
**PROMOTION OF LIBERAL VALUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY:
BEYOND THE STRUCTURAL IMPERATIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM?**

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s led to a multilateral international system no longer divided by contending forces of capitalism and communism. In the context of South Africa, the end of the Cold War occurred at a juncture where the apartheid government was being challenged by pro-democracy forces that have fought against it for decades. The developments in the international system and in the country led to South Africa adopting universal liberal values not only in its constitution, but also in its international relations. Foreign policy documents and statements by the ministry of Foreign Affairs also reflected the country's aspiration of becoming a mediator, a facilitator for democracy and a peacemaker especially in the context of Africa.

International expectation mounted as South Africa was perceived as possessing the capacity to act in a manner that advances democratic values and which gives voice to the weak nations of the world. However, the aura of a post-apartheid South Africa that would act not only in its interest, but also in the interest of the world community never fully materialised. South Africa failed to act in a manner consistent with its stated commitment to democratic values when it recognised Peoples Republic of China, an undemocratic and repressive government. It also marched into Lesotho in 1998, resulting in the destabilisation of this tiny Southern African country. These events led to an increasing criticism of the South African government. Some argued that South Africa was still inexperienced given its recent emergence as a world player. Others blamed the inconsistency on a too broad and ambitious foreign policy that set itself for failure.

This study seeks to contribute to the conceptual understanding of the debate regarding the ambiguous nature of South Africa's foreign policy behaviour. It situates the conceptualisation of South Africa's foreign policy within the predominant debates in international relations between realism, political structuralism and pluralism. Firstly, it holds that the end of the Cold War and ascendancy of globalist conceptions of international relations did not lead to the inadequacy of political structuralism as an organising framework. Secondly, it attempts to clarify the gap between South Africa's

foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour by employing the assumptions advanced by political structuralism. Thirdly, a case study of South Africa's foreign policy towards China, Lesotho, the Great Lakes and Swaziland is carried out. Here it is demonstrated that the ambiguities of South Africa's foreign policy are a function of the constraints imposed by the political and economic structure of the international system. It draws its conclusion by providing methodological recommendations to South Africa's foreign policy makers and future researchers in the field of foreign policy analysis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADFL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation of Congo-Zaire
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
ANWFZ	African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone
AU	African Union
CRC	Constitutional Review Commission
BCP	Basotho Congress Party
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GNU	Government of National Unity
HUMARAS	Human Rights Association of Swaziland
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IFI's	International Financial Institutions
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
LDF	Lesotho Defence Force
MNC's	Multinational Corporations
NCACC	National Conventional Arms Control Committee
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
OUA	Organisation of African Unity
PRC	People's Republic of China
PUDEMO	People's Democratic Movement
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
ROC	Republic of China
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACU	Southern African Customs Union

SAD	Swaziland Alliance for Democracy
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SFTU	Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions
SSN	Swaziland Solidarity Network
SWAYCO	Swaziland Youth Congress
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the research

The end of the Cold War led to a rapid and significant change in the international system¹. The changes that took place included the decline in the conflict-ridden relations between states, a decline of military issues and the ascendancy of social, environmental and economic issues. Social and economic issues relegated to the background during the Cold War gained primacy in the international agenda. Issues of development growth, equity and human development became the most pressing issues in international politics². The dichotomy between domestic and international politics got eroded. Domestic and foreign policies were no longer put in separate compartments, as had been the case during the Cold War³.

States also became aware of commonality of interests between themselves and started co-operating towards the betterment of the international system of states. Despite the fact that states remained sovereign, foreign policy analysts began preoccupying themselves with issues of progressive democracy such as respect for human rights and human security⁴. These values were not only espoused rhetorically, but also entrenched in

¹ According to Waltz, a political structuralist the international system of states is an anarchic entity that has an ordering principle in that it makes states functionally similar. He also defines it in terms of distribution of power amongst its units (states).

² Steel, R. 1995. "The Domestic Core of Foreign Policy", *The Atlantic Online* (www.theatlantic.com/), p. 3

³ Steel argues that, "our domestic troubles are not in a realm separate from our foreign policy", p. 3.

⁴ Human security includes issues such as war crimes against particular ethnic and gender groups, environmental justice, poverty and social equality. They signal a move away from traditional security issues to putting people as the focus of security analysis. The traditional security issues concerned

forums in which states negotiate and co-operate. These forums include governmental organisations such as the United Nations (UN), multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Commonwealth and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

This changing nature of the international system from a state centred one to one characterized by non-state actors led to opening up of state borders. As states democratised, powerful groups that were once undermined by the primacy of states were unleashed⁵. Non-states actors within and outside individual state borders became active and influenced the course of international events. States that were once used as an arena for proxy wars between the superpowers started grappling with internal strife in an attempt to fit themselves within this changing international conjuncture.

Change is an important factor in the study of international relations. The changing international system led to the emergence of a number of dominant themes in the study of International Relations in the 1990s. It not only impacted on the structure of the international system, processes and actors, it also had inevitable implications for the manner in which International Relations was studied⁶

themselves with state's national security. See Kilgour, D. "The UN and the challenge of human security", remarks by secretary of state to the UN Association in Canada, February 18, 2000.

⁵ International politics ceased being the one defined by Hans Morgenthau "is a struggle for power between states". See Morgenthau, H. "A Realist Theory of International Relations", in J. Vasques. 1990. Classics of International Relations. Prentice Hall: New Jersey

⁶ Buzan, B. 1991. People, States and Fear: An agenda for International Security in the Post Cold War Era. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p. 1. According to him change lies at the heart of effective enquiry

The transformation that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s also posed critical questions for theories premised on the state as a primary referent in international politics⁷. Blurring state borders, the break down in the dichotomy between international and domestic politics and the prominence of non-state actors created a far more interdependent world. Scholars such as Keohane and Nye began arguing that state-centric perspectives were becoming an "anachronism" in that they could only partially explain the emerging architecture of international politics⁸. It is against this background that debates between realists, political structuralists and pluralists gained new momentum. These debates revolved around what ought to be the unit of analysis in the study of International Relations.

In South Africa, the abolition of apartheid also ushered in an era of dramatic change. South Africa stopped being a state isolated from the world to a one recognised internationally. With the introduction of democracy in 1994, South Africa began conducting its foreign policy in a manner that promoted its democratic culture globally⁹. Formal relations were entered into with a diversity of states and South Africa started participating in broader issues that did not necessarily affect its national security¹⁰. Commentators began arguing that, "South Africa's foreign relations should be

⁷ Naidoo, S. 1997. New Rules for Security and Survival: Southern Africa's Adaptation to a Changing World Environment. Rhodes University MA Thesis: South Africa, p. 4.

⁸ Keohane, R. & Nye, J. 1989. Power and Interdependence. Harper Collins: San Francisco. Also see Clark, I. 1999. Globalisation and International Relations Theory. Oxford University Press: USA, p. 2.

⁹ Venter, D. "South African Foreign Policy In A Time of Change: The Africa Dimension", *Journal of Third World Spectrum* 5, No. 2 (Fall 1998), p. 14.

