

FAIRY-GODMOTHER, HEGEMON OR PARTNER?

In Search of a South African Foreign Policy

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IN SEARCH OF A SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Hussein Solomon

Evans and Newnham defines foreign policy as the "... *activity whereby state actors act, react and interact.*"¹ Since 1994, various analysts have commented that South Africa lacked a foreign policy; rather, that its foreign relations was characterised by ambiguity and incoherence. Was this really so? Did Pretoria's foreign relations really lack the necessary orientation and strategic purpose to qualify as foreign policy? If this is so, what accounts for South Africa's lack of coherence? On the other hand, if this was not so, how does one account for Pretoria's continued relations with states such as Libya, Cuba, Nigeria and Indonesia, given this country's much vaunted human rights stance? How does one also account for South Africa's rapid about face on the question of the 'Two Chinas' when it switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing?

In an effort to come to terms with these questions, the Human Security Project of the Institute for

Security Studies hosted a workshop entitled **In Search of a South African Foreign Policy**. With the exception of the article by Professor David Black and Dr Larry Swatuk, all other articles in this monograph emanate from papers delivered at this workshop.

In the first article, Roland Henwood attempts to demystify South African foreign policy by identifying the underlying principles of this policy. In attempting to reconcile these principles with the reality, he illustrates some of the fundamental problems facing South African foreign policy-makers.

In a critical assessment of South Africa's foreign policy establishment, Greg Mills stresses the need for foreign policy-makers to define and prioritise objectives and to take cognisance of both their own limitations and the nature of the world outside. Obstacles impeding the development of a coherent foreign policy are also identified.

In their penetrating examination of South Africa's relations with the African continent, David Black and Larry Swatuk argue that these relations are characterised both by continuity and change. They explore these relations within three expanding concentric circles: the 'new' South Africa itself, the Southern African region and sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. In their analysis, they make two important points. Firstly, the nature of South Africa's engagement with the region will also be dependent on the success Pretoria achieves in addressing the historical injustice and grossly inequitable life chances which are the legacies of the apartheid era. Secondly, our notion of foreign relations needs to be expanded to include non-state actors such as South African corporations.

Western states and the media often portray South Africa as the natural leader of Africa. This leadership is also often expressed by Western academics in middle power terms. In his article, Hussein Solomon argues that, given the ambiguities of middle power leadership both as an academic construct and in practice, and because of the real fears among the country's neighbours, it is imperative that middle power leadership as a foreign policy orientation be eschewed in favour of what could be termed 'co-operative leadership'.

Finally, in her provocative response to the current debate on South African foreign policy, Marie Muller provides critical comment and some insightful suggestions regarding further areas for investigation and research. While her focus is on Pretoria's regional policy, this is contextualised within 'general' South African foreign policy.

While this monograph is concerned with South African foreign policy in general, it unashamedly focuses on Pretoria's relations with Africa, and Southern Africa in particular. The reason for this focus is not hard to find. Marie Muller succinctly notes in her article that, "*... relations with one's neighbours are usually most immediate as these will have a direct effect on how a country is otherwise able to function in the international community.*"

Midrand
May 1997

ENDNOTES

1. G Evans and J Newnham, **The Dictionary of World Politics: A Reference Guide to Concepts, Ideas and Institutions**, Harvester-Wheatsheaf, New York, 1992, p. 100.

SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY: PRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS

Roland Henwood

INTRODUCTION

Negative comments on South Africa's foreign policy abound. These include comments referring to the non-existence of a foreign policy, or to foreign policy as an *ad hoc* process, devoid of any specific direction or principles. It is therefore necessary to establish the underlying principles and the contents of the foreign policy of South Africa, before endeavouring to identify or analyse any possible problems. The main purpose of this analysis will not be to list all possible or imaginable problems, but rather to focus on some of the more salient problems already visible in the foreign policy process of South Africa.

No official document on Pretoria's foreign policy exists as yet. The declared foreign policy of South Africa, however, can be determined by analysing the speeches and actions of relevant politicians and officials. The most important sources of information in this regard are the speeches of the Minister and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, especially those in Parliament. Other sources include research papers on foreign policy, as well as the policy documents of political parties and foreign policy discussion documents of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Before explaining the foreign policy of the present Government, it is important to briefly describe the development of the foreign policy of South Africa under the previous Government. This will emphasise some of the important historical and political factors that underlie the foreign policy of South Africa.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF SOUTH AFRICA

The development of South Africa's foreign policy can be divided into two phases. The first phase spans the years of National Party rule (1948-1994) and the second, the phase of the African National Congress (ANC) led Government (since April 1994). This phase includes the transition period of 1990-1994 as it formed the foundation of post-1994 foreign policy. The foreign policy that was implemented before April 1994 by the National Party Government will not be dealt with in its entirety, but the emphasis will be on the more salient features of National Party foreign policy.

SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY BEFORE APRIL 1994

According to Olivier,¹ South Africa's foreign policy up to 1977 can be classified as consisting of a number of separate foreign policies and lines of conduct. The main characteristics of South Africa's foreign policy were:²

- non-isolationist, anti-sanctions and pro-western aimed at enhanced co-operation with non-communist states and international organisations; with emphasis on international trade and commerce because it was a strong instrument to fight isolation and to strengthen the position of South Africa;
- peaceful co-existence and regional co-operation based on geographical realities, the need to foster friendly relations with neighbouring states, and South Africa as part of the African continent (with a permanent white population); and
- external justification to enhance South Africa's image abroad and the maintenance of

internal sovereignty by refraining from interference in the internal affairs of other states (based on Article 2(7) of the **United Nations Charter**).

The most important foreign policy problems that faced South Africa in this era were:

- issues of South West Africa (later to become the independent state of Namibia) and of Rhodesia (later to become the independent state of Zimbabwe);
- security concerns and the means to safeguard South Africa from external attacks; and
- relations with the UN which were characterised by tension and hostility.

The foreign policy of South Africa up to 1977 can be described as reactionary and tentative. It is also important to keep in mind the influence of the internal policies (apartheid policies) on the foreign policy of South Africa.³

The ensuing period in South Africa's foreign policy, from 1978 to 1989, was dominated by the leadership of Prime Minister and later State President P W Botha. Foreign policy in this period was based on the perception of a 'total onslaught' against South Africa, as well as the 'total national strategy' of South Africa,⁴ aimed at defeating the total onslaught against South Africa.⁵

The foreign policy of South Africa during this period was shaped by increased hostility against South Africa. South Africa's response was an increased reliance on 'strong arm tactics' against any perceived enemy or threat. The result was an escalation in the use of violence as a means of addressing problems in the regional context (the infamous destabilisation policy). This came to an end in 1989 when F W de Klerk succeeded P W Botha as State President.

The events that took place in South Africa since February 1990 saw remarkable changes, not only in South Africa itself, but also in the foreign policy of South Africa. Apart from this, changes such as the acceptance of South Africa back into the community of states, necessitated a review and adaptation of the foreign policy of South Africa. The country was now in need of a foreign policy suited to a new world, not only as a result of internal changes, but also as a result of global changes brought about by the end of the Cold War. The new foreign policy had to provide for increasing regionalisation in world politics and the increasing importance of multilateralism in world affairs. This foreign policy was also the foreign policy of South Africa during its transition from apartheid to democracy after April 1994. This transitional foreign policy was based on two pillars:⁶

- the quest for a political solution to the internal problems of South Africa that would satisfy the international community and ensure their support; and
- the revitalisation of the South African economy.

Foreign policy was at this stage influenced by factors such as the need to interact with the rest of the world, economic and development needs, and the limitations inherent in South Africa's position as a (small) middle-ranking country.⁷

New priorities emerged in terms of South Africa's foreign policy. The first priority was relations with Africa, and especially Southern Africa. The second priority was the expansion and consolidation of South Africa's position in other regions of the world, such as the Middle East, Far East, South East Asia and Eastern Europe. The third priority was to expand South Africa's

relations with the UN and other intergovernment multilateral organisations. It was also important to enhance the image of South Africa as it emerged from the isolation of the past.⁸

The period 1989 to April 1994 saw the review and redirection of South Africa's foreign policy to underpin the process of internal political reform and the emergence of South Africa into world politics as a 'normal' member of the international community. This latter phase in the development of South Africa's foreign policy formed the foundation of the foreign policy of the first democratically elected Government of South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY AFTER APRIL 1994

The development of South Africa's foreign policy after April 1994 can be described as the foreign policy of the Government of National Unity (GNU) and as that of the ANC after the withdrawal of the NP from the GNU. This has created the situation where the foreign policy of South Africa is of necessity even more influenced by the perceptions and objectives of the ANC,⁹ despite the continued participation of the Inkatha Freedom Party in the GNU. The analysis of the nature and development of the foreign policy of South Africa after 1994 turns on three aspects:

- declarations of intent, especially as communicated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs;
- the influence of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) on foreign policy; and
- important developments in foreign policy since April 1994.

The declared foreign policy of South Africa, as explained by Foreign Affairs Minister Alfred Nzo to Parliament in May 1994, was aimed at a commitment to:¹⁰

- human rights, specifically the political, economic, social and environmental circumstances conducive to these;
- the promotion of freedom and democracy throughout the world;
- the principles of justice and international law in the conduct of relations between nations;
- international peace and internationally agreed mechanisms for the resolution of conflict;
- the interests of Africa in global affairs; and
- expanded regional and international economic co-operation in an interdependent world.

In August 1994, Mr Nzo gave the following guidelines regarding South Africa's foreign policy:¹¹

- that the conduct of South Africa's international relations should be transparent and take place in close consultation with Parliament;
- the national interests of South Africa will always dictate its policies;
- that South Africa must expand its participation in regional, continental and global multilateral organisations;

- that the security and the quality of life of South Africans, as well as justice and the international rule of law, peace, economic stability and regional co-operation were some of the fundamental principles underlying the foreign policy of South Africa; and
- that South Africa could not become involved in all laudable initiatives and issues in international politics, because of a lack of adequate resources.

Priorities that were already decided on, as far as foreign policy was concerned, were the following:¹²

- peaceful co-existence and the promotion of economic development in Southern Africa;
- constructive interaction with Africa, specifically to address the challenges of the next decade and to find solutions to conflict;
- interaction in multilateral organisations;
- improved relations with the G7 nations, as well as with South Africa's major trading partners; and
- the continuation of traditional friendships and the promotion of new partnerships.

Mr Nzo also focused on important problems that had to be provided for in the foreign policy of South Africa. These included:¹³

- bloc-formation in international politics and the possible exclusion or denial of South African participation in specific 'blocs';
- the risks of protectionism, the undermining of the international trade system, the impact of refugees and mass migration and the threat that these issues posed for job creation;
- the proliferation of arms and weapons of mass destruction; and
- disease, drought and the occurrence of other natural disasters and the impact of these issues on economic and social development.

The analysis of the principles and objectives of the foreign policy of the GNU leads to the conclusion that it reflects the foreign policy of any 'normal' state. It was also noticeable that these principles were contained in the basic foreign policy aims of most states, and that it implied an emphasis on the national and security interests of the own state as fundamental policy principles. The focus on regional co-operation and peaceful co-existence was also a normal part of the foreign policy of any state. A second conclusion regarding the development of South Africa's foreign policy since April 1994, was the emphasis on democracy, justice and human rights, which brought a new dimension to the declared foreign policy, namely that of morality. This posed important challenges for South Africa as it could lead to conflict between perceived interests and the 'right' decision, and had implications for the allocation of resources for essential foreign policy goals (national interests) as opposed to morally justifiable objectives that might, in the long run, negatively influence the material position of the own state.

The foreign policy of South Africa under the GNU had also been influenced by the acceptance of the RDP as an internal policy framework. The **RDP White Paper** included the following

statements that were relevant to the foreign policy of South Africa:¹⁴

- It is impossible to rebuild the economy of South Africa in isolation from its Southern African neighbours. It would also be dangerous for South Africa to dominate its neighbours, as it would restrict their growth, reduce their potential as markets which will worsen their unemployment and lead to increased migration to South Africa. It is therefore important for South Africa to participate in regional development through multilateral forums such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).
- It is important for South Africa to co-operate with its neighbours to develop an effective growth and development strategy for Southern Africa, in order to overcome the negative results of World Bank and International Monetary Fund programmes which had been forced on the region.
- The integration of foreign policy and trade policy as part of a broader strategy to strengthen South-South relations is important, as well as the democratisation of international institutions, thereby ensuring better prospects for developing countries.

The provisions of the RDP as a policy framework for South Africa have important consequences for South Africa's foreign policy. It clearly indicates the interrelationship between the foreign and economic policies of South Africa. It also underlines the interdependency that exists between South Africa and its neighbours, also in terms of internal policy objectives. Lastly, it identifies the importance of co-operation with South Africa, as a leading economic roleplayer, as well as co-operation between states in the southern hemisphere to satisfy their economic and foreign policy needs and objectives.

With a description of the principles and objectives in mind, developments in the foreign policy of South Africa since 1994 need to be analysed. This will serve as a basis to identify some of the problems of South Africa's foreign policy by analysing the following:

- the constitutional and institutional dimension of South Africa's foreign policy; and
- the formulation and implementation of the foreign policy of South Africa.

The constitutional and institutional dimension of South Africa's foreign policy

The constitutional and institutional changes that took place in South Africa since 1994 provided for important changes in the foreign policy formulation and implementation processes. These aspects need to be explained to determine their influence on the foreign policy process in South Africa.

The constitutional changes that took place in South Africa since 1994 included the replacement of the **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa**, Act 110 of 1983, with the transitional constitution, (**Constitution of the Republic of South Africa**, Act 200 of 1993) and the subsequent acceptance of a 'final' constitution, the **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996**. These constitutional changes have formed part of the process to democratise South Africa in all respects, including the foreign policy South Africa follows or would like to implement. The Constitution does not include any specific foreign policy guidelines, but provides a framework for procedural matters and policy decisions. The Constitution also provides a framework of values that ought to be present in the declared and implemented foreign policy of

South Africa. In order to evaluate the influence of constitutional changes on the foreign policy of South Africa, the sections in the Constitution that have a bearing on the foreign policy process need to be briefly explained and linked to the institutional changes that resulted from the constitutional changes.

The transitional Constitution (Act 200 of 1993) provided for the President (in consultation with the Executive Deputy-Presidents) to exercise important powers relating to the foreign policy of South Africa. These include:¹⁵

- the appointment, accreditation and reception of ambassadors and foreign representatives;
- the negotiation and signing of international agreements (parliamentary ratification was required before these agreements could have been implemented); and
- the development and implementation of the policies of the national Government.

The **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996** does not include the same provisions contained in the transitional Constitution, but also provides for matters related to foreign policy. The Constitution of 1996 provides for the President to:¹⁶

- receive and recognise foreign diplomatic and consular representatives and to appoint ambassadors, plenipotentiaries and diplomatic and consular representatives;

and for the national executive (including the President) to:

- negotiate and sign international agreements, but only requires parliamentary ratification in the case of agreements of a technical, administrative and executive nature. It is, however, a requirement that all international agreements be tabled in both houses of Parliament, even if ratification of a specific agreement is not required by the Constitution; and
- develop and implement national policy and to co-ordinate the functions of state departments and administrations.

