to how the media reported on South Africa's participation in the UNSC. Future studies will have to also consider studying whether the media did influence society in its reporting on the subject.

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