¹⁰ South Africa has participated in many international issues such as the Ban Landmine Treaty, extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and brokering of peace treaties in Africa. See Muller, M and Carlsnaes, W. 1997. Change and South Africa's External Relations ITP:(SA, p. 73.

understood in the context of an international move away from geopolitics of conflict and war to that of peace and cooperation”¹¹.

In tandem with the political change, South African international relations thinking took a drastic turn in the immediate aftermath of the 1994 elections. It was now argued that South African foreign policy could be fully situated within approaches that share a global rather than a state-centric conceptualisation”¹². Foreign policy analysts refer to South Africa’s foreign policy as having evolved in a manner that promotes universal liberal values and its democratic political culture globally.

International politics after the 1990s is explained adequately by pluralism, in that they dislodge the nation state as a unit of analysis. They criticise the notion that the state should be the unit of analysis in the study of international relations. This conception of international relations advanced by pluralists such as Burton¹³, which talks of the multi-form and multi-agenda character of international politics gained prominence amongst foreign policy analysts. This led to relations between states and non-state actors being conceptualised as forming an interdependent international society. Due to this nature of international relations the gap between domestic and international politics increasingly became non-existent in the writings of pluralist thinkers. This led to the conception that a democratic country like South Africa was informed by its internal political culture in the conduct of its foreign relations. This conception placed no emphasis on the foreign

¹¹ Du Plessis, A. “ A Geopolitical Context: A Sea of Change from Old to New Geo-politics”, in M..Muller and W. Carlsnaes. 1997. Change and South Africa’s External Relations. ITP: South Africa, p.17.

¹² Muller, M. & Carlsnaes, W. Change and South Africa’s External Relations. ITP: South Africa, p. 73.

policies of states except conceiving of international politics as a web of relations in which states no longer play a dominant role¹⁴. This analysis amounts to a mere description of what the international system looks like. It does not address the preoccupation with survival by individual states and the unequal nature of relations. It is this conception that this work finds problematic.

1.2 **Problem Statement**

The view that international politics is a complex web of relations characterised by declining relevance of foreign policies of states does not account for the constraints inherent in this very system. It cannot be inferred that due to dissolving borders, domestic politics of states are seamlessly linked to international politics. Furthermore, the belief that there exists a web of relations between states without any qualifications, fails to account for the constraints that states big and small contend with in the international system. By the same token, South African foreign policy cannot be understood if the structure of the international system within which it operates is completely ignored.

The changing international system of the late 1980s and early 1990s led to the blossoming of liberal democracies across the world. In the context of South Africa, the changing international system of the 1990s meant that injustices such as apartheid could no longer be accommodated. It can be argued that the demise of apartheid South Africa

¹³ Pluralists such as Burton, Keohane and Nye saw the international system as being based on a variety of relationships and not on states only. See Salmon, T. Issues in International Relations. Routledge: London, p. 303.

can at least be partly explained in terms of the international environment, whose balance of forces was also changing. Shifting balance of forces meant that South Africa could no longer justify an apartheid state. Pressure imposed by the international course of events compelled South Africa to abandon apartheid; it was no longer supported by the international political structure¹⁵.

Nevertheless, the change that took place after 1990 in the international system did not yield an order enforcing authority¹⁶. All states, including democracies such as South Africa are still squarely placed in the ambit of an anarchical international system. The change in the contours of global politics in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War did not mean that states ceased to be constrained by the structural imperatives of the international political system. Strategic factors still play a role in foreign policies of states. South Africa desires to champion liberal values of human rights, freedom, self-determination, democracy and development. However, it is thwarted by systemic constraints of anarchy, which require it to put strategic factors to the fore. This partly explains why South Africa speaks of human rights and at the same time behaves in a manner that seemingly contradicts its stated foreign policy goals.

¹⁴ Viotti, P & Kauppi, M. 1987. International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond. Macmillan Publishing Company, Incl: USA, p. 228.

¹⁵ The contribution played by domestic forces is acknowledged, but international pressure also paid dividends in the fight against apartheid. See Vale, P. "Whose world is it anyway? International Relations in South Africa", in M. Dyer & L. Mangasarian 1989. The Study of International Relations: The State of the Art. Macmillan: London, p. 206.

¹⁶ According to Waltz change of the 1990s did not yield an international community of states due to the absence of a binding international authority independent of states. See Waltz, K. 1988. Military Power and International politics. Langham, Md: University Press of America, p. 626.

South Africa rejoined the international system of states not as an all-powerful state. It still has to find a niche and gain a meaningful voice in the international system. Situated in the developing world, which is increasingly made insecure by problems such as indebtedness, repressive governments, conflict¹⁷ and epidemics such as AIDS, the constraints imposed by the environment within which it operates tend to weigh more heavily on countries of its stature¹⁸.

1.3 Objectives of this study

This study poses analytical questions regarding the conceptualisation of South Africa's foreign policy. It situates South Africa's foreign policy within the dominant theoretical debates of realism, pluralism and political structuralism. The objective here is to assess and demonstrate the continued relevance of the assumptions of political structuralism over pluralist ones¹⁹. This is done in an attempt to conceptualise the foreign policy ambiguities²⁰ within the context of the systemic constraints imposed on South Africa by the political and economic structure of the international system. A limited number of case studies are used to test the hypothesis that the lack of a coherent foreign policy is a function of systemic constraints. It is believed that it is through understanding these

¹⁷ According to the Great Lakes Policy Forum Report, "Africa is ravaged by an integrated zone of conflicts that runs from Angola through Sudan crossing the Great Lakes region", 2 December 1999. Conflicts are by no means confined to this region, since there are other conflicts in places like, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Angola and Ivory Coast.

¹⁸ Schrire, R. & Silke, D. "Foreign Policy: the domestic context" in Muller, M & Carlsnaes, W 1997. Change in South Africa's external relations. ITP: SA, p. 3.

¹⁹ Note that political structuralism is an extension on what had been the basic assumptions of realism. This means that realism has some continued relevance for instance in so far as it acknowledged the importance of the nation state in international relations. See Waltz, K. "Evaluating Theories", American Political Science Review, 91, December 1997, p. 914.

²⁰ Pfister, R. 2000. South Africa's Recent Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Issues and Literature. CIS: Zurich, p. 12

constraints that a coherent foreign policy can be formulated. The international system shows elements of continuity and renders political structuralism a relevant analytical framework. Whilst the growing relevance of pluralist assumptions is acknowledged, their dominance in international relations cannot explain the persistence of the international state system.

1.4 **Limitations of this study**

This study limits itself to the analysis of foreign policy vis-à-vis foreign policy behaviour. It acknowledges the pertinence of other sources of foreign policy such as institutions²¹ and the bureaucratic process of foreign policy making. However, it confines itself to a conception of the rift between foreign policy and actual foreign policy behaviour. Secondly, it does this with reference to secondary literature. Finally, in its case study approach it selects a limited number of cases, which illustrate, but do not purport to exhaust all the pertinent case studies regarding South Africa's foreign policy conduct.

1.5 **Structure of this study**

The next four chapters propose to take the debates introduced above further, with a view to testing the hypothesis that South Africa's foreign policy behaviour is a function of the constraints imposed by the political and economic structure of the international system.