This change from the more specific provisions introduced in the transitional Constitution of 1993 establishes a more independent position for the executive in the foreign policy process of South Africa. This, in the end, may limit the role of Parliament in the foreign policy process, although the role of Parliament in the policy process of South Africa has changed from that of the pre-1994 parliaments, when it served mainly as a rubber stamp of government foreign policy with very little input or influence on policy decisions. When the ANC assumed power, it envisaged a more active role for Parliament in the foreign policy sphere. The rules of Parliament were changed to give parliamentary portfolio committees a more direct and active role in the process of policy formulation.¹⁷ Although Parliament has undergone important and wide-ranging changes, the role of the legislature in the foreign policy formulation process seems to be very limited. The problem will be exacerbated by the fact that the Constitution seemingly strengthens the role of the executive at the cost of the legislature. Parliament may therefore find it very difficult or even impossible to be more than an *ex-post facto* roleplayer in matters of foreign affairs.¹⁸ This may result in limited participation and inputs in the process of foreign policy formulation as it institutionalises and entrenches the independent role of the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs. The nature of the foreign policy to be followed by South Africa will undoubtedly be influenced by this.

The conclusion that one can draw from this is that, in spite of important constitutional and institutional changes, the process of foreign policy formulation has not changed as much. This necessitates an analysis of the process of foreign policy formulation and implementation in South Africa.

FOREIGN POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The analysis of some of the decisions regarding the formulation and implementation of the foreign policy of South Africa is necessary in order to understand the problems of foreign policy formulation and implementation in South Africa. The policy issues that need to be explained include the comparison of declared policy principles and objectives, as explained above, with the policy decisions that have been taken, some of these quite controversial in the eyes of some stakeholders.

The process for foreign policy formulation has also undergone important changes. One of these changes was the release of a discussion document on foreign policy by the Department of Foreign Affairs towards the end of 1996. This was the first time in South Africa that such a foreign policy document was released for discussion and comment by interested parties.¹⁹ Although the document did not live up to the expectations that some had, it at least opened up the debate on foreign policy issues and gave those interested parties the opportunity to participate in forging a new approach to policy formulation. The end result and future of this approach to policy development are not clear. It may not lead to anything concrete, although it may be the beginning of a more inclusive approach to formulating foreign policy in South Africa. This exercise served the purpose of exposing the divergent views in South Africa on matters of foreign policy. The problem with general participation in the policy process is linked to the dominant role of the executive (as explained in the previous section).

Some of the problems identified in the discussion document also apply to the foreign policy decisions that have been taken since 1994. These include problems such as:

- the lack of a South African identity that is evident in foreign policy decisions;
- uncertainty over the values that apply / should apply in South Africa's foreign policy;
- the lack of clearly defined national interests;
- a dualism prevalent in the foreign policy of South Africa;
- the contradictions and ambiguity in foreign policy decisions and actions;
- a lack of policy co-ordination;
- the influence of personal and ideological preferences in policy decisions; and
- a lack of adequate resources for foreign policy purposes.

The existence of these problems will be better understood if analysed against the background of some of the more noteworthy foreign policy decisions that have been taken. Examples of this include South Africa's relations with states such as Cuba, Libya, Iran, Syria, the two Chinas and the effect of this on relations with other states, such as the United States. In order to understand the importance and effect of these policy decisions, a brief description of the relations between

South Africa and these 'problematic' states are provided. The reasons for the development of relations between South Africa and these states cannot be explained by referring to the declared foreign policy only.

South Africa and Cuba

South Africa's relations with Cuba seem to be contrary to the declared principles underlying the foreign policy of South Africa. The importance of these relations do not centre around material benefits or the influence of Cuba in global politics, but are important to South Africa for historical, symbolic and political reasons. Cuba supported the ANC during the liberation struggle and played an important role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). It is therefore important for the South African Government to show its gratitude to Cuba by developing closer ties, and at the same time to demonstrate its solidarity with the NAM. The opposition of the US to South Africa's relations with Cuba also serves to demonstrate the fact that the foreign policy of South Africa is no longer exclusively pro-western in orientation. Closer ties with Cuba thus also serve to indicate a break with the foreign policy of the previous Government.

South Africa and Libya

Relations with Libya can be explained by using the same arguments as those that apply in the case of ties with Cuba. An important additional reason is the position of Libya as part of the African continent. The South African Government supports the initiatives of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to lift the UN imposed sanctions on Libya and for the trial of the two Libyans accused in the Lockerbie air disaster to take place in a neutral country.²⁰ This serves to demonstrate both the solidarity of South Africa with the OAU and the importance of Africa in the foreign policy of South Africa. The position of South Africa with regard to ties with Libya also emphasises the fact that South Africa has broken with the pro-western policies of the past. In the case of Libya, even more importance can be given to this fact because more states are opposed to ties with Libya than to the relations of South Africa with Cuba.

In spite of the reasons given, the South African Government seems to be careful in the development of its relations with Libya. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that more governments are opposed to the Libyan Government. These include governments that are not as negative towards South Africa's ties to Cuba and include the major European trading partners of South Africa.²¹

South Africa and Iran

The reasons for the development of closer ties between South Africa and Iran are much the same as those that apply in the case of relations between South Africa and Cuba and Libya. An additional reason is the material benefit for South Africa in the form of oil purchases from Iran. It is believed that Iran supplies in as much as 65 per cent of South Africa's oil needs.²² South Africa stands to gain even more if Iranian oil is stored in South African oil storage facilities (dependent on the result of environmental impact studies).²³ The cultural and religious symbolism of ties with Iran is also important and again serves to illustrate the shift away from an exclusive pro-western (Christian?) orientation by the Government.

In reaction to criticism against Iranian President Akbar Hasjemi Rafsanjani's visit to South Africa in September 1996, President Mandela said that the enemies of the West are not necessarily also the enemies of South Africa. He stressed that South Africa wanted to develop good relations with all countries, including the superpowers, but not at the cost of the ties that existed

with good friends who supported the ANC against the apartheid regime when the superpowers supported the apartheid regime.²⁴

South Africa and Syria

South Africa's relations with Syria have never been important. This changed when the possibility of an arms deal with Syria became an issue. Arguments against the deal included the opposition of the US and Israel to such arms sales, because of the possible destabilising effect an inflow of advanced weaponry would have on the peace process under way in the Middle East. The US has accused the Syrian Government (with that of Libya and Iran) of supporting terrorism. Members of Congress in the US have also threatened to withdraw all development aid to South Africa if the sale of arms to Syria goes ahead.²⁵ The response of the South African Government was that it had the right to decide if weapons were to be sold to any customer that did not violate human rights, and that it would not be dictated to by anyone.²⁶ An important question raised in this regard concerned the refusal of permission to South African arms manufacturers to sell arms to Turkey. The sale of arms to the Turkish Government was prohibited on the grounds of its human rights record, as well as its aggression against a neighbouring state.²⁷ The South African Government explained its position on the marketing of weapons systems to Syria by describing it as a change in the previous government's pro-Israeli policies, as well as repeating its position that the enemies of the West were not necessarily the enemies of South Africa.²⁸ No decision has so far been taken on the marketing and sale of weapons systems to Syria.??? The South African Government, however, has refused the sale of arms to Iran, Libya and Iraq.²⁹

South Africa and the People's Republic of China

On 27 November 1996, President Mandela announced that South Africa would establish full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) towards the end of 1997.³⁰ This announcement was met with some surprise by South Africans as it meant that the diplomatic relations with Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC) would come to an end. In July 1996, President Mandela had stated that South Africa had no intention of severing its ties with the ROC.³¹ The diplomatic ties between South Africa and the ROC was seen to be very special, as it developed at a time when the previous Government had very few friends in world politics. The decision to establish full diplomatic relations with the PRC implied that the South African Government no longer recognised the ROC. The ROC supported the ANC in the run-up to the first democratic elections in 1994, made contributions to the RDP, had substantial investments in South Africa, had successfully democratised its political system and improved its human rights record. In terms of the declared foreign policy of South Africa, the ROC seemed to be ideally suited as a diplomatic partner for South Africa. However, the South African Government decided to develop diplomatic relations with the PRC instead. The new diplomatic partner contravenes all the principles underlying the foreign policy of South Africa. It is not democratic, currently has one of the worst human rights records in the world and has no significant investments in South Africa. The reasons for the decision to develop diplomatic relations in this instance can be found in the national interests of South Africa. The relations that South Africa had with the ROC was inconsistent with South Africa's role in international affairs. As a normal member of the community of states and as a potentially important role player in the UN, the NAM and OAU, it was no longer in the best interest of South Africa to maintain its strong relations with the ROC. The PRC also offered South Africa a stronger relationship with another permanent member of the UN Security Council, the government that will take control over Hong Kong (where South Africa has vested interests) on 1 July 1997, access to a market with immense potential and the possibility of more influence to South Africa in north-south relations.³²

The Principle of Bilateral Relations

The principles that form the framework for foreign policy formulation as explained by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (see the section on South Africa's foreign policy after 1994), are clearly not followed to the letter in the foreign policy of South Africa at this stage. How can Government explain the relations it forged with Libya or the People's Republic of China if the principles of democracy or human rights are fundamental to the foreign policy of South Africa? From the above description of South Africa's relations with these states the following serve as possible explanations.

The position of the South African Government is that bilateral relations must be approached within the framework of resolutions of the UN and other international initiatives. Bilateral relations are seen as a matter between South Africa and any other involved country. The fact that South Africa forges ties with another country does not imply express support for or agreement with the internal policies or practices of that government.³³ The foreign policy decisions of South Africa must be based on the national interests of South Africa and not on those of any other roleplayers.³⁴ Based on this point of departure, relations with these states are defended on the grounds of:

- the principle of universality: this implies that South Africa will develop ties with all states of the world that falls within the framework of its foreign policy principles (and national interests). The position of President Mandela is that the enemies of the west are not necessarily the enemies of South Africa;³⁵
- showing appreciation to governments that supported the ANC during the liberation struggle;³⁶
- South Africa will not be dictated to by anyone;³⁷ and
- South Africa will not avoid relations with states where violations of human rights may be possible, because South Africa follows accepted international practice in its relations with others.³⁸

This does not necessarily answer the criticism referred to at the beginning of this document, but explains the approach of the South African Government to its foreign policy and associated foreign policy problems.

CONCLUSION

The foreign policy of South Africa has undergone important changes, but also include important problems. This is the result of several factors. The recent transformation of South Africa to a democratic system of governance and the subsequent reintegration of South Africa into a much changed international community have resulted in the introduction of the conflicting demands of world politics into the foreign policy of South Africa. These will inevitably emphasise aspects such as incompatibilities, value differences and dualism in the foreign policy of South Africa. The fact that South Africa is nothing more than a (small-) medium roleplayer in world politics, from which much is expected, will accentuate this even more.

It is however also important for the South African Government to start evaluating the impact of its policy decisions on the long term prospects for South Africa. The danger of a foreign policy based on a lack of clear values and uncertainty or unwillingness to clearly define national

interests, is a directionless and ad hoc policy approach. This will cause decisions that need to be changed often and will inevitably lead to a perception of South Africa as being untrustworthy as an ally.

This does not imply that South Africa has a weak foreign policy, but rather that it may be time to refine the process of foreign policy formulation and implementation. A more cautious, stable and permanent approach to issues of foreign policy will result in more predictable foreign policy decisions and actions. This will be to the advantage of South Africa, because it will provide everyone associated with the country with a better idea of the interests of South Africa. This need not be at the expense of flexibility or creativity in the foreign policy of South Africa.

ENDNOTES

1. G C Olivier, **Suid-Afrika se Buitelandse Beleid**, Academica, Pretoria, 1977, pp. 210-211.
2. *Ibid.*
3. For a discussion of this relationship see R Henwood, *South Africa's Foreign Policy and International Practise – 1993 – An Analysis*, in **South African Yearbook of International Law**, 19, Verloren van Themaat Centre for Public Law Studies, University of South Africa, 1993/94, pp. 249-262.
4. G Mills and S Baynham, *South African Foreign Policy, 1945-1990*, in G Mills (ed.), **From Pariah to Participant**, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, 1994, pp. 18-33.
5. D Sole, *South African Foreign Policy Assumptions and Objectives from Hertzog to De Klerk*, **South African Journal of International Affairs**, 2(1), 1994, p. 104.
6. L H Evans, *South African Foreign Policy and the New World Order*, **ISSUP Bulletin**, 3/94, 1994, pp. 8-9.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.
9. For a detailed explanation of this see R Henwood, *op. cit.*, p. 301;
10. Republic of South Africa (RSA), **Debates of Parliament** (National Assembly), 27 May 1994, col. 216.
11. RSA, **Debates of Parliament** (National Assembly), 8 August 1995, cols. 914-916.
12. *Ibid.*, col. 916.
13. *Ibid.*, col. 917.
14. RSA, **RDP White Paper**, Government Printer, Pretoria, September 1994, pp. 10, 31-32.
15. RSA, **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa** (Act 200 of 1993), section 81(1)(f), (l); 82(a-e) and 231(2).

16. RSA, **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996**, section 84(g,h,i); 85(b,c); 231(1,2,3).
17. For a more detailed discussion of this see R Henwood, *South Africa's Foreign Policy and International Practice – 1994/95 – An Analysis*, in **South African Yearbook of International Law**, 20, Verloren van Themaat Centre for Public Law Studies, University of South Africa, 1995, pp. 271-274.
18. R Henwood, *South African Foreign Policy and International Practice – 1995/96 – An Analysis*, in **South African Yearbook of International Law**, 21, Verloren van Themaat Centre for Public Law Studies, University of South Africa, 1996, pp. 247-249.
19. RSA, **South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document**, Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 1996.
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LEANING ALL OVER THE PLACE? THE NOT-SO-NEW SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Greg Mills

"Human rights will be the light that guides our foreign policy."

– ANC President Nelson Mandela, 1993₁

"We start from the premise that South Africa is committed to human rights. The problems we face in this regard is the issue of possibilities and limitations on South Africa in the real world. How do we get human rights enforced and implemented in the international environment? There must be a possible [sic] contradiction between South-South co-operation and the values which we may want to project. There has to be interaction between theory and practice."

– Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad, September 1996₂

INTRODUCTION

In the continuously shifting scene of international relations, foreign policy does not rely so much on direction as an orientation or 'leaning'. In South Africa's case, its foreign relations could be said to be lacking the necessary broad orientation and strategic purpose.³ There is a danger that South Africa may develop a self-image as a benign foreign policy godmother. It has perceived itself to have a long-list of guiding principles, including a symbol of democracy and human rights; an even-handed friend of all, as epitomised by the underlying spirit of 'universality'; and an international go-between and mediator. Unless South Africa is to end up with an insolvent foreign policy, it will have to define and prioritise its objectives and take cognisance both of its own limitations and the nature of the world outside. The wide-ranging variety of self-appointed roles is one of the key problems in identifying South Africa's foreign policy orientation.

In this, South Africa appears to be in a dilemma over some of the fundamental issues which underscore its guiding principles: it is caught between being part of Africa, yet being part of the West in Africa. Now that it does have an opportunity to play an expanded role in Africa and the region, it is in a quandary over whether or not regional development and involvement will detract from domestic imperatives. It is trapped between a desire to assist the region, given that Southern Africa's problems have domestic consequences, and not to appear to dominate the region even though it does. Hence, it is apparently reluctant to take the policy lead in Southern Africa, and hesitant to become involved, for example, in African peace support operations.

The African National Congress (ANC) spent decades appealing to the world's conscience to help bring about an end to the morally repugnant system of apartheid. Now in power, they appear to be incapable of making any moral judgements about who they should deal with and who they should not – instead preferring to treat all equally. From their background, it would be expected that discriminating against countries that support terrorism is a pretty easy call, and terrorist groups an even easier one. Although morality is a contested principle of foreign relations, South Africa, and President Mandela in particular, have overtly attempted to seized the moral high ground, and it is this facet beyond all else which gives the country such international stature.

But critics have argued that South Africa has essentially a 'twin-track' foreign policy: that, on the one hand, it pursues the national interest above all else, embracing human rights. Hence the opening of relations with Beijing in preference to Taiwan and the close ties with Indonesia, Cuba and Libya. Yet, on the other hand, perhaps mindful of the success of its own recent transition, Pretoria outwardly displays concern over human rights and democratisation elsewhere, which since the 1994 elections has notably manifested itself in stricter control over the export of South African manufactured arms, but not an end to arms sales. Many countries would of course agree with this stance (if they cared about democracy), though – as with President Mandela's blast at Nigeria at the 1995 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Auckland – few would express such sentiments. To confuse the issue even further, since 1994 Pretoria would appear to have attempted to redress the foreign policy imbalances of the apartheid era (and the National Party) by a shift towards the opposite direction without going all the way. Hence, its policy stance towards the Middle East has seemingly shifted from being pro-Israeli to pro-Arab, and its policy towards the US and Cuba has also moved in the opposite direction.

The public furore in January 1997 over proposed South African arms sales to Syria once more raised fundamental questions about the nature of Pretoria's foreign policy, which this article seeks to address, notably:

- What is the overriding objective of South Africa's foreign policy?
- What strategies should be adopted to achieve this objective?
- What attributes are required to ensure that the correct strategies are adopted and followed?

ASSESSING THE PAST

It is necessary to recall where South Africa has come from in the foreign domain. In 1990, the South African Government was extremely isolated, with only 30 overseas representations. At that time, the ANC's 28 diplomatic offices abroad were focused on increasing that isolation. Today, South Africa has relations with all but 22 (including North Korea, Iraq, Somalia, Liberia, Haiti and Sierra Leone) of the 170 or so countries and institutions holding diplomatic status; with 108 residential diplomatic accreditations (75 embassies/high commissions) abroad (as opposed to 167 in South Africa, of which 96 are embassies/consulates) and 44 non-residential accreditations. To give a comparison of similar size powers, Argentina has 80 embassies, 52 consulates and five multilateral missions; and Chile, 66 embassies and eight multilateral missions.⁴

The development of new diplomatic and international relations has thus involved bringing in different parties with markedly opposing styles and contrasting ideological baggage. As a result, Pretoria, not surprisingly, has so far followed a foreign policy underscored by the principle of 'universality' – essentially, the opening of diplomatic doors to any state that would care to do so. Foreign policy has thus become a highly personalised affair, with President Mandela's international superstar status overshadowing all else. His deputy and heir-apparent, Thabo Mbeki, also takes a keen interest, echoing his earlier, and pre-government role as head of the ANC's Department of International Relations. His active participation is facilitated by the comparative absence of high-profile leadership in the Foreign ministry. The Minister, Alfred Nzo, has long been the butt of public ridicule and rumoured to be on his way out.

Like other government departments, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has inevitably

been embroiled in a process of transition. The 'old' DFA comprised 1 917 staff. Following the election in 1994, 139 'overseas trained officials' (including ANC cadres) as well as 415 former TBVC (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) 'homeland' diplomats joined the DFA. Prior to 30 April 1996, 259 redundancy packages were approved, and from July 1996 to date, 112 applications for severance packages were received. Of the eighty ambassadors currently abroad, twenty are political appointees, 42 are from 'previously disadvantaged' communities, and ten are women. Such an inevitably turbulent process could not have been improved by the temporary nature of leadership in the DFA. The appointment of its Director-General, Rusty Evans, expires at the end of September 1997, and rumours are rife about his possible replacement. This has perhaps not been the most healthy environment in which to establish foreign policy priorities.⁵

It is also important to point out that, while there have been definite problems with foreign policy orientation overall since 1994, there have also been a number of successes which have not necessarily stolen the limelight. South Africa's constructive role in negotiating consensus around an indefinite extension of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** at the NPT Review and Extension Conference in May 1995, was for the most part warmly received by the international community. The presidential and DFA roles in crisis management in both Lesotho and Mozambique in 1994 and subsequently in Lesotho and Swaziland have also received justifiable warm praise. The improvement in relations with Zimbabwe, which threatened to flounder on tariff discrepancies between the two, is another, and Pretoria's engagement with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in attempting to encourage regional trade and development can also be seen as a positive step in the right direction.

ESTABLISHING FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

The DFA has attempted to redress a perceived lack of policy consistency and co-ordination through the formulation of the **South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document** – a kind of draft white paper – released in June 1996. Once comments on this paper have been absorbed, a foreign policy framework will be formulated based, in the words of Minister Nzo, "*on national consensus*."⁶ Whether such a consensus is achievable or even desirable is moot. Not only is this a difficult, almost impossible task, but it could take foreign policy issues out of the hands of the professionals, thereby diffusing the focus from key priorities.

Undoubtedly, it is desirable for South Africa's foreign policy experts to establish a general understanding of the values on which decisions and standpoints are premised. It is also important to establish a clear chain of command, throughout which there would be an acceptance of South Africa's role in the international community, and of the evolving nature of that community.

As it stands, however, the **Discussion Document** does not provide this lead. Its stated design is to assist the Government in the task of "*shaping, directing and executing South Africa's foreign policy*." Frankly put, however, the document can best be described as an ambitious, but misguided wish list for South African foreign policy which understates the importance of the international operating environment and South Africa's abilities and resources to work within that context – in other words, its capacity to act, which always has limitations. This is of critical importance. Foreign policy, by its nature, often has to be reactive – responding to unanticipated and often unwanted developments in the international setting. The state's aim should be to develop a systematic response in the biological rather than the mechanical sense – that it responds and reshapes according to the environment.

The **Discussion Document** identifies an all-inclusive list – variously described – of pillars, cornerstones, principles and priorities for South Africa's foreign policy, covering virtually everything from "*responsible global citizenry*" to "*the advancement of human rights and the promotion of democracy*" to support for "*the work of the UNHCR*" and to "*secure world-wide peace, promote disarmament, prevent genocide, restrict proliferation of nuclear arms of mass destruction and achieve a new world security regime.*" Ironically, the document states that "*South Africa's policy initiatives should be modest and not overly ambitious.*" Though few would take exception to these noble goals, it is doubtful, given South Africa's limited resources and size, that all of these can realistically be achieved.⁷

Clearly, the necessary move from South Africa's current foreign profile to a nuanced foreign policy requires the prioritisation of goals and the creation of an orderly and systematic manner to achieve these, mindful, of course, of domestic personnel and resource limitations. In this regard, democratic South Africa's foreign policy and diplomacy needs to be based on an understanding about its self-interest in the global village. The national interest may be said to be underpinned by the general values enshrined in the Constitution, and encompasses the security of the state and its citizens and the promotion of their social and economic well-being, as well as the encouragement of global peace, regional stability and development. Put simply, this is achieved by a focus primarily on two areas:

- encouraging stability and development in Southern Africa; and
- securing incremental improvements in investment and trade links world-wide.

These strategic 'pillars' of foreign policy involve tactically, in turn:

- keeping South Africa's established trading and investment partners on-side;
- encouraging new links with emerging markets in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere;
- representing the interests of Southern Africa in international forums, and;
- extending assistance to the region, where necessary, in the interests of stability and development.

South Africa's policies and the manner in which it interacts with the outside world will thus be shaped by a number of factors.

The Role of Personalities

This is a crucial factor. President Mandela's stature in the international domain has meant that South Africa's image (and its foreign policy) tends largely to be equated with the President's profile. As a result, policy has often followed his public statements, rather than the other way around. His successor(s) will have to co-ordinate responsibility, and learn to rely on those involved in the process of policy formulation to make the right decisions, which (s)he will then articulate to a greater extent than at present. Of course, given the nature of modern diplomacy, a head of state cannot be expected to be a mere microphone and, from time to time, will take a prominent foreign policy role.

South Africa's External Political Relations

As noted above, here it is critical for South Africa to identify the key objectives in its foreign

policy – notably the economic and physical well-being of South Africans. Only with this in mind (and with an appreciation of its own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the nature of the world outside), will it be able to establish and maintain a foreign policy orientation – to 'lean' in the direction arguably of securing incremental improvements in its trade and investment ties, and towards closer relations with the neighbouring states. At the moment, Pretoria is instead leaning all over the place. Outbursts of barely concealed anti-American/Western sentiment will not assist South Africa's long term cause, and neither will consorting with so-called 'pariah' states simply for the sake of maintaining old friendships and ideological ties.

Familial Ties

These will obviously help to define relations with Europe, especially with the United Kingdom, given the preponderance of UK passport holders (1,1 million) in South Africa, Portuguese passport holders (600 000), as well as Commonwealth ties.

The Success of the South African 'Experiment'

The success of South Africa's transition to democracy and the extent of external involvement in the country over the long term, hinges on the success of its economy and the existence of economic opportunities, and its stabilising role in Southern Africa. This is related, in turn, to the role of leadership, the implementation of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution macro-economic strategy (GEAR), levels of interaction with the global economy, regional stability, socio-political stability (including crime), as well as its image as a responsible, reliable international partner.

The World Around Us

In Southern Africa and further afield, South Africa's transition to economic, political and security normalcy will have a profound effect on South Africa's image and fortunes, especially given our increased business interaction with the subcontinent. South Africa could also stand to profit in a role as a bridgehead for international trade with the region.

Resources

These relate to the availability of personnel (leadership especially), natural and financial resources, and also South Africa's technical attributes and skills. The allocation of diplomatic resources and the focus of external business activity in the future will be determined by a number of criteria, including:

- levels of trade and investment (both ways), and rates of growth;
- sustainability of growth, which relates to: the size of the population (market), population growth and demography, population wealth, and GDP/manufacturing ratios; and
- the availability of South African resources, diplomatic or otherwise, including personnel and finances.

BUDGET SHRINKAGES, THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADE AND THE DFA/DTI INTERFACE

In terms of resource allocation, budget shrinkages have meant that the DFA, in the future, will have to disperse its resources in a creative manner which best represents South Africa's national interests. The Department was allocated R1 146 billion in the 1996-7 Annual Budget,

only a 0,7 per cent increase on the previous year. Already far below the domestic inflation rate of around 9 per cent, this cut has been exacerbated by the 20 per cent fall in the value of the Rand in 1996, consequently increasing the cost of maintaining foreign missions. This will also make an expansion in the number of missions more difficult, and the books will probably have to be balanced by 'downsizing' in some countries, in the form of staff cuts, the closure of whole consulates or even embassies, and the possible use of 'sleeping diplomats'. The sharing of missions with other member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has also reportedly been mooted.⁸

The issue of representation abroad is complicated by the experience and qualifications of such representatives and their skills and raises, in turn, the question of the value of having separate departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Industry (DTI). It has been asked whether South Africa should not do what the Australians, for example, have managed successfully, and simply merge the two, while maintaining two separate ministers? This would certainly facilitate policy homogeneity (which was notably absent between the DTI and the DFA over the issue of the Indian Ocean Rim initiative in 1995) and would stimulate DFA expertise in foreign trade and multilateral economic issues which it does not (at least not at the level of the DTI) possess at present. The setting-up of special units dedicated to expanding trade - along the lines of the French *Poste d'Expansion* - is another possibility. Alternatively, the DFA should play a greater role in co-ordinating the various departments concerned with foreign relations: DTI, Defence, Culture, Sport, Tourism, Transport, and so on.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

In an age when much of foreign relations is in essence about foreign economic relations, given the need to address social inequalities through economic growth, it is inevitable that South Africa's foreign policy will be geared to this end. As Nelson Mandela put it in 1993: "*The primary motivation of the ANC's foreign economic policies as a whole will be to place South Africa on the path of rapid economic development with a view to addressing three key problem areas: slow growth, severe poverty, and extreme inequalities in living standards.*"⁹

Given that it is impossible to buck geography, there will inevitably be an African focus, though care will have to be taken to balance this against other demands and priorities: trade with Africa amounted to 8,3 per cent of the overall total in 1995; with the European Union (EU) 33 per cent; the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA – Mexico, US, Canada) 9 per cent; the states of Latin America's Mercosur grouping 1,7 per cent; Asia and the Middle-East 26 per cent; and surrounding states of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU – Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland) 8,5 per cent.¹⁰

SOUTH AFRICA'S TOP TEN TRADE PARTNERS, 1995 (R MILLION)					
Country	Position		Total	Imports	SA Exports
	1994	1995			
Germany	2	1	20 583,6	16 029 ,9	4 553,7
UK	3	2	19 042,3	10 755,4	8 286,9
US	1	3	16 337,0	11 511,5	4 825,5
Japan	4	4	14 990,5	9 880,1	5 110,4
China/Hong Kong	6	5	6 478,8	3 472,5	3 006,3
Italy	7	6	6 415,6	4 005,9	2 409,7
Switzerland	5	7	6 040,9	2 382,1	3 658,8
Taiwan	8	8	5 774,0	3 220,2	2 545,8
Zimbabwe	-	9	5 507,0	964,1	4 542,9
Belgium	9	10	5 365,4	2 129,0	3 236,4

The grand total for South African trade in 1995 was (1994 figures in brackets): imports, R97 285 million (R75 601); exports, R102 323 million (R90 133).

South and Southern Africa, however, are minor players in the global economy. In 1993, SADC's total share of global economic output was just 0,58 per cent, or 0,13 per cent without South Africa.¹¹ Yet, South Africa itself is just a dwarf in the global context, with a GDP just one-third that of the Netherlands and only 6 per cent of Germany's. However, South Africa's comparative dominance in the subcontinent does give it an international voice, particularly in an era when African powers are expected to take greater responsibility for continental affairs.

THE REGIONAL DIMENSION

South Africa is clearly the regional giant, and what happens to its domestic circumstances will inevitably affect its regional environment and *vice versa* – hence Southern Africa's oft-stated priority in Pretoria's foreign policy calculations. As President Mandela noted to the UN General Assembly in October 1994: *"We are a part of the region of Southern Africa and of the continent of Africa. As members of the Southern African Development Community [SADC] and the OAU [Organisation of African Unity], and an equal partner with other member states, we will play our role in the struggle of these organisations to build a continent and a region that will help to create for themselves and all humanity a common world of peace and prosperity."*¹²

To complicate the balancing act between Africa and other diplomatic commitments, South Africa will also have to juggle the need for domestic development and its leadership of Southern Africa, especially given regional political sensitivities around its dominance and past role. For South Africa's economy is nearly four times as big as the other eleven members of SADC, or nearly twenty times the size of the next largest.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE (1993)				
	Area (sq km)	Population (m)	GDP (US \$ m)	GDP/head
Botswana	600 400	1,2	3 740	2 670
Lesotho	30 400	1,7	510	408
Swaziland	17 400	0,7	950	1 174
Namibia	823 100	1,3	2 508	1 716
Zimbabwe	390 600	9,6	4 514	420
Zambia	752 600	7,9	3 995	352
Mozambique	801 600	14,0	1 467	97
Angola	1,25m	8,9	6 179	601
Malawi	118 500	8,9	2 019	192
South Africa ('94)	1,22m	42,3	117 200	2 771

Source: The Standard Bank, **South Africa in Figures**, 1996

However, South Africa has many 'complexities' in managing the nature of its co-operation (let alone integration) with the Southern African region, most immediately over Pretoria's discussions with the EU on the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA). These relate, firstly, to the restructuring of the SACU agreement which is already being fundamentally altered by trade liberalisation under the World Trade Organisation (WTO).¹³ Secondly, in dealing with SADC, there are problems around the process of integration, as SADC moves from 'development co-

ordination' to development and trade integration.