²¹ Departments other than the Department of Foreign Affairs have played a pivotal role in South Africa's international relations, e.g. Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). However foreign policy here is

Chapter two assesses the debates between realism, political structuralism and pluralism. The objective of this undertaking is to demonstrate the continued relevance of the political structuralism in the analysis of South Africa foreign policy.

Chapter three examines South Africa's foreign policy against its foreign policy behaviour. The purpose of such an examination is to demonstrate that the contradiction between the two can be explained in terms of structural imperatives of the international system.

Chapter four, using a case study approach, tests the hypothesis that contradictions between South Africa's foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour can be explained in terms of structural imperatives and the distribution of capabilities amongst states in the international system.

Chapter five constitutes the concluding section and endeavours to draw together and summarise the various arguments and findings of this study.

deliberately viewed as an integrated government undertaking rather than through the various efforts of individual departments.

CHAPTER TWO

SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF PREDOMINANT DEBATES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1 Introduction

As much as the end to the Cold War brought change to the international system, the end of apartheid brought in a different foreign policy context for South Africa. The struggle against apartheid was a struggle against a crime against humanity, discrimination and injustices. After 1994 the country became a constitutional democracy and adopted liberal principles as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. Foreign policy not only took into account domestic issues, but also prioritised the promotion of democracy, human rights, sustainable people-centred development and issues of peace and peace building both in Africa and internationally¹. However, a number of occasions South Africa conducted itself in a manner that contradicts these foreign policy goals. As such, one of the difficult challenges facing South Africa has been that of maintaining consistency between its foreign policy discourse and practice. It has been argued that South Africa's foreign policy behaviour is vague, erratic and inconsistent². This inconsistency occurs against a backdrop of domestic challenges such as a precarious social and economic base³.

¹ Le Pere et al argue that South Africa's foreign policy has been ". vacillating between realist and moral internationalism". See le Pere, G, Lambrechts K, & van Nieuwkerk, A. "The burden of the future: South Africa's foreign policy challenges in the new millennium", *Global Dialogue* 4.3, December 1999, p.1.

² Pfister, R 2000. *South Africa's Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Issues and Literature*. CIS: Zurich, p. 12.

³ South Africa maintains a medium human development ranking on the UNDP index, has great income inequality, joblessness and worsening crime on which the government is also expected to deliver. See Le Pere et al., "The burden of the future: South Africa's foreign policy challenges in the new millennium", *Global Dialogue* 4.3, December 1999, p.3.

Despite being a democratic country South Africa therefore faces challenges. These include the inability to unambiguously coordinate and globally promote values consistent with its democratic internal disposition. Some have argued that such an inconsistency is a reflection of complacency on South Africa's part. Others are convinced that the discourse that espouses values such as human rights is only a rhetoric that has no real substance to it⁴. South Africa's failure to practically implement coherent foreign policy is deeper than these comments suggest. An explanation is to be found in broader theoretical issues seldom cited by foreign policy analysts. The theoretical issues revolve around the predominant debates in international relations as to the relevance of the three schools of thought namely realism, pluralism and political structuralism in describing the current reality. Their different assumptions regarding the unit of analysis in international relations, is pertinent in explaining the ambiguities in South Africa's foreign policy.

This chapter seeks to examine the erratic nature of South Africa's foreign policy by situating it within the intellectual debates of these predominant theories of international relations. Such an undertaking is aimed at assessing how these schools of thought conceptually explain the inconsistencies in South Africa's foreign policy. Firstly, an outline of the basic assumptions put forward by these schools of thought is given. Secondly, an attempt is made to demonstrate that political structuralism continues to explain international politics adequately despite the criticism levelled against it by pluralists⁵. Thirdly, it wishes to show that international politics

⁴ Solomon, H. "South Africa's foreign policy and middle power leadership", Institute for Security Studies Monograph 13, *Fairy God Mother, Hegemon or Partner?* May 1997.

⁵ According to Keohane and Nye, "the old international patterns have crumbled and the traditional agenda no longer defines our perils". See Keohane, R and Nye, J. 1989. *Power and Interdependence*. Harper Collins Publishers: USA, p. 3.

is indeed complex and as such no single set of assumptions can wholly explain it⁶. Whilst the relevance of pluralist assumptions is acknowledged, it is argued that political structuralism continues to be of pertinent relevance in the analysis of South African foreign policy.

2.2 Predominant debates in International Relations

Among the dominant debates in international relations has been the debate between state-centric theories and theories of complex interdependence put forward by realists and pluralists. At the heart of these debates has been the fundamental dispute regarding the unit of analysis and motives for state behaviour⁷.

Since the 1940s realism or the “power politics school of thought has dominated international relations⁸. Realists focus on the individual state as the primary referent in international relations. During the Cold War, which was characterised by conflicts between states, the assumptions of realism proved relevant in explaining the nature of international politics. Due to changes in the international system there emerged an intense debate between realists and pluralists who saw the state as becoming superseded by non-state actors. Realism was seen as incapable of explaining the burgeoning social and economic relations in a world in which state borders were becoming porous. Pluralists began arguing that an interdependent world in which non-state actors were primary actors in shaping world politics was emerging. This debate later

⁶ Keohane, R & Nye, J. 1989. *Power and Interdependence*. Harper Collins Publishers: USA, p. 4. Also see Hagan, J. “Domestic Explanations in the analysis of foreign policy”, in L. Neack, J.A.K Hey & P.J. Haney. 1995. *Foreign policy analysis: Continuity and change in its second generation*. Prentice-Hall: New Jersey, p. 12.

⁷ Maghooi, R and Ramberg, B, 1982. *Globalism versus Realism: International Relations’ Third Debate*. Westview Press: USA.

⁸ Evans, G. & Newnham, J. 1998. *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*. Penguin Books: USA, p. 465.

drew on political structuralism, which became a critique and an intellectual extension of realism⁹. This school of thought maintained a state-centric view, but directed attention to the political structure of the international system as the primacy unit of analysis. This debate was made more intense by the developments of 1990, the unexpected end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, which seemed to go against the assumptions of realism.

In the context of South Africa this same debate can be situated in the alleged differences between apartheid and post-apartheid foreign policy. During apartheid, the nature of politics in South Africa led to the pursuit of a realist perspective¹⁰. It is argued that, “the period 1948 to 1994 saw a foreign policy that was dramatically simple, based on single issue strategies to ensure the survival of the white regime”¹¹. The foreign policy strategies that were adopted in the mid 1980s such as “Total National Strategy” were indicative of a preoccupation with national security issues. This foreign policy context influenced the nature of South Africa’s International Relations as a discipline. Vale argues that, “... most published work in South Africa was in the realist genre”¹². As such, it was argued that some academics in the country became servants of the South African apartheid government. This meant that their analysis of international politics and view of foreign policy inevitably revolved around the preservation of the South African state.

⁹ Viotti, P & Kauppi, M. 1987. International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond. Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc: USA, p. 230.

¹⁰ Vale, P. “Whose World Is It Anyway? International Relations in South Africa”, in M. Dyer & L. Mangasarian. 1989 The Study of International Relations: The State of the Art. Macmillan: London.

¹¹ Evans, G. “South Africa Foreign Policy After Mandela”, Round Table. October 1999 (352).