Pretoria's negotiations with Europe over the FTA are probably the single most important short term foreign economic policy issue facing South Africa (and a graphic example of the need for a consistent foreign policy orientation), not only given the value of bilateral trade and investments and potential expansion thereof, but also because of the effects of the agreement on the image of South Africa as a trading partner to reckon with. In 1996, the EU accepted 25 per cent of South Africa's exports and supplied 42 per cent of its imports. In June 1994, South Africa was offered a FTA by the EU's Council of Ministers. In spite of support from SADC and the Afro, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries that South Africa should instead be accorded full Lomé status, the Council also decided to exclude South Africa from the trade preferences enjoyed by the ACP nations and to grant only qualified accession to the Lomé Agreement.

The EU's negotiating mandate for the FTA was released in March 1996, to which Pretoria responded finally in December of the same year with its own negotiating terms. Much of this delay was the result of a debate within South Africa over the effects and theoretical desirability of an FTA, especially since the EU mandate excluded some 39 per cent of South African agricultural products (or 4 per cent of total South African exports to the EU) from the proposed agreement. Presuming that South Africa can produce an exact policy mandate, negotiations are expected to continue before the end of 1997, though the implications of the envisaged FTA will be debated for some time to come. It will mean, for example, that EU states could potentially have more preferential access to the South African market than to its SADC neighbours. At this stage, it is thus not clear how South Africa's bilateral trade relations might, in short, impact on the potential route for South African-SADC integration. The objectives of the SADC free trade protocol are to:¹⁴

- further liberalise intra-regional trade in goods and services on the basis of fair, mutually equitable and beneficial trade arrangements;
- ensure efficient production within SADC reflecting the current and dynamic comparative advantage of its members;
- contribute towards the improvement of the climate for domestic, cross-border and foreign investment;
- enhance the economic development, diversification and industrialisation of the Region; and
- establish a Free Trade Area in the SADC region.

Importantly, the SADC free trade protocol binds South Africa to SADC in its negotiations, whether these are with the EU or potentially with the US over a free trade agreement. The SADC protocol explicitly states that "*[n]othing in this Protocol shall prevent a Member State from granting or maintaining preferential trade arrangements with third countries, provided such trade arrangements do not impede or frustrate the objectives of this Protocol" and "any advantage, concession, privilege or power granted to a third country under such arrangements is extended to other Member States."*¹⁵

FINDING ITS AFRICAN ROOTS

President Mandela has argued that "*South Africa cannot escape its African destiny. If we do not*

devote our energies to this continent, we too could fall victim to the forces that have brought ruin to its various parts."¹⁶ Aside from improvements in relations in the more obvious areas of political and security interaction, there has also been a tremendous growth in South Africa's trade and investment ties with the African subcontinent. In terms of foreign investment, South Africa's foreign assets in Africa stood in 1994, in terms of direct investment, at R3 752 billion, with total African assets at R6 143 billion. This may perhaps be low by comparison to the total of South African Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) abroad of R74 billion (1994), but the figure is increasing all the time with an estimated additional South African-African investment of around R9 billion since the election in 1994.¹⁷

The trade relationship (excluding SACU) increased by some 30 per cent for 1993-94 from a total of R8 456,9 billion (exports, R6 827,4 billion; imports R1 629,5 billion) to R10 986 billion (exports, R8 632 billion; imports, R2 354 billion); and again leapt some 52,6 per cent between 1994-95 to R16 771,2 billion (exports, R13 916 billion; imports, R2 855,2 billion). This amounts to roughly 8 per cent of South Africa's total trade flows.

It is important, however, to view these increases not only as a part of South Africa's total trade (which is significant though not excessively so) and trade as a part of a pattern of general relations with the continent (which is important) but in terms of the potential for the future (which could be the most significant). In this, trade could be said to be led by South Africa's other interests, whereas with the EU, for example, trade is the lead in the relationship.

These changes in its African relations are also illustrated by the increase in the number of South African-based companies operating in the subcontinent. For example:

- The Standard Bank now operates in fourteen African countries, with a total of 103 African branches. South Africa's top eight banks represent US\$ 6 billion of the total of US\$ 8 billion of the capital of African banks.¹⁸
- South African mining investments and interests are becoming increasingly diversified throughout the continent.
- South African Breweries now operates in Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania, in addition to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.
- Shoprite-Checkers have opened retail supermarket stores in Zambia, while Pick 'n Pay plans to expand into Namibia, Botswana, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

This expansion has been made possible by political and economic changes throughout the continent, and has been largely facilitated through privatisation campaigns. In this, South Africans possess the competitive advantage of geographic location coupled with knowledge of African working conditions, sensitivities and opportunities. And when one considers that South Africa currently, according to the DTI, supplies just 15 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's imports and just under 30 per cent of SADC's imports, Africa must be an attractive growth market and opportunity given South Africa's inherent advantages.¹⁹

In this regard, it is also important to note that, although SADC has been established to provide region-wide development-type project assistance, the success of regional development will be dependent, to a great extent in future, on increased levels of private investment in projects which are attractive for very sound commercial reasons which, in turn, is dependent on relative stability and growth potential.²⁰

One such project is the Maputo Corridor with Mozambique, potentially one of the most positive and ambitious cross-border development projects in Southern Africa. The first phase of the project entails the construction of a highway – a toll road from Witbank in South Africa to Maputo in Mozambique – estimated to cost over R600 million. Only 10 per cent of the costs will be covered by public funds, and the rest is expected to be raised by a consortium of private investors. The next stage involves the rebuilding of the adjacent railway line, as well as the modernisation of the Maputo Harbour at a cost of R150 million. Maputo is the nearest port to South Africa's industrial heartland, and before Mozambique's independence used to carry 40 per cent of the old Transvaal province's foreign trade. This figure is today only at five per cent, which gives an estimation of the potential for this scheme.

A second area, particularly in Mozambique, Namibia and Angola, concerns the exciting possibilities for the opening up of new gas and oil fields.

Power generation and transmission are two further areas. In June 1996, power executives from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia and Zaire gathered in Kinshasa to discuss plans to build export links across the region from the Inga River hydroelectric scheme on the Zaire River. With a potential to generate 44 000 MW (compared to Cahora Bassa's installed capacity of 2 000 MW), the Inga Dam has a capacity of 17 775 MW so far. Currently it produces only about 650-700 MW, just enough for local demand. Sub-Saharan Africa's current generating capacity is 48 646 MW, 82 per cent of which is supplied by South Africa. Studies by the African Development Bank have estimated that a regional approach to power system development could result in generating savings of some US \$3 billion between 1995-2010, could save some US \$400 million annually in operating costs, and provide US \$800 million annually in export income.

Of course, the success of regional programmes is dependent on the pace of privatisation and deregulation within Southern Africa, and on the path of political development and creation of conditions of socio-political stability.

CONCLUSION

To continue to punch beyond its weight in the international arena and capitalise on the virtual global hero worship of its current President, Pretoria will have to ensure that its foreign policy has a significant economic underpinning, thereby providing a product for its Department of Foreign Affairs and its other representatives abroad to sell. At the same time, to stretch the analogy, even if a nation is able to punch beyond its weight, it gains little if it is only a flyweight taking on the heavyweights. There is a need for South Africa to learn discretion, and not to lean all over the place in the international arena.

To maintain a flexible foreign policy capable of coping with global change, there will always be a need to understand and monitor the continuously shifting international milieu. In this, South Africa will require carefully defined foreign policy goals and priorities and not the ambitious wish list articulated at present. Looking to the future, a state that wishes to pursue a human rights agenda internationally will have to be 'pure' at home. This encompasses styles of domestic governance, as well as issues concerning crime, policing and arms sales.

Given the need to attract investment funds and the primary concern of potential foreign investors about rates of return, a cogent economic policy is critical for an overall successful foreign policy. This will be assisted, in turn, by any number of the following:

- improved dialogue and confidence between Government and business, and greater co-operation and co-ordination between state departments concerned with foreign policy;
- a greater willingness to engage with Africa and its problems and not seek refuge from commitment by deferring decisions to the multilateral environment. This can only serve to strengthen external impressions of South Africa's seriousness as a global player, and of Africa's intent to deal with its affairs;
- encouraging SADC to work in a manner that is complementary to global trends and to South Africa's external trade relations (such as those with the EU). This could demand less sensitivity towards current regional suspicions and greater farsightedness;
- placing its foreign diplomatic resources in a manner that ensures the greatest return; and
- restricting its role to those areas where it has the greatest capacity to be effective.

ENDNOTES

I am grateful to James Barber and Alan Begg for their helpful comments in the preparation of this paper. All faults remain mine alone, however.

1. N Mandela, *South African Foreign Policy*, **Foreign Affairs**, November/December 1993, p. 88.
2. Summary of concluding remarks, **DFA Foreign Policy Workshop**, Randburg, 9-10 September 1996, pp. 8-9.
3. I am grateful to James Barber for this point.
4. See **Business Day**, 10 and 13 January 1997. South Africa currently has 75 embassies or high commissions in foreign countries, while there are 96 embassies or high commissions in South Africa. South Africa also has consulates in 18 countries, and 57 countries have consulates in South Africa. South Africa has accredited a nearby embassy to cover 44 countries, while seven countries have non-residential accreditation in South Africa. Interestingly, the Republic's 1996-97 foreign affairs budget amounted to US \$250 million; while Chile and Argentina's were US \$130 million and US \$456 million (1995-96) respectively, though each had a similar number to South Africa of foreign missions. In the Argentine case, the budget includes the cost of trade representatives.
5. This information was supplied in correspondence with the Department of Foreign Affairs, dated 15 January 1997.
6. Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo, **DFA Foreign Policy Workshop**, *op. cit.*
7. See, **South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document**, Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 1996, 38 pp.
8. See **Business Day**, 10 January 1997.
9. Mandela, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

10. For these and other trade figures, see G Mills (ed.), **The South African Yearbook of International Affairs 1996**, SALLA, Johannesburg, 1996.
11. J Herbst, *Africa and the International Economy*, in A Handley and G Mills (eds.), **From Isolation to Integration: The South African Economy in the 1990s**, SALLA, Johannesburg, 1996, pp. 62-85.
12. **Discussion Document**, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
13. The importance of SACU receipts for the BLNS states is critical in their negotiating position on the EU FTA. Currently, income from SACU accounts for 46 per cent of the budget of Swaziland, 15 per cent of Namibia's, over 50 per cent of Lesotho's, and 16 per cent of Botswana's. See **Business Day**, 9 September 1996.
14. **Protocol on Trade in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region**, 9 September 1996, pp. 7-8.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
16. Mandela, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
17. See, **SA Reserve Bank Quarterly Bulletin**, September 1996; and for figures on an increase in South Africa's African investments since the election, see **Business Day**, 4 October 1996.
18. See **Financial Mail**, 5 January 1996; C Ryan, *Standard's African Adventure*, **Millenium**, October-November 1996, pp. 96-102.
19. Conversation with DTI official, November 1996.
20. See P Mistry, Building Infrastructure in Southern Africa and the New South Africa, *The South African Journal of International Affairs*, 4(1), Summer 1996, pp. 56-71.

GAZING INTO THE CONTINENTAL CRYSTAL BALL: DIRECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA-AFRICA RELATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

South Africa passage from apartheid to majority rule, currently in its transitional Government of National Unity (GNU) phase, has been greeted internationally with enormous enthusiasm. Here, in the midst of the mounting conflict and confusion of purpose of the post-Cold War world, is an undeniably good news story: a triumph of peaceful negotiation (notwithstanding the thousands of lives lost) and democracy over violence and racist authoritarianism. It has produced a government led by a man, Madiba Nelson Mandela, sometimes described as the "*last twentieth century hero*": a truly inspirational figure with unequalled international stature and moral authority. And it has provided a source of optimism on a continent habitually described as being "*in crisis*."

In this article, the substance and implications of South Africa's relations with its continental neighbours, near and far, are examined. The conclusions can be characterised as analytically sceptical, but prescriptively hopeful. That is, while a close and unblinkered analysis of the challenges confronting South Africa and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa leads to expectations of a future marked by strong continuities, increasing inequalities and mounting insecurity, it also reveals clear bases for hope that a more co-operative and constructive future can be brought into being – however slowly, painstakingly, and perhaps haphazardly.

These themes are explored within three expanding concentric circles: the 'new' South Africa itself, the Southern African region, and sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY SOUTH OF THE LIMPOPO

There is no gainsaying the change in the discourse, and indeed the practice of South African-African relations which has followed the inauguration of the GNU. The new policy élite, centred around the ANC, has repeatedly professed its intent "*to become part of a movement to create a new form of economic interaction in the region based on principles of mutual benefit and interdependence.*"² Moreover, through a variety of co-operative initiatives with its neighbours, Mandela's South Africa has created "*an important impression ... in contrast to apartheid South Africa ... that the new government operates in concert with other states of the region. The GNU has been at great pains to avoid using its predominant power in regional relations.*"³ The contrast with the attitude and activities of the doomed apartheid state during its last decade – the era of destabilisation in the 1980s – is stark.

Yet, at levels of policy-making, political economy, and popular opinion, the forces of continuity are also very strong. South Africa remains the regional hegemon, and most South Africans of various classes and identities continue to be preoccupied with their own formidable problems first. Without South African commitment and leadership, rooted in a successful domestic transition at the socio-economic and political levels, the prospects for a new era of co-operation and community in the region and continent are grim. These conditions will not be easily attained.

Economic Growth, Development and Continuing Decline

The attempt to re-make South Africa – to promote development, as well as growth in a manner which begins to address the historical injustices and grossly inequitable life chances which are the legacies of the past – is handicapped from the outset by the impact of prolonged economic decline. Patrick McGowan has summarised that, in the light of its deteriorating relative circumstances in most significant areas since the mid-1970s, "*South Africa will be fortunate to retain a place among the world's semi-peripheral powers over the next twenty years Rather more likely,*" he adds, "*is relative descent, so that South Africa will increasingly resemble a big Zimbabwe, at the border between the periphery and the semi-periphery.*"⁴ This is bad news for Africa. South Africa's increasingly marginal place in a global economy which imposes increasing constraints on even the most powerful of countries, severely limits its room for manoeuvre, and any inclinations towards generosity.

To be sure, the country's economic performance has improved, but only slowly. GDP growth estimates for 1997 of 2,5-3 per cent remain well short of the 4 per cent required to make any inroads into South Africa's acute unemployment problem. This is so despite Nelson Mandela's remarkably successful, and sometimes controversial efforts to gain the confidence of the South African and international business communities. In the meantime, the traditional mainstay of the South African economy, gold, is experiencing a 'crisis' marked by sharply worsening production

figures. In sum, even if the GNU, or its post-1999 successor, is able to engineer a reversal of South Africa's relative economic decline, the process will be a long and difficult one. It will make it all the more challenging to generate the resources and the political will required to finance South Africa's ambitious Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

Post-Apartheid Reconstruction and Development

The RDP is the centrepiece of the GNU policy agenda. Among other things, it embodies the Government's 'justice agenda'. It provides the political assurance that, along with fiscal responsibility, economic restructuring and growth, the ANC (with its 'partners' in Government) is committed to real change for the poor majority which is its primary base of electoral support. Yet, the RDP and its associated programmes will place an enormous strain on South Africa's limited human and financial capacity.

The RDP process as a whole has come under increasing criticism for its preoccupation with bureaucratic structures and limited progress in meeting concrete targets. At the same time, the RDP White Paper, designed to set out plans for implementation, has been criticised by progressive academics as a compromise to neoliberalism.

Obviously, the political stakes around the RDP are very high. Notwithstanding the fact that the RDP itself enjoins the "*democratic government*" to "*negotiate with neighbouring countries to forge an equitable and mutually beneficial programme of increasing co-operation, co-ordination and integration*,"⁵ it seems likely to absorb a great deal of time, energy, and resources for essentially domestic purposes, with relatively little left over for the region and continent. While progressive politicians and analysts in the 'new' South Africa periodically point out the country's historic culpability for much of the hardship which currently besets the region, and note that a strong case can be made for South African reparations, there will be no large scale influx of South African public resources to help fuel a regional recovery.

Forces of Continuity

Along with the limitations of relative economic decline globally and pressing priorities domestically, the prospects for fundamental change in South Africa-Africa relations are also inhibited by strong forces of continuity in the South African political economy and society. In the political economy, policy options are constrained and 'moderated' by the central role which a small number of highly concentrated corporations continues to play. Powerfully reinforced by the prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the influence of corporate South Africa will sharply discourage options entailing substantial planning and intervention, at both national and regional levels. Moreover, these corporations are likely to strongly reinforce the position of South Africa's 'growth firsters' who argue that, above all, South Africa must generate growth; that to do so, it must attract investment; and that in light of these priorities, its foreign (economic) policy should continue to emphasise extra-continental linkages with South Africa's largest sources of trade and investment in Europe, North America and Asia. On the other hand, South African corporations and other private interests are themselves playing an increasingly prominent role as architects of trans-social links between South Africa and the rest of the continent.

At the social level, too, forces of cultural continuity and (mis)perception constrain the prospects for more co-operative intra-regional relations. South Africans have historically "*lived up against*" their neighbours. These habits of mind are resilient. Obviously, much of the white economic *élite* has traditionally seen itself as 'European' and 'Western' in identity and orientation. These

perceptions, strongly reinforced by patterns of white emigration over the past several decades, will not be easily reoriented. But there are strains of chauvinism and parochialism among black South Africans as well, capable of generating a sense of both superiority and hostility towards their African neighbours.

Finally, and returning to the level of the state, it should be noted that even with the best will in the world, a major stumbling block to the decisive reorientation of South Africa's policy towards its continental neighbours is the onerous challenge of bureaucratic reorganisation and reorientation. Indeed, much of the slowness of policy change in domestic and foreign policy alike can be attributed to the difficulty of engineering change in the machinery of Government, and then establishing and implementing new priorities. In other words, there is a problem of simple bureaucratic overload. Under these circumstances, the forces of inertia can weigh heavily. This has perhaps most notably manifested itself in ongoing arguments over 'new directions' in foreign policy.

In sum, the tremendous domestic and global challenges confronting the new South Africa, allow only for cautious optimism concerning the prospects for a qualitatively new, more co-operative and constructive level of commitment to the region and continent. Yet, it would also be misleading to underestimate the changes which have already occurred. Thus, the emerging South African-Southern African relationship is characterised by ambiguity.

SOUTH AFRICA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: PARTNER AND/OR HEGEMON?

What, precisely, has changed in regional relations since the South African elections? What are the benefits, and where are the dangers? Above all, the region as a whole has benefited from the cessation of inter-state hostilities between South Africa and its neighbours, and the former's destructive campaign of destabilisation.⁶ While the bonds of regional (inter)dependence ensured that a variety of more and less open economic and even political links were maintained throughout the apartheid era, the dawning of a new era of legitimate communications and co-operation created opportunities for a range of novel bilateral and multilateral initiatives in the region. What forms are these initiatives likely to take?

Regional Security

Some of the most dramatic changes have taken place in the security sphere. In a situation replete with ironies, whereas the old South African security establishment – both military and police – has been the major source of regional insecurity, the 'new' security establishment is engaged in a variety of co-operative exercises to combat regional insecurity. For example, under the terms of a bilateral crime combating agreement, code-named Operation Rachel, "*South African police specialists ... have destroyed mortars, rocket-launchers, hand-grenades and landmines since starting an operation against illegal weapons with their Mozambican counterparts.*"⁷ Similar agreements and operations have been initiated with other neighbouring states. More broadly, the 'new' South African National Defence Force (SANDF), despite strong continuities at the level of personnel with the old South African Defence Force (SADF), has played a leading role in the planning for a new regional security arrangement: the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Organ for Politics, Defence and Security. It is anticipated that the functions of this security mechanism will include the provision of "*intelligence support for preventive diplomacy initiatives in the case of pending or actual conflicts within the region,*" planning for combined operations, and the establishment of "*security arrangements between states on specific issues such as countering weapons smuggling.*"⁸ Indeed, given the relatively promising development of regional security links, there are some

scholars who argue that, in building regional co-operation, "*a focus on security should precede rather than follow economic integration.*"⁹

Democracy and Human Rights

A second important regional effect of the South African transition is that, through the power of its example, a new regional norm of democracy and human rights has been strongly promoted. Whereas in the past the persistence of apartheid allowed SADC states to largely escape critical scrutiny of their own democratic shortcomings, and indeed justified certain important derogations from democratic norms in light of the security threat posed by Pretoria, the advent of a freely elected South African Government, featuring strong constitutional safeguards for human rights, has created strong pressures on neighbouring governments to accelerate their own reform processes. This is not to suggest that the trend towards democratic practices and civil liberties is irreversible in the new South Africa. Nor is it to suggest that the new regional norm of democracy and human rights is irresistible for neighbouring governments determined to retain political control. However, as long as the South African state and society continue to move in this direction, the pressures on regional governments to do likewise will continue to mount. Indeed, the problem-filled, but promising processes of political reform and democratisation in countries such as Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, need to be understood in relation to the process of change in South Africa.

Continuity and Change in Regional Political Economy

At the level of the political economy, pockets of the region – in both spatial and class terms – are beginning to benefit from increased South African interest and investment. Much of South Africa's renewed economic interest in the region and continent is based on the pursuit of new markets for trade, rather than opportunities for longer term investment. Yet, some substantial new investment projects are coming on line, particularly in Southern Africa. For example, Eskom and its subsidiary Roshcon are developing and/or rehabilitating power grids in Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia with a long term view towards establishing a SADC grid. Mining giant Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI), in conjunction with other South African organisations, has entered into a turnkey supply agreement to rehabilitate Maamba Collieries in Zambia. South African hotel companies are making new investments in Southern Africa and beyond, and various South African mining, transportation and energy firms are either considering or undertaking major projects in the extraordinarily difficult, but potentially lucrative context of Zaire.

Perhaps most remarkable is the advent of what has been described as "*another Great Trek*," a process formalised in mid-1995 by an agreement between the South African government and Angola, Mozambique and Zaire "*for the settling of hundreds of mainly Afrikaans-speaking farmers on millions of hectares of prime agricultural land in those countries.*"¹⁰ It is likely that Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe will also welcome South Africa's 'new *trekkers*'. Fears concerning the effects of land redistribution, illegal immigration, loss of protection for agricultural goods, among others, have persuaded numerous white South African farmers to seek greener pastures (literally) in the more fertile and less regulated rural areas of their increasingly prostrate neighbours. In some respects, this process builds upon the (re)emergence of large scale, corporate-owned plantation agriculture, notably in Mozambique.

What do these emerging linkages imply for post-apartheid development prospects in Southern Africa? At one level, South African firms and farmers are providing much-needed investment, technology, and employment. There can be no doubt that some individuals, groups, and areas

in neighbouring countries will benefit materially – in some cases very significantly – from renewed South African interest.

At another level, however, in the absence of effective institutional frameworks and regulatory safeguards, both nationally and regionally, these various projects will significantly exacerbate disparities and promote private networks of patron-clientélism. They are likely, in other words, to reinforce and accelerate the emergence of regional 'growth poles' and 'backwaters', in both spatial and class terms. At the risk of sounding anachronistic in this era of marketisation and privatisation, it can be anticipated that this trend will, unmitigated, exacerbate human insecurity throughout the region. Those inside the charmed circles of growth and development will take steps to protect themselves, their families and their property from the immiseration outside, while those outside will resort to various illicit 'modes of accumulation' (theft, drugs, wildlife poaching and trade, guns, etc.). Moreover, should the state structures of the region continue to experience declines in effectiveness and legitimacy, this process will continue to be marked by increasing resort to private 'protection rackets' – both 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate'.

At yet another level, however, it may rightly be asked how much of this is really novel, *versus* simply a restoration of the *status quo ante*. After all, South African corporations, such as Anglo-American, have had long-standing holdings and investments throughout the region, while white farmers or settlers have maintained a presence in areas as remote as Botswana's far-western Ghanzi district. South African investments in and promotion of tourism in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, for example, in some respects simply resurrect pre-independence patterns.

Notwithstanding the acceleration of regional interpenetration and concurrent human insecurity, what is occurring is in some respects simply the 'normalisation' of historic regional economic patterns and trends which have always been particularly beneficial to South Africa. It is not surprising, therefore, that South African interests, both private and government, have been somewhat lackadaisical in their attitude toward the reform and renegotiation of regional trading and investment arrangements.

Institutional Frameworks for Regional Co-operation

All of this points toward the continuing relevance of the institutional frameworks within which regional economic relations take place. There have been no shortage of regional organisations in Southern Africa designed, formally at least, to foster regional economic co-operation and/or integration. To this point in time, however, none have been sufficiently coherent and effective to provide a framework within which regional economic relations can be restructured on a more balanced and complementary basis. Of the organisations extant, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) has long been the most extensively and effectively integrated. Yet, this arrangement between South Africa and its four smallest and most dependent neighbours is manifestly based on profound asymmetries of power, and is not operating to the satisfaction of either South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia or Swaziland. It is currently being renegotiated.

SADC, after a long honeymoon with the international donor community, has had trouble adapting to the post-apartheid context and giving shape to its new status as a development 'community'. It has come under increasing criticism from donors and scholars alike.

Finally, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), despite "*impeccable credentials in that it constitutes one of the five sub-regions that the ECA has indicated as building blocs for the proposed African Economic Community*," has had limited practical impact. This is most fundamentally because "*most governments fail to live up to their treaty*

obligations,"¹¹ although numerous other problems with this organisation could be noted. COMESA and SADC, with substantial overlap in membership and objectives and fearing for their organisational lives in a more hostile donor climate, have been engaging in increasingly open conflict over how their efforts and mandates should be harmonised.

An added factor is that, while many of the states of Southern Africa may be suffering through a prolonged decline in authority and effectiveness, they remain sufficiently strong and jealous of their sovereign prerogatives to effectively stymie any regional integration schemes they regard as threatening. As a result, Rob Davies has summarised the situations confronting both SADC and COMESA as "*weak commitments by weak states to weak organisations*."¹²

South Africa and the *Status Quo*

With the emergence of a legitimate, post-apartheid South African state into the regional political equation, there has been some hope and expectation that South Africa would provide the leadership necessary to sort out this confusion of organisational purpose, and to give new direction to the regional institutional 'project'. Indeed, the story of Southern Africa's regional institutions since the early 1990s might be sub-titled 'Waiting for South Africa'. The GNU did give a fillip to SADC and struck a blow to the prospects of COMESA by choosing to join the former, but not the latter. But beyond that, it has done little. This is partly attributable to the fact that South African policy makers have not sorted out their own policy towards these two regional institutions, despite South Africa's ostensible foreign policy priority on the SADC region. The fundamental problem is that, despite the many looming challenges and opportunities of regional relations, in economic terms, the *status quo* serves South Africa's immediate interests well. Hence, as noted above, Pretoria simply does not share the urgency of many of its neighbours concerning the need to give new purpose and direction to regional economic relations and institutions.

Thus, in light of the continuing dominance of economic links with Europe and both the size and promise of links with Asia, a great deal of the new Government's energy has gone into the effort to negotiate a new, Lomé-like arrangement with the European Union (EU), and talks concerning the creation of an Indian Ocean Forum in which Australia, India, and South Africa would be the principals. South Africa's early negotiating priorities have focused, in other words, beyond the (sub)continent – though in fairness, it should also be noted that it has argued that any Indian Ocean Forum must include the entire SADC region.

The one major exception to this extra-regional focus has been SACU. Here, a major initiative to renegotiate the agreement was launched in 1994. All parties appear to be firmly committed to what is anticipated to be a multi-year process. In sum, insofar as the GNU's negotiating priorities are an indicator, the 'new' South Africa's foreign economic policy priorities appear to be extra-regional on the one hand, and in that portion of the region where it is most clearly hegemonic, on the other. Despite discursive change, South Africa's actions in this issue area indicate continuity.

There are, however, other issue areas and relationships which hold out the possibility of fostering a new and more equitable degree of regional co-operation. Some of these will be discussed below. In the meantime, the third concentric circle is focused on: South Africa in Africa.

SOUTH AFRICA IN AFRICA: GROWTH POLES, BACKWATERS, AND THE POLITICS OF FORGETTING?

The struggle against apartheid was profoundly Pan-African in character. No issue united African governments and peoples like the struggle against white minority rule, above all in South Africa. While much of this opposition was rhetorical in character, and a significant number of African states maintained more or less open economic and political links with South Africa, many others made real commitments of scarce resources to the struggle. These included, above all, those countries immediately adjacent to South Africa, but also others, such as Uganda and Tanzania, which were further afield. Their contributions included hosting refugees and both political leaderships and armed cadres of the ANC and other liberation movements, often in large numbers, as well as providing material assistance to the struggle.

As a result of this long-standing commitment and the bonds of solidarity forged with the ANC, there was an expectation among African states as a group that the ANC-dominated GNU could be turned to for both material support and enlightened political leadership in increasingly crisis-ridden Pan-African organisations such as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and African Development Bank (ADB). Moreover, it was also reasonable to expect that those states which had been unswerving in their solidarity and had made the largest sacrifices, would be 'rewarded' by the 'new' South Africa, while those which had co-operated, tacitly or otherwise, with the apartheid state could anticipate a cool and difficult relationship.

Early evidence suggests, however, that these expectations are misplaced. Notwithstanding sincere expressions of gratitude and goodwill towards Africa, the OAU, and leading allies, such as Tanzania, South Africa's political leadership has been distinctly reticent about taking on a significant leadership role in its crisis-ridden continent, and providing tangible political or material 'rewards' to the ANC's stronger allies. There are a number of fairly obvious reasons for this. Systematically, the end of apartheid coincided with what might be described as a tectonic shift at the level of the world order which had the effect of shaking the ANC (and others) loose from its traditional normative and solidarist anchors. Economically, South Africa's own intimidating needs and challenges have meant that it lacks surplus resources to devote to the continent's manifold problems, while its top priority has been to develop and exploit trade and investment opportunities which can help it to re-establish economic growth and generate employment. On the continent, the better short term economic opportunities tended to be located in states, such as Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire, which were at best lukewarm in their support for the anti-apartheid struggle. Stalwart supporters, such as Tanzania and Uganda, have rather less to offer at this point. Finally, the process of negotiation and compromise on which the South African transition rests, embodied in the awkward executive structure of the GNU, has led to a significant watering down of the ANC's core influence and more radical alignments and priorities.

Preventing Conflict, Building and Keeping Peace

This does not mean that South Africa will entirely eschew a leadership role in the continent's political and security affairs and organisations. To some extent, the cautiousness with which the new leadership, including Mandela, has approached continental forums, reflects an admirable degree of modesty concerning the need to understand Africa's problems thoroughly and have a clear policy approach before plunging in. Similarly, South Africa's officials have been rightly chary of usurping the leadership of continental mediation processes already under way, and thus appearing to seek a position of dominance which would trigger political alarm bells in the State Houses of Africa. On some issues, however, such as regional peacekeeping and the development of the OAU's Conflict Prevention Mechanism agreed to at its 1993 Summit, South Africa is moving towards a more active leadership role.