¹² Vale, P. “Whose World Is It Anyway? International Relations in South Africa”, in M. Dyer & L. Mangasarian 1989. The Study of International Relations: The State of The Art. Macmillan: London (p. 206).

However, with the end of apartheid, international relations thinking took a drastic turn in South Africa. Analysts now argue that South African foreign policy can be fully situated within approaches that share a global rather than a state-centric conceptualisation¹³. They refer to South Africa's foreign policy as having evolved to promote universal liberal values and a democratic political culture globally. It is the extent to which South Africa can succeed or live up to its desire to externally promote values entrenched in progressive liberal democratic constitution of 1996 that this study seeks to problematise. Here the question of whether the structural imperatives of the international system will allow South Africa to play an influential role is crucial.

It is argued that the foreign policy behaviour of states is not necessarily a reflection of their internal composition due to restraints imposed by the international system. South Africa's desire to promote human rights, freedom, self-determination and equality globally does not mean that its foreign policy behaviour will always be in favour of these values. We now proceed to examine basic assumption of realism, political structuralism and pluralism.

2.3 Realism

Realism advances a number of assumptions about international relations. They argue that the key point of departure in the study of international relations is the state. International organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and multinational corporations (MNC's) play a minimal role in international politics. This means that they define international relations as the

¹³ Venter, D. "South Africa and Africa: Relations in a time of change", in M. Muller 1997 Change South Africa's external relations. Halfway House, Thompson.

study of inter-state relations¹⁴. The state is viewed by realists in the context of a metaphorical hard-shell. This means that they make a distinction between international politics and domestic politics. In their analysis, domestic politics has no relevance in the study of international relations, because what happens within the boundaries of the state has little influence on how states behave in the international system. They propose that the purpose of state is national survival; thus the maximisation of power is a rational and inevitable goal of foreign policy. As suggested by Hans Morgenthau, the notion of international politics as a struggle for power is central in the realist conception of international relations¹⁵.

Realists argue that the international system is anarchic in that states answer to no higher authority. This means that they must fend for themselves and protect their interests to ensure survival¹⁶. A country's national interest according to realists is the "maximisation of power to the virtual exclusion of issues such as the promotion of ideological values or of moral principles"¹⁷. Instead of trying to promote moral issues, states seek to influence others towards a preferred direction and to avoid any influence on their own behaviour. South Africa's foreign policy under apartheid was premised on this kind of thinking. States in the region were influenced or coerced into behaving in a manner that served the protection of an apartheid state¹⁸.

¹⁴ Waltz, K argues that so long as the international system with a central order enforcing authority has not emerged anarchy is still a relevant conceptual narrative. See Waltz, K. 1988. Military Power and International Politics. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, p. 626.

¹⁵ Morgenthau, H. "Realist Theory of International Relations" in J. Vasquez 1990. Classics of International Relations (2nd ed). Prentice Hall: New York, p. 33.

¹⁶ Realists refer to this as a, "system of self-help". See Evans, G and Newnham, J. Penguin Dictionary of International Relations. Penguin Books: USA, p. 464.

¹⁷ Evans, G. & Newnham, J. *ibid*, p. 466.

¹⁸ South Africa coerced its neighbours in the form of Total National Strategy to accept the apartheid South African state. See Mills, G. 1994. From Pariah to Participant: South Africa's Evolving Foreign Relations, 1990- 994. SAILA, Jan Smuts House: Johannesburg, p. 11.

Since realists regard the state as the primary referent in international relations, the role of domestic factors in decision-making processes within states is given secondary importance. South Africa for them is a coherent¹⁹ state whose foreign policy has nothing to do with the internal political process. They argue that liberal values in foreign policy are used selectively so long as they serve the purpose of helping South Africa improve its power position. The United States during the Cold War for example condemned countries like China for human rights violations. Support by the United States of dictatorial regimes in the Western sphere of influence was not free of human rights violations, but nonetheless it used the human rights issue to discredit communist states. Realist would view the inconsistency in South Africa's foreign policy as a product of desire by South Africa to improve its power position rather than with the promotion of liberal values.

One of the central assumptions of realism is that of self-interestedness of states. States according to realists tend to manipulate the behaviour of others towards a direction that puts them at an advantage²⁰. The projection of universal liberal values is thus interpreted as a rhetoric behind which South Africa seeks to maximise its gains or influence. It can also be argued that as a rational actor, South Africa calculates its capabilities and realises that the projection of liberal values serves its national interest. The contradiction between foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour is due to the fact that South Africa is not preoccupied with

¹⁹ Keohane, R & Nye, J. 1989. *Power and Interdependence*. Harper Collins: USA, p. 23

²⁰ Evans, G & Newnham, J. *op.cit*, p. 465.

the actual implementation of foreign policy discourse, but uses it so long as it serves national interest²¹.

Realism points out that cooperation is possible, but only when it serves the purpose of fulfilling national self-interest²². States take part in global forums such as multilateral international organisations with a view to manipulating the international environment to their benefit. In this vein, South Africa's struggle for the cause of the weaker states in the South for instance, can be interpreted as a calculated move, aimed at augmenting its relatively weak position in the international system²³. Realists argue that the contradiction between foreign policy discourse and foreign policy behaviour is a product of being self-interested.

2.4 Political Structuralism

Political structuralism emerged in the 1970s as a response to the challenges posed by interdependency theory against a state-centric conceptualisation of international politics²⁴. It is both a critique and an extension of realism, and is hence a strand of realist theory²⁵. In the late twentieth century political structuralism has contributed as one of the most influential intellectual movements in the study of international relations. Political structuralism advances

²¹ According to the Penguin Dictionary of International Relations, "national Interest refers to the goals or objectives of foreign policy". See Evans, G. & Newnham, J. op.cit, p.344.

²² Evans, G. & Newnham, J. Penguin Dictionary of International Relations. Penguin Books: USA, p. 466.

²³ South Africa has endeavoured to insert the needs and interests of Southern Africa, Africa and Third World in general as a priority on the agendas of forums such as the UNCTAD, NAM and the WTO. It has committed itself to solidarity with other developing countries. See Le Pere, G. Lambrechts, K. & Van Nieuwkerk, A. le Pere, G, Lambrechts K, & van Nieuwkerk, A. "The burden of the future: South Africa's foreign policy challenges in the new millennium", Global Dialogue 4.3, December 1999, p. 3.

²⁴ Burchill, S and Linklater A. 1996. Theories of International Relations. St Martin's Press, p.83.

²⁵ Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer are Political Structuralists who drew from Realism in formulating their theory. This makes Political Structuralism a strand of Realism in that it shares the fundamental paradigmatic

certain fundamental assumptions regarding the level of analysis in the study of international relations. Firstly, they reject the unit level of analysis because it fails to account for constraints imposed by the structural conditions on the individual units. They thus adopt the systemic level of analysis. They do accept the state-centred character of the international system, which lacks central authority. However, the decisive influence of political structure of this international system is regarded as the most pertinent aspect in explaining state behaviour. States interact amongst each other, but the outcome of those interactions is determined by the structural conditions of the international system²⁶. States are thus made functionally similar despite the fact that they have different internal structures.