Ironically, and perhaps of concern, the initiative in these areas once again rests primarily with

the South African defence establishment, as it has with the emergent SADC Organ. There is a strange (though not unfamiliar) circularity to South Africa's emergence as a leader in addressing issues of continental insecurity and armed violence which it has itself helped to foment, through its arms trading and the covert activities of its apartheid predecessor. Despite these tensions, however, it makes sense that the 'new' South Africa should use its relatively strong military-security technology and capabilities to aid in continental conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

South Africa as Continental Conscience?

Even more troublesome is the question of whether and how South Africa should contribute to the promotion of a 'culture of human rights' and the strengthening of democratic norms and procedures on the continent. It is here that Mandela's vaunted moral authority and the country's own powerful example would seem to give it a distinct comparative advantage. Without doubt, the GNU will confront a number of telling tests on this issue during its five-year lifetime. However, recent controversies over South African relations with Nigeria, with Taiwan and mainland China, and the decision to sell weapons to Syria, suggest that little more than moral 'lip service' can be expected in foreign policy formation.

Entrepreneurs of 'Security'

While official South Africa moves gingerly towards a more prominent role in Africa's political and security affairs, the most immediate impact of change in South Africa on the continent's security equation has come, once again, from the private sector, specifically profit-seeking former SADF mercenaries. According to one source, South African mercenaries in Africa are now thought to number in the thousands. Battle-hardened veterans of guerrilla warfare in Southern Africa employed by the Pretoria-based firm Executive Outcomes have helped to turned the tide of war in Angola from UNITA to their former enemies in the MPLA, thereby facilitating the latest peace process there. More recently, they have achieved the same reversal of fortunes on behalf of the ruling military junta in Sierra Leone against the rebel Revolutionary United Front. As state capacity declines in many parts of the continent and disorder spreads, the prominence of such 'private armies' is likely to continue to increase, and South Africans are likely to be prominent among them.

Traders and Investors, Winners and Losers

Beyond this political economy of violence,¹³ more conventional South African traders and investors are also having an increased impact on the continent. Both trade and, more slowly but still significantly, investment between South Africa and the continent are growing. In trade, South African exports to Africa increased by almost 50 per cent in two years to a total of almost US \$2,5 billion in 1994, while imports tripled over the same period from US \$220 million to US \$664 million. This placed Africa as a whole fifth among South Africa's trading partners, behind Germany, the UK, the US, and Japan – though continental markets have always been disproportionately important as purchasers of South African manufactures. While the main criterion governing increasing interaction appears to have been whether African countries offer viable markets for South African goods, and thus short term opportunities for trade, there have also been a range of new investments on the continent beyond Southern Africa. Predictably, many of these have been in the mining sector, but others have occurred in tourism, transportation, and breweries.

It would be a mistake, however, to overestimate the significance of these developments,

however. Spread over a whole continent and several hundreds of millions of people, their impact is significantly dissipated. Moreover, most African countries have relatively little to trade with South Africa. Thus, small, debt-distressed economies, like those of Uganda and Tanzania, Guinea and São Tomé, are likely to experience increasingly unbalanced trade relations with South Africa, particularly in the context of International Monetary Fund (IMF) mandated liberalisation conditionalities (that is, when they attract the attention of South African traders and investors at all). Moreover, where significant investments do occur, they will create and reinforce patterns of winners and losers, in a context where the price of losing may be high indeed. In total, as with the Southern African region, the effects of South Africa's increasing commercial interchange with the rest of the continent are likely to be highly uneven. They are likely, therefore, to increase tensions and insecurity within and between African countries, though the extent to which they alter current trends on the continent is likely to be limited.

It should be added that the 'normalisation' of South Africa's relations with the continent has opened the door to an increase in a range of illicit forms of exchange. As the continent's formal sectors decay, various forms of buccaneer capitalism flourish, creating new loci of political and economic power.

Given this rather chaotic and unpromising set of prospects, it is hardly surprising that some powerful interests in South Africa advocate focusing the country's attention on extra-continental markets and alliances, and that some scholars argue that *"a 'fortress South Africa' policy may not be a politically incorrect option at all, but also something of a socio-economic necessity."*¹⁴ Yet, should South Africa seek to 'live up against' its neighbours, the continent's myriad problems which transcend state-centric solutions (from environmental decay to disease to arms trading to drought and food insecurity) will only worsen. Inevitably, they will spill over into South African society, economy and polity. How, then, might a more co-operative and hopeful future be constructed?

BRIDGES OF HOPE? BUILDING A MORE CO-OPERATIVE FUTURE

Unfortunately, the analysis in this article points towards the irresistible conclusion that movement toward a more co-operative and secure South African, Southern African, and Pan-African future will be slow, erratic, and uneven at best. There is nothing to be gained through panglossian attempts to minimise the scale and diversity of the challenges to be confronted. The transition from apartheid in South Africa has not fundamentally altered important structural challenges and trends in continental affairs, and, in some respects, may indeed exacerbate inequalities and insecurities in the Southern African region and beyond.

Nevertheless, the slow process of normalising South African-African relations and the difficult, but thus far successful birth of a (more) democratic and non-racial order in South Africa itself, have also created a range of new openings and opportunities for positive-sum co-operation and transnational community building. Where do these opportunities lie, and how can they be encouraged?

Promising beginnings have been made in several areas. Some of these have already been noted: bilateral agreements to deal with small arms trading, for example, and the emergent SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. Among other key areas in which co-operation is both possible and strongly desirable are:

- health, particularly in view of the alarming spread of AIDS throughout the region;

- the environment, notably with regard to scarce water resources and shared watershed ecosystems;
- energy resources;
- tourism;
- agricultural research and food security;
- telecommunications: and
- labour.

This list is by no means exhaustive, but gives some indication of the potential scope for co-operative efforts.¹⁵

Such sectoral co-operative efforts should be encouraged to proceed as far and as fast as possible. More and less extensive schemes of regional co-ordination should be allowed, indeed encouraged, to co-exist, without being forced to conform to some sort of regional 'grand design'. The ADB's notion of 'variable geometry' could usefully serve as a guiding principle in this regard: dynamic sectors should not be held back or deliberately stunted in the hopes of achieving 'balanced development'. At the same time, however, political efforts should be made to establish linkages and synergies between these schemes, so that they spill over into more extensive forms of regional co-operation.

There is, of course, nothing terribly new in this approach to building co-operation. What is proposed is essentially a latter day and region-specific variant of the old idea of 'neo-functionalism'. However, unlike the neo-functionalism conceived in relation to the process of European integration, it may be that in Southern Africa, attempts to deepen co-operation in the areas of trade and investment should be downplayed, as compared with some of the issues noted above. The fact is that, for the developing countries of (Southern) Africa, trade and investment issues are 'high politics', and are likely to generate a high degree of inter-state competition and conflict. Hence, although the longer term goal of a more fully-fledged economic community should not be neglected, regional efforts should probably be concentrated, in the first instance, on other areas in which positive-sum outcomes will be more readily achieved.

This leads to the question of agency, i.e., how are such co-operative efforts to be encouraged, and by whom? Here, two related points deserve particular emphasis. The first is that, notwithstanding regional and continental fears of South African dominance, much of the leadership for co-operative efforts – technical, entrepreneurial, and political – will need to come from South Africa. The reality is that in many cases, the greatest concentration of the requisite knowledge and skills rests with South African groups and institutions, while on many issues, other African states and groups will be at best hesitant to move forward without a clear signal of South African support. Hence, it is incumbent on those South Africans who 'think regionally' to articulate their position consistently and forthrightly, and to work actively to forge transnational coalitions of like-minded people to provide what Peter Vale has referred to (with apologies to George Bush) as "*the vision thing*."¹⁶

The second point which bears emphasis is that this leadership – both national and transnational – cannot be expected to come exclusively, or even primarily from states. Indeed, given the record of formal inter-state co-operation in Africa, it may be that states will frequently constitute

stumbling blocks rather than allies in co-operative efforts. Although co-operative schemes are unlikely to be sustainable in the face of active state antagonism, much of the impetus in their conception and consolidation needs to come from regional and continental civil societies. Without trans-social co-operation, imagination, and pressure on regional states, co-operative efforts cannot be expected to succeed. How realistic is this fashionable prescription in post-apartheid (Southern) Africa?

The short answer is that, given the historic weakness of civil societies throughout the continent, the odds are long. However, despite difficulties in adjusting to the new era, South Africa's civil society remains more diverse, vibrant, and independent than any other on the continent, and has given some evidence of a desire to work with, learn from, and provide leadership to its counterparts elsewhere.

The promotion of effective regional co-operation and community-building will rest on the efforts of a wide range of interests and actors, developing and promoting a 'regional consciousness' rooted in concrete and immediately relevant achievements. These interests and actors will include corporations, universities and research institutes, trade unions, environmental non-government organisations (NGOs), women's organisations, and cultural groups, along with state-based organisations. While this approach may appear idealistic, and will indeed require a long term vision in the face of uncertainty and setbacks, it would appear to be the only alternative to a future of mounting human insecurity and continued continental marginalisation.

CONCLUSION: THE ROLE OF OUTSIDERS

Obviously, the challenges before South Africa and its continental neighbours are daunting. The needs for timely and well-targeted international support are wide-ranging and extensive. This is a disheartening statement, given the current mood of 'donor fatigue' and the global decline in real spending on development assistance. Still, there is much that the international community can do to support a successful transition in South Africa and beyond, even within the parameters of reduced resources. Several injunctions apply to these efforts.

Firstly, in South Africa itself, international assistance must embody both short and long term dimensions. For the South African transition to succeed, popular support must be consolidated through the success of, for example, housing and school feeding programmes associated with the RDP. At the same time, policy within and toward South Africa must support much longer term and larger scale projects, in health care, education, energy, and the like.

Secondly, in focusing on the importance of a successful transition in South Africa, external governments, NGOs, and private sector organisations must not lose sight of the rest of the region and continent. They must support those groups and institutions championing a regional and transnational vision, and provide assistance to concrete regional initiatives. This will pose some problems, particularly for official (national and international) aid agencies. The experience of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in attempting to promote regional integration in the context of its 1991 strategic policy framework **Africa 21** is illustrative.¹⁷ CIDA has had considerable difficulty in attempting to organise programming on an integrated regional basis, primarily because the principal political and judicial units with which it must deal are still national states. This makes the task of regional programming a trying one, both administratively and politically. Nevertheless, while the modalities of a regional approach may have to adjusted, the effort and philosophy behind it should be maintained and reinforced.

Finally, it needs to be recognised that the process of South African, regional, and continental

'reconstruction and development' will be a long term and politically difficult one. It is not one which can be successfully achieved within a straitjacket of economic and political conditionalities. Hence, without abandoning the need for 'policy dialogue', donors would be well-advised to avoid dogmatic adherence to and insistence upon neoliberal policy prescriptions. Such an approach will generate ill-will and thwart the sense of 'ownership' necessary for difficult policy initiatives and reforms to succeed. This observation suggests one final way in which the emergence of the 'new' South Africa may be beneficial to the development and security prospects of the continent. Given the high stakes and profile of the South African transition, and the country's relatively robust capabilities and resources, South African policy-makers will be accorded a degree of flexibility and space, in the medium term at least, which most of their African counterparts no longer enjoy. By aligning themselves with South Africa in regional and continental initiatives, other African countries can perhaps regain a degree of autonomy and independence in the establishment of their own priorities and processes.

ENDNOTES

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SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP

Hussein Solomon

INTRODUCTION

South Africa occupies an ambiguous position within the international political economy. It is the most developed state on the continent of Africa. Within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, its Gross National Product (GNP) contributes 84 per cent to the regional GNP.¹ In the context of the North-South debate, does this make South Africa a 'Northern' state on a 'Southern' continent, or does this make Pretoria the leader of the South? There are some sections of world opinion who would argue that South Africa is the natural leader of Africa. Consider in this regard, the following statement by Angela King,² who headed the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) in 1994: "... *this country [South Africa] will soon become a catalyst for the rapid development of not only the southern African region but the rest of the continent.*"

This view is also subscribed to by several South African academics. In a recent article entitled *Global Dialogue, Human Rights and Foreign Policy: Will South Africa Please Lead*, Vernon Seymour³ noted that "[t]he world expects more from a democratic South Africa ... After a long struggle for human rights in this country, our new democracy is viewed as a natural leader, especially with a president like Nelson Mandela whose integrity and commitment to democracy and human rights are beyond question."

Often, this role has been couched in terms of middle power leadership which is seen as the antithesis of the national self-interest foreign policies which dominate *realpolitik*. Is this really so? Do middle powers conduct their foreign policies in a more altruistic way than do other states caught up in the realism of E H Carr and the power politics of Hans Morgenthau? What exactly is middle power leadership? Does South Africa have the capability or the will to fulfil such a role? Should Pretoria pursue such a leadership role, can it balance the attendant international responsibilities against the various and tremendous domestic challenges facing the 'Rainbow' nation? These are some of the questions which will be addressed in this article.

WHAT IS MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP?

In a world increasingly characterised by growing interdependence, all countries now have global interests. In a world characterised by transnational security threats – global warming, mass migrations, narco-trafficking and small arms proliferation, to name but a few – there is an increasing need for multilateral management.⁴ Such multilateral management, however, is not forthcoming due to the fact that international institutions, are generally moribund or in a state of disrepute. In addition, the number of governments which could effectively confront the problems attached to global interdependence and multilateral co-operation are few. Thus, Barbara Ward⁵ commented that "[t]he superpowers are too vast, unwieldy, too locked in their own responsibilities. The great mass of new states are too poor and too shaky. It is the middle powers ... who occupy about the right position on the scale of influence."

Supporting this view, Robert Cox⁶ notes that middle powers are to be found in the middle rank of material capabilities, both military and economic, and that they seek to bolster international institutions for co-operative management. In the same vein, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal⁷ note that middle power leadership in the contemporary period is intimately related to the "*hiatus in structural leadership in the international order*" following the end of the Cold War. As great powers turn inward, following their own brand of the Monroe Doctrine, this opens up more opportunities for smaller powers with sufficient capabilities – the middle powers – to exercise certain forms of leadership. This leadership is seen in benign terms, as it is thought that the "... *interests of the middle powers coincide more with the general interest than do the interests of the small powers or of the great powers.*"⁸ Hence, it is thought that in pursuing their national interests, middle powers are also pursuing the general interest which leads to a more stable world order.

By itself, a middle power is unlikely to have overwhelming influence on the international stage. As such, middle power leadership is, in essence, multilateralist in approach.⁹

Various authors note that middle powers have certain distinct national role conceptions. According to Holsti¹⁰ national role conceptions are "... *the policy-makers' definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their state and of the functions their state should perform in a variety of geographic and issue settings.*" Some of these include the role of regional or subregional leader, and the role of bridge or mediator.¹¹ Within the context of the Cold War, this latter role was seen in terms of the East-West divide. With the end of global bipolarity, the role of bridge or mediator is increasingly seen in terms of the North-South divide. Another important role ascribed to by middle powers is the role of manager. This emphasises institution-building which is seen in broader terms than just formal organisations and regimes. Rather, it includes the development of conventions and norms.¹²

Middle powers are generally active in what some writers have termed low politics or second order issues on the international agenda. Several reasons account for this. Firstly, great powers

largely have a monopoly over first order issues. Secondly, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal¹³ note that middle powers do not feel themselves threatened by the issues on the first agenda of international politics – for example, the territorial integrity of the Scandinavian states is not threatened from outside. Rather, middle powers are concerned with threats emanating from second order issues which threaten their traditionally high standards of living. Consider here, "*... the Australian economy being hurt by a subsidy war between the United States and the European Community or the quality of the environment in Canada being under jeopardy from American pollution.*"¹⁴

It should be noted, however, that with the easing of interstate warfare which has accompanied the end of the Cold War, first order issues on the international agenda concerning the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states, are increasingly marginalised by issues traditionally seen as low politics. This has found expression in the theoretical discourse of new security thinking which emphasises the importance of non-military security issues – international foreign trade, environmental degradation, population growth – to a nation's survival. This widening of the security agenda, resulting in low politics issues becoming first agenda issues, could result in the further marginalisation of middle powers as the great powers take over these issues as well.