Secondly, political structuralists argue that the international system is also characterised by the unequal distribution of power or capabilities among its units. This leads to states struggling for survival and accumulation of power as a systemic requirement. Waltz, a political structuralist argues that “each state pursues its own interests, however defined, in ways it judges best²⁷”. Finally, political structuralism does mention economic issues and the existence of non-state actors. However these entities are seen as subordinates to states.

Political structuralism interprets South Africa’s foreign policy in terms of an anarchic international system and not at a unit level of analysis. At the end of apartheid there was a lot

assumptions with Realists such as Morgenthau, Niebuhr and Carr. In this study the term political structuralism, which is used by authors interchangeably with the term structural realism will be employed.

²⁶ Waltz, K. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Random House: New York

²⁷ Kenneth Waltz is a founding father of structuralism. See Waltz, K. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Random House

of euphoria over South Africa becoming a beacon of hope in the continent²⁸. Its democratisation was perceived as an opportunity that will fuel the winds of democratic change across Africa. However, in the immediate aftermath of the 1994 elections, South Africa's desire to promote its democratic values globally was thwarted by the inability to influence partners closer to home. It realised that its relations could not be based purely on the promotion of liberal values. On the contrary, other interests such as trade relations had to be pursued²⁹. Political structuralism interprets the contradiction between South Africa's foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour as consequence of systemic constraints of anarchy. South Africa rejoined an international system of anarchy when official relations were opened after 1994. Despite the desire to promote democratic values of human rights, freedom and equality globally, South Africa is compelled just like the other states to take charge of its own survival. It is in this context that South Africa's foreign policy is erratic and vague. It is because it seeks to promote liberal values in a system in which states pursue their national self-interest³⁰. The similarity between realism and political structuralism is that they both consider foreign policy as an arena of the state. However, as indicated, political structuralism has extended realism giving it capacity to capture and explain the changes that have taken place in the international system since the 1990s.

²⁸ South Africa got involved early in the 1990s in attempts of bringing about constitutionalism in Africa, as was the case in Lesotho. This elevated the expectations of the international community.

²⁹ See chapter four for a detailed analysis of cases where South Africa did not act in accordance with its foreign policy content in initiating relations with other countries e.g. China and Sale of arms to Great Lakes and India at the height of the East Timorese conflict.

³⁰ States are made functionally similar by the ordering principle of the international system. See Waltz, K. 1988 *Military Power in International Politics*. Lanham, Md: University Press of America, p. 86.

Secondly, South Africa's foreign policy can be explained by political structuralism in terms of its position in the international system. The international system determines the power capabilities of states³¹. The position of a state in the international system therefore determines the extent to which it can achieve its stated goals. A middle power³² like South Africa, situated in the developing world, is compelled more often than not to succumb to the structural constraints of the international system. Schrire and Silke put this point eloquently when they argue that,

“Domestic and foreign policies are inevitably interlinked, however the strength of that relationship depends upon the distribution of power within the global system. Where states are dominant, domestic factors tend to be important in shaping foreign policies, while conversely for small states the restraints imposed by the global system tend to weigh more heavily”³³.

In terms of foreign policy discourse, South Africa aims high. However, its middle power status and relative resource potential limit it from achieving its stated foreign policy goals. South Africa desires to involve itself in world issues such as an equitable economic system, the alleviation of poverty and non-nuclearity. Its foreign policy loses focus due to its inability to amass the resources necessary for the achievement of these ambitious goals. The international

³¹ Political structuralists argue, “ that the international system is characterised by a desire to accumulate power as a systemic requirement”. See Burchill, S and Linklater, A. 1996. Theories of International Relations. St Martin's Press p. 87.

³² According to Cooper, Higgot and Nossal, “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”. South Africa has the features of both a developing and a developed country and thus qualifies as a middle power. It also shows inclination towards cooperation rather than unilateral assertion of its influence. See Solomon, H. “South Africa's foreign policy and middle power leadership”, in ISS Monograph 13, *Fairy God Mother, Partner or Hegemon?* May 1997. Also see Cooper, A.F. 1997. Niche Diplomacy: Middle powers after the Cold War. Macmillan: London.

³³ Schrire, R. & Silke, D. “Foreign Policy: The Domestic Context”, in M. Muller and W. Carlsnaes 1997. Change and South Africa's External Relations. ITP: SA, p. 3.

system is such that influence comes with economic muscle³⁴. Preoccupation with the accumulation of resources necessary for economic growth forces South Africa to give priority to the strengthening of its economic position at the expense of liberal values. In a nutshell, South Africa's success in promoting its domestic values abroad is determined by the fact that it has to fend for itself in a competitive international context. Inconsistencies in foreign policy are therefore inevitable outcomes of being part of the international system that lacks central authority and in which states seek to amass wealth and power.

2.5 Pluralism

At the end of the Cold War the debate between dominant schools of international relations intensified. International politics and the structure of international relations were seen as drastically transforming. The emergence of non-state actors such as international organisations and multinational corporations (MNC's) led to the assault on the central thesis of state-centred conceptualisation. The permeability of state borders and internationalisation of transactions made inter-state relations inaccurate indicators of international politics. The notion that the state is an impermeable and sovereign unit no longer held water in the light of these developments³⁵. Different metaphors such as a "cobweb"³⁶ of relations were used to depict the interconnectedness of actors from different corners of the globe.

³⁴ Leon, T. "South Africa must pump diplomatic iron before taking the world on its shoulders", *The Sunday Independent*, March 18, 2001, p. 7.

³⁵ Wolfers, A. 1962. Discord and collaborations: Essays on International Politics. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 19.

³⁶ Little, R. "The growing Relevance of Pluralism", in S. Smith et al. 1996. International Theory: Positivism and Beyond. Cambridge University Press: New York, p. 67.

These developments in international politics led to the emergence of pluralism. This led to a new debate between pluralists and state-centric perspectives. The former advanced a new set of assumptions about the state of international politics. Firstly, pluralists reject the state as a primary actor. They argue that non-state actors are important entities in international politics. International organisations are not just forums within which states compete, but on the contrary important agenda setting entities in international politics³⁷. With the same strength multinational corporations were becoming a dominant feature of international politics. Pluralists believe that their ability to interfere with the authority of states means that they cannot be dismissed.

Secondly, pluralism argues that the state is not a unitary entity. It is rather an embodiment of competing individual groups, interests and bureaucracies³⁸. They argue that to view the state as unitary is tantamount to “reification”³⁹. It is in within this context that they see the dichotomy between domestic and international politics as breaking down. They argue that. “...boundaries are dissolving and international politics is being domesticated”⁴⁰.

Thirdly, stemming from their conception of the state as being “pluralistic”, they contest the rational actor notion put forward by realists. Their fragmented view of the state characterised by clash of interests, bargaining and compromise is not always conducive to rational decision-

³⁷ Viotti, P & Kauppi, M. 1987. *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond*. Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc: USA, p. 228.

³⁸ Viotti, P & Kauppi, M. 1987. *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and beyond*, p.228

³⁹ For them when we talk of South African Foreign Policy we are referring to a product of competing perspectives, coalition and compromise after which a policy is announced in the name of a country. See Viotti, P & Kauppi, M, p.229.

⁴⁰ Smith, S., Booth, K & Zalewski, M. 1996 *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*. Cambridge University Press: New York, p. 66.

making. Misperceptions and bureaucratic politics can lead to poor calculations, hence irrational goals⁴¹.

Fourthly, the broad agenda of international politics demonstrates that state-centricism and national security issues touted by state-centric perspective no longer define international politics. An interdependent world has spawned economic, social and ecological issues that are also equally important in international politics. Luard discusses these non-military issues that are placed high on the international agenda such as environmental issues, pollution and refugees⁴². It is on these grounds that pluralists reject the high-low politics dichotomy.

Put within the South African foreign policy debate, pluralism raises some interesting interpretations. Pluralists argue that South Africa is superimposed on an international system of states as well as non-state actors⁴³. International politics is much more complex than explained by both political structuralists and realists. The pluralistic nature of the international system makes it difficult for South Africa to gather the information needed for purposes of foreign policy formulation. This means that the exercise of foreign policy is not as easy as depicted by the rational actor conception put forward by realists. The ambiguities in South African foreign policy can thus be explained in the context of an unpredictable and complex web of relations between states and non-state actors.

⁴¹ Viotti, P. Kauppi, M. 1987. *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond*. p. 230

⁴² Luard, E. 1990. *Globalisation of Politics: The Changed Focus of Political Action in The Modern World*. Macmillan: London.

⁴³ According to pluralists, "the international system is one of mixed actors". See Evans, G & Newnham, J. 1998. *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*. Penguin Books: USA, p. 438.

Pluralists reject the unitary view of the state put forward by realists⁴⁴. Within borders of states there exist competing groups such as interest groups and political parties. The process of policy making is an exercise that involves the diverse interests of a pluralistic society. The distinction between domestic and international politics is also dislodged. South Africa's international politics is the extension of its domestic politics⁴⁵. A complete analysis of South African foreign policy requires an analysis of interactions between various entities that influence foreign policy. The erratic nature of South Africa foreign policy is thus a product of competition, coalitions and compromises that have to be made in an attempt to maintain a balance between different interests⁴⁶. Any foreign policy that embodies interests of diverse groups is bound to have occasional contradictions and ambiguities⁴⁷.

One of the pertinent assumptions put forward by pluralists is that of the extensive nature of the international agenda. The end of the Cold War changed the international conjuncture to include new issue areas⁴⁸. Social issues such as pollution, environmental degradation, poverty and natural disasters occupy a top priority in international relations⁴⁹. By the same token, economic issues such as international trade and competition between blocs have also gained new momentum. This means that international affairs have become much more complex. South

⁴⁴ Little, R. "The growing relevance of pluralism", in Smith, S., Booth, K & Zalewski, M. 1996. International Theory: Positivism and Beyond. Cambridge University Press: New York, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Viotti, P & Kauppi, M. 1987. International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond. Macmillan Publishing Company, Incl: USA, p. 232.

⁴⁶ Maintaining a balance between interests of opposition parties such as Democratic Alliance and the UDM is not an easy process, especially when coupled with interests and aspirations of the leading party's electorate.

⁴⁷ South Africa is a diverse nation consisting of the poor rural masses, the black middle class, the Afrikaaner minority and numerous other groupings whose interests have to be prioritised in foreign policy.

⁴⁸ Talking about this new post Cold War environment Naidoo argues that the international system was forced to rethink traditional notions such as national security. See Naidoo, S. 1997. New Rules for Security and Survival: Southern Africa's Adaptation to A Changing World Environment. Rhodes University MA Thesis: South Africa, p. 3.

Africa might be concerned with environmental issues for instance, but because some other issue such as industrialisation have become urgent, environmental issues might be given secondary importance. In summary, the international agenda is so extensive such that it is difficult to simultaneously give equal priority to all foreign policy goals. Contradictions are thus a product of the complex nature of international issues and the intertwined nature of relations between states and non-state actors.

2.6 A conceptual evaluation of the theoretical debates

Realism offers some insightful explanations of international relations. It does not however, place emphasis on non-state actors and non-military issues that have become pertinent in international relations. Their preoccupation with high politics negates the increasing permeability of state borders by multinational corporations and other non-state entities such as drug syndicate groups⁵⁰. The growing importance of non-state entities and relevance of issues such as poverty, migration and global economic decline that are not confined within state borders cannot be dismissed. Realism falls short of explaining these equally important areas of international relations. Furthermore, the importance of internal political processes on foreign

⁴⁹ Luard, E. 1990. *Globalisation of Politics: The Changed Focus of Political Action in the Modern World*. Macmillan: London.

⁵⁰ Despite the fact that realism has offered a window through which international politics can be analysed, it is too rigid and understates the role of non-state entities such as terrorists groups whose actions affect the course of international events. The recent alleged involvement of a terrorist group Al Qaeda in the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Centre in the US are indicative of non-state actors' resounding influence in international affairs. On the rigidity of realism and its inability to capture events like this see Evans, G & Newnham, J. 1998. *Penguin Dictionary of International Politics*. Penguin Books: USA, p. 466.

policies of states is also a crucial area which realism dismisses by creating a distinction between domestic and international realms.

The domestic aspect of South Africa's foreign policy is crucial in the analysis of South Africa's conduct towards the rest of the world. South Africa has shown through commitment and deed that it desires to relate with other states in a non-discriminatory manner. This is one of the values entrenched in its domestic policies⁵¹. The role of individuals and domestic interest groups seeking to influence government policy in general cannot be underestimated. The role of organised labour, the media and robust civil society⁵² characterise South Africa's foreign policy since 1994. This aspect playing a pertinent role in international relation is not thoroughly conceptualised by realism.

Pluralism does account for change in the form of burgeoning political economic and social transactions⁵³. They view the nation state as being eclipsed by non-territorial actors such as multinational corporations⁵⁴. Their criticism of realism raises interesting conceptual limitations. However, they do not seem to offer any clear framework within which international politics can be conceptualised other than criticising their opponents' assumptions.

⁵¹ South Africa befriends pariah states due to the commitment to diplomatic engagement and eschews outright condemnation and marginalisation of other states. This is the behaviour associated with middle powers in their attempt to play a conciliatory role in international affairs. See Cooper, F. 1997. *Niche Diplomacy: Middle powers after the Cold War*. Macmillan: London.

⁵² With the shift of power from states to non-state actors, such as nongovernmental organizations, community organizations, neighborhood associations, religious organizations, professional associations, not-for-profit private corporations, membership organizations, and all forms of private organizations and institutions are now more influential in policy making. See a speech made to the UN Symposium on Outreach to Civil Society by the Director of Governance and Civil Society of Ford Foundation (http://www.wfuna.org/site/Edwards_speech_to_Symposium.htm)

⁵³ Keohane, R & Nye J. 1989. *Power and Interdependence*. Harper Collins: USA (pp. 3)

This thesis does not intend to give credit too one school of thought and dismiss the other as that would be tantamount to arguing that international politics of the late 20th century is completely different from that of today. The international system is “marked by both continuity and change”⁵⁵. No single school of thought can wholly capture the picture without blending its assumptions with those of other schools of thought in international relations⁵⁶.