WHO QUALIFIES FOR MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP?

There is a fierce, and as yet unresolved, debate among academics and policy-makers on the criteria needed for states to qualify for middle power leadership. While it is accepted that middle powers generally are in the middle range of power capabilities, proponents of middle power leadership are unsure of how to assess these power capabilities.

Some proponents of middle power leadership use Gross National Product (GNP) as the best general indicator of national power. Thus, Wood¹⁵ argues, "*GNP automatically captures aggregate economic power, wealth and/or population size, and to a substantial extent, military potential ...*" On the basis of using GNP as a criterion for identifying middle powers, Wood arrives at a list of states which includes:

1 Italy	2 China	3 Canada	4 Brazil
5 Spain	6 Netherlands	7 India	8 Poland
9 Australia	10 Mexico	11 Belgium	12 Sweden
13 Switzerland	14 Saudi Arabia	15 Czech Republic	16 Nigeria
17 Austria	18 Denmark	19 Turkey	20 Argentina
21 South Korea	22 South Africa	23 Indonesia	24 Venezuela
25 Romania	26 Norway	27 Finland	28 Hungary
29 Pakistan	30 Algeria	31 Iran	

A second area of contention is: which China is Wood referring to? If the reference is to the People's Republic of China, then it could convincingly be argued that it is more a great power and a nascent superpower than a middle power. If Wood is referring to Taiwan, his classification is similarly problematic, as Taiwan is not recognised as an independent sovereign state by international law.

Thirdly, several academics have problems with this list on normative grounds and they object to certain states with poor human rights records being granted the status of middle power which, for many, is viewed as one of moral leadership. On this basis, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal¹⁶ suggest certain behavioural criteria which middle powers should subscribe to. These are closely

related to whether or not a particular state is a good global citizen. These judgemental criteria, however, are value-based and are specific to certain cultures. As such, the behavioural requirements for middle power leadership are the subject of great controversy.

It has also been noted that different kinds of middle power leadership require different criteria. Essentially, there are two kinds of middle power leadership: subregional or regional leadership, which is seen in spatial terms, and functional leadership which is viewed in terms of leadership in a specific issue area.¹⁹ Thus, while regional leadership requires certain military and economic capabilities, functional leadership requires expertise in a specific issue area, for example nuclear non-proliferation or environmental degradation.

It should be noted that even these seemingly objective criteria for middle power leadership are not unproblematic. For instance, to what extent was South Africa's election to the chair of SADC related to the prestige of its President, Nelson Mandela, as opposed to certain military or economic requirements of leadership? Similarly, there are other variables impacting on a leadership role which are unaccounted for in the literature on middle power leadership. This, in turn, raises doubts as to the analytical usefulness of the middle power concept.

COLLECTIVE INTERESTS VERSUS NATIONAL INTERESTS

Not all analysts view middle powers in benign terms. They argue that, despite claims to the contrary, national self-interest and *realpolitik* concerns still largely influence the foreign policies of these states.

While middle powers seem to be committed to collective interests, at least at the rhetorical level where such interests conflict with the national interest, it is the latter which prevails. For example, while the Canadian Government under the administration of Pierre Trudeau placed a high priority on global economic development, it was also sensitive to the local needs and interests of Canadian industries. Hence, the Canadian Government embarked on a policy of protectionism which witnessed the imposition of quotas on the imports of clothing and footwear from low-cost countries. Similarly, Australia responded with greater protectionism when faced with stiffer competition.²⁰

Middle powers' excessive concern with stability and order in the international system often results in their being supportive of the hegemonic *status quo*. Thus, one Canadian diplomat was quoted as saying, "*Pax Americana is better than no Pax at all.*"²¹

A concomitant of this is that some analysts have noted that Western middle powers, in particular, are not overly anxious to strengthen universal 'egalitarian' bodies where minor powers might gain excessive influence. A good example of this is the resistance displayed on the part of Western middle powers to calls from Third World states for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). In a penetrating examination, David Black²² comments: "... *some middle-sized Western states ... had a strong interest in supporting the norms and institutions of the post-war 'liberal economic order' – the Bretton Woods Institutions and the GATT. Their, and their dominant classes' strong interest in maintaining a relatively open, liberal and stable international economy also contributed to the development of internationalist interests and behavioural patterns, through active support for, and participation in, the major institutions of this economy. Later, when the stability of the international economy seemed threatened by 'Southern' dissatisfaction and demands for a New International Economic Order, some of these states (notably the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) were particularly active in seeking to forge a reformist response which would allow the international economy to meet the challenges,*

while retaining its essential continuity and viability."

The above illustrates that, far from reflecting the collective interests of humanity, Western middle powers are prone to supporting the interests of the North at the expense of the South.

In the same vein, other commentators have viewed middle powers as little more than status-seekers: basically those powers that do not qualify for a place in the ranks of the great powers, but are unwilling to be classified with the 'mediocre rest', seeking alternative roles to exercise leadership. Thus, Touval and Zartman²³ notes that *"[m]ediation by the medium-sized states appears to have been motivated by the desire to enhance their influence and prestige. There should be little wonder that small and medium-sized states seek to enhance their international standing by assuming the role of mediator - they have few ways in which to do so. Moreover, mediating often saves them from having to take sides when pressed to do so in a conflict."*

Reluctance on the part of middle powers to take a stance in a conflict situation is intimately related to their national role conceptions of mediator, bridge or conciliator; and has led to the charge of 'fence-sitting' often levelled against them. Coupled with this is the charge often made by the United States that such middle powers are shirking their international responsibilities and are not engaged in burden sharing.²⁴

Black²⁵ notes that middle power leadership is often based on implicit or explicit assumptions of moral superiority. However, critical examination of middle power foreign policies often contradicts these assumptions of occupying the moral high ground. In this regard, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal²⁶ effectively illustrate this moral relativism by comparing Australian and Canadian rhetoric on Kuwait's sovereignty in the Gulf conflict of 1990-1991 with their silence on Indonesia's invasion and annexation of East Timor in 1975.

In short, middle power leadership is an extremely ambiguous theoretical construct. There is a fierce debate as to what middle powers are and whether they play a positive or negative role in the international system. Given this ambiguity and the fact that theory impacts on policy; it is hardly surprising that Cox²⁷ holds a pessimistic view as to the utility of middle powers in practice: *"Through most of the period between World War II and the present, the middle-power thesis has been more of an idea, a potentiality, than a realised and effective strategy of world politics."*

DOES SOUTH AFRICA QUALIFY FOR MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP?

Despite the ambiguous nature of middle power leadership in theory and practice, it has been noted that certain academics have called on Pretoria to play such a role. In this regard, perhaps the first question should be whether South Africa qualifies for such a role according to the various criteria listed above.

On the basis of its GNP, South Africa certainly qualifies for middle power leadership. However, it is also true that this aggregate figure hides wide discrepancies between rich and poor within the country. According to Ellen Sirleaf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), South Africa is two nations in one: a minority of the population with a *per capita* income far in excess of US \$3 000 a year, and a majority with US \$300 a year like much of Africa.²⁸

In this context, some commentators have suggested that South Africa should not pursue the role of regional leader, as this leadership would come with certain responsibilities. Sirleaf, for instance, further commented that it is imperative that South African resources should not be

used outside the country until the lot of its own citizens, who had so long been denied, is improved.

Similarly problematic are the behavioural criteria for middle power leadership and whether Pretoria can be construed as a well-behaved global citizen.

On the one hand, numerous examples can be cited where South Africa played the role of a good global citizen. For example, in July 1994, President Mandela convened a meeting in Pretoria with the Heads of State of Angola, Mozambique and Zaire to act as a facilitator between Angola and Zaire on the issue of alleged Zairian support for Jonas Savimbi's Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). This resulted in a follow-up meeting which witnessed the revival of the Joint Security Commission (JSC) between the two countries.²⁹

On the other hand, South Africa's friendship with Cuba and Libya is seen by the US, in particular, as not in keeping with being a good international citizen. This is further compounded by Pretoria's proposed sale of weapons technology to countries such as Syria. But these behavioural criteria for middle power leadership are extremely problematic, since one might ask whose values are employed to judge whether this is a bad or a good state. After all, US support for some of the world's most malevolent dictators – Somoza, Batista and Mobutu to name a few – are well-documented.

While South Africa's meeting of GNP and behavioural criteria for middle power leadership may be seen as unresolved at best, it should be noted that Pretoria has demonstrated that it has the material capability and the technical expertise to function as a middle power at both the spatial and the functional levels. This was revealed during the Lesotho constitutional crisis in October 1994, and during the negotiations for the extension of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** (NPT) in 1995.³⁰

DOES SOUTH AFRICA HAVE THE POLITICAL WILL?

More important than having the capabilities is whether South Africa has the political will to take on the mantle of leader in both regional and functional terms. The ability to make a sound judgement on this aspect is confounded by the ambiguity generated by the contradictory statements emanating from this country's leadership.

On the one hand, South Africa's leaders seem distinctly reticent about taking on a leadership role on a crisis-ridden continent. In his address to the United Nations General Assembly in June 1994,³¹ Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo stated: *"Uppermost in our minds, however, are the responsibilities which our Government of National Unity has towards the people of South Africa. Our primary goal is to strive to create a better life for all our people ... [as a result] South Africa will have extremely limited resources for anything which falls outside the Reconstruction and Development Programme."*

This view was further entrenched by Pierre Dietrichsen,³¹ a senior Department of Foreign Affairs official, who wrote that *"South Africa is a medium military power with limited resources at its disposal for use in the international arena, for example for peacekeeping operations. Although South Africa's foreign debt is low by world standards, the country's own development needs are such that South Africa could not become a substantial donor of development assistance."* At the same time, Mr Aziz Pahad, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, was quoted as saying that a leadership role was being thrust upon South Africa, and South Africa could no longer sit on the sidelines.³³

It is imperative that for a successful and coherent South African foreign policy to develop, this ambivalence among policy-makers needs to end.

WHAT ABOUT 'FOLLOWERSHIP'?

Cooper, Higgott and Nossal³⁴ have argued that leadership is based on some measure of consent among followers. However, the level of consent among South Africa's neighbours on the issue of its leadership has also been characterised by ambiguity.

Consider, in this regard, the case of Nigeria. In late 1995, President Mandela led a one-man campaign against Nigeria on account of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni activists. Abacha was unmoved. Africa was embarrassed, and distanced itself from Pretoria's stance, both at the levels of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The Commonwealth fudged. By April 1996, South Africa's ambassador was back in Abuja; while his bosses joined African resistance to a UN resolution that would have appointed an international human rights watchdog over Nigeria.³⁵ Clearly, the lesson is that the world will not simply follow because Madiba and the Rainbow nation is blowing the whistle. This view is further entrenched if one considers South African foreign policy reversals on the questions of dual recognition in the 'Two Chinas' dilemma and Pretoria's failed attempts to mediate in Angola, Zambia and Algeria.

On the other hand, these 'failures' must be balanced by the leading role Pretoria is playing to resolve the crisis in Zaire, and by calls from Namibia, Mozambique and Tanzania for the South African Navy to protect their maritime resources, South Africa's election to chair SADC, and soon also the Non-Aligned Movement.³⁶

How does one account for this ambiguity among so-called followers? South Africa's level of development, the stature of its leadership and its relative military and economic strength are being called upon to aid the continent. At the same time, there are real fears about South Africa and middle power leadership. These revolve around the fact that Pretoria's foreign policy is characterised more by continuity than change; that the coercive diplomacy which characterised South African foreign policy during the destabilisation years of the 1980s has been replaced by the assertive diplomacy of the 1990s under the new mantle of middle power leadership. This, generally, is seen in terms of a benevolent leadership by Pretoria. But a concomitant of this, is that our neighbours are accorded a rather passive role: the relationship is characterised more by paternalism than by partnership.

THE WAY FORWARD: CO-OPERATIVE LEADERSHIP VERSUS MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP

Given the ambiguities of middle power leadership – both as an academic construct and in practice, and because of the real fears among our neighbours – it is imperative that middle power leadership, as a foreign policy orientation, needs to be eschewed in favour of what could be termed co-operative leadership. Here, leadership is more diffuse and the emphasis is on consensus-seeking among the various players. This kind of leadership, which the Department of Foreign Affairs has embarked upon, has already borne fruit. Consider in this regard, South Africa's active participation in OAU efforts at bringing conflict to an end in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Somalia.³⁷ It should also be noted that the constitutional crisis in Lesotho in October 1994 was defused by South Africa, acting in alliance with Zimbabwe and Botswana.

To be sure, co-operative leadership does have its down-side. For instance, the search for consensus might slow attempts to act quickly as and when a crisis develops. This, however, has to be balanced against addressing regional fears of South African domination. For example, no charge of status-seeker can be levelled against this form of leadership. Moreover, historical experience has indicated that where such regional fears are left unchecked – Kenya's role within the East African Community, Chile's hegemonic role in the Andean League and Nigeria's leadership position within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) come to mind – the entire regional project may be scuppered.

The principle of co-operative leadership, moreover, has deep roots within the African National Congress: "... *the construction of a new regional order will be a collective endeavour of all the free peoples of Southern Africa and cannot be imposed either by extra-regional forces or any self-appointed 'regional power' ... a democratic South Africa should therefore explicitly renounce all hegemonic ambitions in the region. It should resist all pressure to become the 'regional power' at the expense of the rest of the sub-continent; instead it should seek to create a new form of economic interaction in Southern Africa based on the principles of mutual benefit and interdependence.*"³⁸

Co-operative leadership is also leadership by example. One senior Department of Foreign Affairs official, Johan Marx,³⁹ puts it succinctly: "... *the greatest contribution which South Africa can make to the development of Africa is by demonstrating that effective and corruption-free administration, constant maintenance of existing infrastructure, and in the long run, a democratic system in one form or another are essential prerequisites for sustained development. If South Africa could render that service to Africa, it would be a leadership role of which all Africa could be proud.*"

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38. ANC Working Group on International Affairs, *Foreign Policy in a New Democratic South Africa*, in Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 227.
39. Marx, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

SOUTH AFRICAN REGIONAL POLICY IN PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

This Article is a brief response to the current debate on South African foreign policy. A number of points, often raised, are dealt with very briefly. The idea is to comment on and make some suggestions regarding further areas for investigation and research. The discussion focuses mostly on South Africa's regional policy and attempts to put it in the context of 'general' South African foreign policy, as well as in a broader perspective.