Pluralism is useful in the understanding of South Africa’s foreign policy. It raises the pluralistic aspect of a country and captures the essence of its politics. However, their analysis downplays the role of the state and gives primacy to non-state actors. It does not illuminate the structural limitations imposed on these non-state actors by the international system. For example, in South Africa the labour movement under the banner of Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was opposed to the governments Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy. They viewed this macro-economic policy as aimed at opening the economy to market forces, thus delaying the issue of redistribution and equality⁵⁷. However, due to the fact that the government had to respond to issues of economic growth and attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) this discontent by the labour movement did not yield much. Instead it led to rifts between African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and COSATU alliance. Another example is that of COSATU’s

⁵⁴ Keohane and Nye. 1989. *Power and Interdependence*. Harper Collins: USA.

⁵⁵ Keohane, R and Nye, J. *Power and Interdependence*. Harper Collins: USA, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Keohane and Nye argue that international relations is not seamless, but a tapestry of diverse relations and no one theory can capture it. See Keohane, R and Nye, J. *Power and Interdependence*. Harper Collins: USA, p. 4. Also see Kegley, C, Herman, C. and Rosenau, J. 1987. *New Directions in the study of foreign policy*. Allen & Unwin Publishers: USA.

⁵⁷ See Lehloesa, T. 2000. *South Africa’s Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy in the Context of Structural Adjustment Programmes in the South*. Rhodes University MA Thesis, p. 6.

support of the trade union federation (SFTU) against the Swazi government in 1997⁵⁸. This solidarity by COSATU did not have much influence on South Africa's foreign policy towards Swaziland regarding democratic reforms. This means that domestic civil society is important, but to presume that it plays a dominant role in foreign policy and government policy in general is tantamount to arguing that the government policy is entirely driven by domestic considerations. There is a degree of incompatibility between domestic affairs and international affairs. Pluralism seems to give too much attention to domestic processes. If there were a simple continuity between the two, South Africa would not be required to consider international trends in formulating its policies⁵⁹.

Political structuralism offers a more plausible analysis of South African foreign policy. Due to its experience in overcoming apartheid and establishing democracy, South Africa is being perceived as more inclined towards championing human rights and democratisation⁶⁰. This concentration on what South Africa can provide, in an international system of cooperation between diverse actors, is common amongst pluralists. It understates the fact that South Africa also has to contend with restraints imposed on it by the political and economic structure of the international system. South Africa's foreign policy values have to be reconciled with a complex nature of international affairs. Political structuralism directs attention to this aspect of international relations, which sets the parameters of state behaviour. South Africa's disposition

⁵⁸ Mutume, G. "The struggle for democracy in Swaziland continues", in *Mail & Guardian*, February 7, 1997.

⁵⁹ More often than not South Africa is compelled to fine-tune its domestic policies such that they are in line with international trends (sometimes against the will of South Africans). Adoption of GEAR despite dissatisfaction by the labour movement is a classic example of economic policy seeking to embrace a liberal global economic system.

⁶⁰ Pfister, R. 2000. *South Africa's Recent Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Issues and Literature*. Centre For International Studies: Zurich, p. 3.

towards issues of human rights, democracy, equality and development is not a sufficient indicator of actual foreign policy practice. This is due to the fact that the structural imperatives of the international system force it to act in a manner different to what it would have ordinarily done.

Conceptualising international politics through the consideration of distribution of capabilities is another relevant factor in the analysis provided by political structuralism. South Africa lacks the resource potential necessary for the alleviation of socio-economic problems at home, let alone in other parts of the continent. Due to this relatively weak resource potential, South Africa is forced to prioritise its foreign policy goals such that they are in line with its position in the international system. South Africa has been accused of pursuing grand foreign policy goals, which it does not have the resources to accomplish, instead of clear foreign policy commitments closer to home⁶¹. South Africa's inability to implement its ambitious foreign policy goals due to lack of resources is explained most adequately by political structuralism's "...notion of unequal distribution of capabilities amongst states in the international system"⁶².

2.7 Conclusion

Political structuralism remains relevant in analysing South African foreign policy. It provides us with an analytical tool that does not preoccupy itself with the impact South Africa can have

⁶¹ Leon, T. "South Africa must pump diplomatic iron before taking the world on its shoulders", *The Sunday Independent*, 18 March 2000, p 7.

⁶² Evans, G. & Newnham, J. 1998. *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*. Penguin Books: London.

on the international system. On the contrary, it allows foreign policy analysts and makers alike to assess the limitations imposed on South Africa by the international system. It would be negligent of any foreign policy maker to ignore the structural challenges imposed on a country's resources by virtue of being part of an international system. A view of foreign policy that takes cognisance of systemic constraints is indispensable. Firstly, it will enable South African foreign policy makers to prioritise foreign policy goals more realistically. Secondly, it enables foreign policy analysts to capture the limitations of South African foreign policy missions. Thirdly, South Africa can only close the gap between foreign policy "theory and practice"⁶³ if it sets itself goals within its reach rather than broad goals for which resources are required.

⁶³ Pfister, R. 2000. *South Africa's Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Issues and Literature*. CIS: Zurich, p. 12.

CHAPTER THREE

A THEORETICAL CONCEPTION OF THE AMBIGUITY BETWEEN FOREIGN POLICY AND FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOUR AFTER 1994

3.1 Introduction

After the adoption of a constitutional democracy in 1994, South Africa formed the Government of National Unit (GNU)¹. At an international level its pariah status was discarded and it took its rightful place in international affairs. Its policies and programmes began focussing not only on internal issues, but showed an international dimension. Countries around the world extended diplomatic recognition and some began forging new partnerships to assist in the rebuilding of what had been a society shattered by the system of apartheid². South Africa demonstrated a desire to conduct its foreign relations in a manner that espoused democratic values. Human rights, the promotion of democracy, respect for international law, forging of economic ties with the world and reflection of Africa's interests, all formed the linchpins of South African foreign policy³. All these developments in foreign policy signalled the role South Africa was going to play in international affairs.

¹ ANC "Foreign Policy Perspective in a democratic South Africa" ANC Foreign Policy Document, December 1994, p. 1

² South Africa's embassies increased throughout the world with the assumption of a constitutional democracy. It also returned to the Commonwealth, United Nations, joined SADC and the Organisation for Africa Unity (OAU). See Nel, P., Taylor, I & Van de Westhuizen, J. "Multilateralism in South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for a Critical Rationale", A paper presented at the 3rd Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Vienna, 19-19 September, 1998, p. 7.

³ ANC, "Foreign Policy Perspective in a democratic South Africa", an ANC document archived at [gopher://gopher.anc.org.za/00/anc/policy/foreign.txt](http://gopher.anc.org.za/00/anc/policy/foreign.txt)

However, despite the fact that the Cold War was over and apartheid had reached its demise in South Africa, maintaining coherence between foreign policy theory and practice remained a vexing challenge. The international conjuncture had changed in a manner that was conducive to the pursuit of foreign policy sensitive to liberal ideals on the one hand. On the other hand it re-imposed a combination of old and new limitations on what states could or could not achieve⁴. In the case of South Africa, commentators talked of a South Africa that acted in a manner incongruent with the noble ideals contained in its foreign policy documents⁵. Despite its stated will to play a preponderant role in bringing about lasting solutions to human problems through promotion of democracy there exists a gap between discourse and practice⁶. Debates in South Africa suggest that the enthusiasm that accompanied the opening of relations after 1994 showed signs of being unrealistic as early as 1995⁷.