Regional policy is foreign policy relating to the region of which the country in question is part. In the South African case, it can refer to South African policy towards Africa as a whole, in which case it may perhaps also be called 'continental' or 'Africa policy', or towards Southern Africa – however that concept is defined. For purposes of this discussion, the broader meaning, implying 'Africa policy', will be under discussion, unless otherwise specified

Making a distinction between regional policy and 'general' foreign policy, raises the question regarding the nature of the relationship between the two. This should be investigated more thoroughly than can be attempted here, and not only with regard to South Africa, but in the broader context as well. Common wisdom has it that relations with one's neighbours are usually most immediate, as these will have a direct effect on how a country is otherwise able to function in the international community.¹ Whether this implies that 'other' foreign policy is simply an extension of regional policy, is doubtful. Different factors come into play in different contexts. However, it may be true that 'general' foreign policy should be understood in terms of regional policy, rather than the reverse. In the South African case, it has been understood by policy-makers for a long period that the country's fortunes elsewhere were intimately connected to, if not determined by what it manages to attain in Africa. The new South Africa, of course, has made Africa the central focus of its foreign policy. How does South African regional and 'general' foreign policy compare and interrelate? How does it compare with and relate to past South African regional and general foreign policy and with the foreign policies of other countries, at least in terms of some salient characteristics commonly ascribed to it?

INCOHERENCE AND A NON-PURPOSEFUL FOREIGN POLICY

There can be no question that South African regional policy has undergone an almost complete change since the bad old days of conflict over the continuation of the old regime. Certainly, there were different interpretations regarding the exact nature and intent of the policy during that time.² However, few doubted that it was purposeful and coherent. This is an obvious area in which there has been a change: one finds repeatedly in the literature on South African foreign policy that it is criticised for not being coherent and having no clear purpose. For example, the point is made again and again that although South African foreign policy is supposed to emphasise the promotion of human rights and democracy, thus far the country has not given any real effect to this. The Nigerian case is often cited in this regard.³ Naturally, coherency, or the lack of it, does not only apply to regional policy, nor only to the issues of human rights and democracy. Relations with Cuba, Iran, Syria and the People's Republic of China are obviously also relevant, and the issues of arms trade and nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament also come into play.

A number of interrelated questions arise from this:

- Is the South African foreign (including regional) policy unique in its apparent incoherence and in apparently not being purposeful?
- What are the reasons for the incoherence and associated non-purposefulness?
- Can this state of affairs be changed?

It would seem as if South African foreign policy, especially with regard to the twin issues of human rights and support for democracy, is not that unique in its apparent incoherence and non-purposefulness. This has certainly often been the reaction of foreign diplomats when the matter has been discussed at workshops or symposia and it has been claimed that 'normal' foreign policy is to an appreciable extent fairly incoherent. This contrasts rather sharply with South African regional policy under the conditions of conflict during the 1980s when it was quite obvious that the policy-makers were fairly single-minded. Likewise, under the old regime it was quite clear that the general foreign policy priorities were the defence of the *status quo* in South Africa, and countering the effects of international action against it. In spite of this apparent clarity

of purpose, South African foreign policy during the 1970s was described by at least one commentator as *ad hoc* and reactive.⁴ The implication was that, even though it was clear what South African decision-makers wanted to attain, the actual execution of the policy was often haphazard and therefore not that coherent. This seems to bring one back to the description of current regional and foreign policy: clarity with regard to purpose, but apparent incoherence in implementation. The main difference between 'old' and 'new' foreign policy seems to lie in the greater number of aims included in the new foreign policy and the apparent problem of inconsistent prioritisation – and this is probably the more 'normal' situation faced by most other states.

Academics have also begun to put the new South Africa's foreign policy into theoretical perspective. Van Aardt,⁵ for example, points out that much of what can be said about South Africa's foreign policy, can also be applied to those of many other states, especially those in transition. If we accept this – and we probably have to, as it would be difficult to point to many examples to disprove that most countries tend to be rather inconsistent when applying, for example, the criterion of respect for human rights and active support for democracy to their foreign relations – the question arises why states, including South Africa, find it so difficult to be coherent with regard to foreign policy issues such as these. Answers to this question can probably be found in a number of areas, as will be indicated below. What is interesting, is that we seem instinctively to look first for the reasons for incoherence in the foreign policy-making process itself. This then raises questions pertaining to constitutional provisions, the role of different personalities and the nature and state of bureaucratic processes.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS, PERSONALITIES AND BUREAUCRATIC PROCESSES

According to Henwood, the final South African Constitution leaves more to the President with regard to foreign relations, than did the transitional Constitution.⁶ The implication is that the role of Parliament may be weakened further in future. However, does this have any bearing on coherency? Is a single person necessarily more inclined to formulate a coherent policy than a body of people in the form of Parliament or the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs? Is the incoherence that has been perceived due to different forces influencing policy in different situations, or is it due to the interplay between various forces within the decision-making process? If the latter, will this be a passing phase which will come to an end, for example, once the Department of Foreign Affairs has been fully transformed?⁷ While press reports have often implied that the Department of Foreign Affairs is still dominated by the 'old guard', resulting in a lessening of its influence in the policy-making process, Department of Foreign Affairs officials report that there is in fact today in many cases better relations between 'desks' and the political leadership, that more consultation takes place at these levels, and that it may even be said that more weight is sometimes given to the opinions expressed at 'desk' level than before.

Closely connected to these questions and issues are those related to the roles played by the Foreign Minister, Mr Alfred Nzo, and his deputy, Mr Aziz Pahad. The former has often been made out by the press as a 'non-factor' in the foreign policy process and the latter as the true 'power behind the throne' in foreign affairs.⁸ Contrary to these reports, one also hears that Mr Nzo is in fact an extremely effective negotiator, in particular in multilateral situations.

The current and future role of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki is another matter which needs to be investigated more closely. Is some of the 'versatility' in foreign policy due to his increasing influence, and in what way will he interrelate with Parliament, with the Portfolio Committee, and with the Department of Foreign Affairs if and when he takes over from President Mandela? Will he have other forces playing a role which may not have been influential before? Add to this the

relationship between the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Trade and Industry,⁹ and it becomes clear that research should certainly focus more closely on processes of foreign policy-making in South Africa. As in the past, though perhaps less so with the current emphasis on openness and transparency, these processes take place largely within a 'black box' which is not easy to open. It is also doubtful whether such analysis will deliver all the reasons for the alleged incoherence of South African foreign policy and more specifically South African regional policy and the search therefore should continue.

PRIORITIES AND 'NEW FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES'

It is inside the 'black box' of policy-making that priorities are set among different aims in particular situations. Politics is about both interests and values. However, it would seem that in a play-off, the former normally wins and South African decision-makers know this. As a result, South African decision-makers have been careful not to infringe openly and actively on the interests of other states in pursuit of stated values and for obvious reasons: South African best interests are served in this manner. During his 1997 visit to Singapore, President Mandela verbalised this by saying that South Africa would not let the issues of human rights and democracy stand in the way of beneficial economic relations with other countries. Is this a matter of prioritising under a specific set of circumstances or inconsistency? Is there a clear hierarchy of foreign policy aims which stipulates that the promotion of human rights and democracy is the first principle? This does not appear to be the case – and, indeed, why should it be the case?

As Van Aardt¹⁰ indicates, part of the problem with the new South African foreign policy, as with many others, lies in the nature of the issues involved: "*... traditional foreign policy decision-making processes, based largely on the realist world view, do not facilitate the making of any policy that is at odds with the basic rules of the international system.*"

This means that there is an inherent tension between the issues involved in much of current foreign policy-making and the context in which the policies are made and implemented. Thus, the old policy only seemed more 'coherent' because of the approach followed, which made foreign policy something that was always directly related to the concerns of a state (security, autonomy, welfare, status and prestige), and accorded with the basic principle on which the state system was based (sovereignty and the rule of non-intervention). The issues simply did not reflect concerns with 'new' goals or values, such as human rights or democratisation.¹¹ Because of the contradictions involved, it is one thing to include pursuit of these as foreign policy goals, but quite another to implement such policies. The alleged incoherence, non-purposefulness or inconsistency of South African regional and general foreign policy, as well as of the foreign policies of other countries, may therefore arise from the contradictions between the issues involved and the approach applied in their pursuit, rather than from problems within the policy-making process or an inability to prioritise.

A word of warning with regard to democratisation as a foreign policy goal should be sounded. Much has been written on the relationship between democracy and foreign policy, and recently the theme has been taken up again with particular reference to the impact of democratisation on international security, identified and explained with special reference to transitional regimes.¹² The conclusion reached is that the transition to democracy could have quite serious negative effects on the foreign policy of the transitional state and through that, on the security of its region. Of course, one may disagree with the findings or argue that this may apply to Russia, but not necessarily to African countries. The point is that support of democratisation elsewhere in Africa may not necessarily imply a short term contribution to regional security. Without in any

way discouraging democratisation as a goal for South African regional policy, it may be important to at least be aware of the possible repercussions for regional security and to pose some questions regarding ways and means of helping to effect democratisation while minimising any possible negative impact on security in Africa.

THE DIVERSITY OF FOREIGN POLICY INSTRUMENTS AND OF ACTORS

A further implication of what has been said, is that due to the nature of the issues involved, they may not be susceptible to normal, traditional instruments of foreign policy. As more and more 'new' issues are included in foreign policy agendas, the problems associated with these will hold true for more and more states and will probably become a permanent feature of foreign policy. A simple comparison of the principal aims of earlier and current South African regional and foreign policies bears this out, and the same would apply to the foreign policies of many other states. The fact is, quite simply, that the traditional foreign policy instruments may not be effective in dealing with many of these issues¹³ and the attempts at 'forcing' this or at finding alternative instruments or combinations of instruments may well seem to be a very 'untidy' process. Chances are that it may also resemble incoherence or seem non-purposeful.

Criticism has also been expressed regarding an 'overuse' of multilateral diplomacy by South Africa. The old South Africa much preferred bilateral diplomacy, and the new emphasis on multilateral relations is one of the more salient changes which has taken place in the conduct of foreign relations by the new Government. However, multilateral diplomacy is more visible and its increased use does not necessarily imply the non-use or 'under-use' of bilateral methods, which tend to be 'quieter'. Van Aardt's analysis of the handling of the Nigerian issue, for example, shows that ample (unsuccessful) use has been made of the latter. The fact is that international political practice offers a variety of instruments and that all have a role to play, depending on the particular circumstances. When taking into account what has already been said about the unsuitability of traditional instruments in dealing with many of the 'new issues', the argument for preferring bilateral methods to multilateral methods may weaken further.

South African foreign policy also functions within an environment in which a great variety of international actors participate. This does not only imply a variety of state actors, but also many non-state actors as well. This fact of modern international politics is expressed in the concept of the so-called 'mixed actor perspective'.¹⁴ The implication for South African regional and general foreign policy is quite far-reaching. Both as targets and as potential allies, actors are no longer a monolithic group.¹⁵ Certainly, many of Africa's problems cannot be addressed without taking into account the role of non-state actors, such as private companies operating there, opposition groupings, and many others.

PERCEPTIONS AND SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY

It would seem from what has been said thus far that at least some of the common perceptions regarding the weak points in South African foreign policy and its implementation can be refuted as not necessarily accurate or based on an oversimplification and, at the very least, that such 'weak points' are not confined to South Africa alone. South African regional policy, in particular, has come in for sharp criticism as inconsistent. However, as has been pointed out, on closer analysis it would seem that South African policy, both regional and 'general', is quite normal – at least when compared to similar cases. It is not that unique, and there are a number of sound reasons for its being the way it is. Perhaps, it is simply a case of too much having been expected of the new South Africa, its policies towards its neighbours in Africa, and its policies in general. The new South Africa occupies the moral high ground and therefore it is expected to

comply with all, even rather exaggerated expectations. Perhaps, and this has been the basic contention here, it is time to place the 'new' South Africa's policies towards Africa in some perspective, to attempt to rectify some misperceptions and to judge it on the same basis as that of other states. South Africa will not be able to put all, most or even many wrongs in Africa right. It will act much like all other states, according to prevailing perceptions of what is 'in South Africa's best interest' in any single set of circumstances, often incoherently, especially while decision-making processes are still very much in flux, but also where 'new' issues and a variety of instruments and actors are involved. The plea here, therefore, is for a more realistic appraisal of South African external policies. This does not mean that those that make and implement policies should not be pushed hard to make decisions that can be justified on the basis of declared aims, and that South Africans can be proud of, or that the most effective and preferable ways of implementing these policies should not be pursued. However, pushing for this and criticising existing policies and their implementation on the basis that it is somehow uniquely inadequate, is something entirely different.

LEADERSHIP IN THE REGION, LEADERSHIP ELSEWHERE

South African attempts to assist the transition process in Zaire and general support for peacekeeping in Africa,¹⁶ should be applauded. Admittedly, the former is an arduous and thus far not a very rewarding process. However, such actions give effect to the aims and principles expounded as underlying South African policy in the continent of Africa. It also focuses South African efforts in the region, where it is much needed and where South Africa has a far better chance of being effective and making a difference, than anywhere else. South Africa's chairpersonship of SADC also offers countless opportunities.

However, South African leadership in Africa does not exclude leadership elsewhere, should the circumstances be favourable. The country should be careful not to be too ambitious, trying to deal with too much at the same time. However, the relevant decision-makers have already shown, through South African policies on the continent, that they are sensitive to this and careful not to overextend themselves. Such caution may not always be popular with all partners within, for example, the Non-Aligned Movement, where South Africa has now also been called to leadership. One thinks here in particular of India with regard to the issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Effective leadership should be responsible, yet daring, and demands a careful weighing of opportunities and capabilities. Academic observers of South African foreign policy could best aid the process by doing what they are best suited to do: academic effort should be directed more in the area of sound basic research into the issues, the interplay of actors and the possibilities regarding effective state actions, and should perhaps involve a little less intense scrutinising of every move made (or not made) by South Africa in the region and in the world. We may have reached the point in the debate on South African regional and foreign policy where some more substantial inputs are also needed.

ENDNOTES

1. This is, for example, expressed in the so-called 'concentric circle approach', as formulated by L J Cantori and S L Spiegel, **The International Politics of Regions: A Comparative Approach**, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1970.
2. See M E Muller, **Kompeterende Interpretasies van Suid-Afrika se Regionale Beleid**, unpublished D Litt et Phil thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, 1991.
3. See for example M van Aardt, *A Foreign Policy to Die For: South Africa's Response to the*

4. G C Olivier, **Suid-Afrika se Buitelandse Beleid**, Academica, Pretoria, 1977.
5. Van Aardt, *op. cit.*
6. Henwood, *South African Foreign Policy and International Practice – 1995/96 - An Analysis*, in **South African Yearbook of International Law**, 21, VerLoren van Themaat Centre for Public Law Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1996.
7. See for example M E Muller, *South Africa and the Diplomacy of Reintegration*, **Diplomatic Studies Programme Discussion Papers**, 16, Centre for the Study of Diplomacy, Leicester, April 1996, for a discussion of the transformation of the DFA.
8. See Muller, *op. cit.*, 1996.
9. See for example the reference to this in M E Muller, *The Foreign Ministry of South Africa: From Isolation to Integration to Coherency*, paper read at a conference on **Foreign Ministries: Change and Adaptation**, Canadian High Commission, London, 5-7 February 1997.
10. Van Aardt, *op. cit.*
11. Van Aardt, *op. cit.*, p.108.
12. A V Kozhemiakin, *Democratization and Foreign Policy Change: The Case of the Russian Federation*, **Review of International Studies**, 23, 1997, pp. 49-74.
13. Also see Van Aardt, *op. cit.*
14. See for example B Hocking and M Smith, **World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations**, Prentice Hall, London, 1995.
15. Also see Van Aardt, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
16. See for example J Cilliers and M Malan, *From Destabilization to Peacekeeping in Southern Africa*, **Africa Insight**, 26(4), 1996, pp. 339-346; C de Coning, *Making Peace in Africa: South Africa's Role in the Organisation of African Unity*, **Global Dialogue**, 2(1), February 1997.