This chapter examines the gap between liberal values mirrored in South Africa's foreign policy and the actual foreign policy behaviour. Firstly, it commences by outlining the changing manner in which South Africa projects its democratic political culture in its relations with the world⁸. Secondly, an assessment of South Africa's foreign policy vis-à-

⁴ Even though the end of the Cold War led to the termination of conflicts, new ones emerged militating against the prevalence of peaceful relations between actors in international politics.

⁵ Suttner, R. "South African Foreign Policy and the Promotion of Human Rights", in FGD Occasional Paper No. "Through A Glass Darkly? Human Rights Promotion in South African Foreign Policy", 13 August 1996, p. 16.

⁶ Pfister, R. 2000. "South Africa's Recent Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Issues and Literature". CIS Publication: Zurich, p. 12

⁷ "South Africa's re-entry into the global arena has not been problem-free". See Ajulu, R. "South Africa and the North/South: Pragmatism versus Principle", in C. Landsberg, G. Le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk, A. 1995. Mission Imperfect: Redirecting South Africa's Foreign Policy. Foundation for Global Dialogue: Johannesburg, p. 45.

⁸ South Africa's foreign policy was initially predicated on a desire to promote progressive liberal democratic values. As it got more deeply involved in international affairs it began realising that pursuing a morally charged foreign policy was not easy as it was initially thought it would be.

vis foreign policy behaviour is undertaken. Here the extent to which foreign policy behaviour has been an antithesis of what is reflected in foreign policy documents and speeches by foreign ministers is examined. Furthermore, an explanation and outline of the imperatives of the international system that thwart South Africa's good foreign policy intentions is offered. The objectives of this section are to reflect that countries such as South Africa face not only opportunities, but also challenges that are brought about by virtue of being part of the international system. It is through an understanding of the nature and magnitude of these challenges that South Africa will be able to put in place more realistic and practically achievable foreign policy objectives. Attention is drawn to the limitations imposed on South Africa's foreign policy by an international system that is globalising, grossly unequal and with geo-economic considerations as its Leitmotif⁹. As a concluding remark it is suggested that such an international system sometimes compels South Africa to sacrifice its noble ideals in favour of pragmatism and reformism¹⁰.

⁹ Globalisation has brought economics to the heart of international relations leading to the reinsertion of states into the international system that is characterised by gains and losses. South Africa is not an exception in that its position in the international political and economic system dictates that it can do some things with considerable degree of success while it can dismally fail in others. This is the price it pays in its foreign policy.

¹⁰ This is the term utilised by Taylor and Nel in an attempt to show that South Africa is sometimes compelled to adopt a soft approach against issues it would have otherwise vigorously condemned. See Nel, P & Taylor, I. "Multilateralism in South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for A Critical Rationale", A

3.2 The liberal content of South Africa's foreign policy

It is necessary to establish the principles underpinning South Africa's foreign policy before examining the lack of consistency between stated foreign policy goals and foreign policy behaviour¹¹. The most prominent problems regarding South Africa's foreign policy can only be identified after a careful analysis of the good intentions underpinning it has been carried out. The transition to democracy and the subsequent rise of non-racial South Africa led to the reorientation of the country's national policies. The constitution adopted in 1996 makes reference to universal moral values such as equality for all, respect for human rights, creation of a just and equitable society and respect for law¹².

These liberal values were not only confined to the realm of domestic policy. They have also been articulated with the same spirit and vociferousness in South Africa's foreign relations¹³. Even before the adoption of the constitution in 1996 South Africa preoccupied itself with the "promotion of human rights in its international relations"¹⁴ since the inception of democracy in 1994. As a matter of course, South Africa declared its intention to participate and promote human rights in multilateral fora such as the Third World Committee of the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission on

paper presented at the 3rd Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Vienna, 16-19 September, 1998, p. 11.

¹¹ Henwood, R. "South Africa's Foreign Policy: Principles and Problems", Published Monograph, No 13 *Fairy Godmother, Hegemon or Partner?* May 1997.

¹² Chapter 2, sections 9 and 10 make reference to equality before the law and human dignity for all South African citizens respectively. See Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (<http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/constitution/saconst.html>).

¹³ Domestic and Foreign Policies are tightly intertwined. However what remains to be established is the degree to which different countries succeed in promoting their internal values globally. See Schrire, R. & Silke, D. "Foreign Policy: The Domestic Context", in M. Muller and W. Carlsnaes 1997. Change and South Africa's External Relations. ITP: SA, p. 3.

Human Rights¹⁵. Since 1994 South Africa has actively participated in international regimes with a view to promoting the issue of human rights. The accession to the African Charter on Human Rights in July 1996 was also an indication of the priority given to universal moral and humanitarian issues. As part of its inclination towards the protection of human rights it began speaking against countries with gross human right violations. As such, South Africa began involving itself on the issue of human rights as early as 1994 when Mandela visited Nigeria to urge the Abacha regime to move towards democracy. The country's involvement in this issue did not culminate with this soft approach. South Africa's High Commissioner in Nigeria was recalled and South Africa called for the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth¹⁶.

Issues of human rights can be effectively pursued in an environment that is conducive to democracy. The promotion of human rights is incomplete without the existence of democratic institutions. It is in this context that South Africa has played a "catalytic"¹⁷ role in the promotion of democracy in other parts of the world. South Africa's commitment to the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means throughout the world was demonstrated when it sent a delegation to assist in the Northern Ireland peace process. It also made a contribution in an attempt to peacefully resolve the political crisis

¹⁴ Mandela, N. 1993. "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 5, November/December 1993.

¹⁵ Muller, M. "Current Developments in South African Foreign Policy", in *Modern Diplomacy. A collection of papers presented at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomacy, February 1998.*

¹⁶ Seymour, V. "Global Dialogue, Human Rights and Foreign Policy: Will South Africa Please Lead?", in *Southern Africa Perspectives*, No. 55, 1996. Cape Town., p. 5. South Africa also sent Archbishop Desmond Tutu to express concern over the state of human rights in the Nigeria, but to no avail. Mandela criticised Nigeria in 1995 for the executions of Ken Saro Wiwa and other Ogoni activists.

¹⁷ Le Pere, G., Lambrechts, K. & van Nieuwkerk, A. "South Africa's foreign policy challenges in the new millennium", in *Global Dialogue*, Vol. 4.3, December 1999, p. 2.

in East Timor¹⁸. Pretoria's involvement in the peace process in Burundi is also indicative of South Africa's desire to contribute to peaceful resolution of conflict and establishment of democratic institutions, which will in turn ensure that human rights violations come to an end¹⁹.

South Africa got involved in other areas that are also inextricably linked to human rights, thus taking its mission of promoting democratic values externally even further. It realised that it is impossible to facilitate peace in a world where states continue to arm themselves. It started to play an active role in the issue of disarmament with a view to creating an environment conducive to peaceful resolution of disputes. As part of its commitment to peace South Africa became very instrumental in the 1995 signing of the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)²⁰.

This predisposition occurred in tandem with the domestic political process of democratic consolidation. It was a natural outgrowth of its domestic moral stance. South Africa's commitment to liberal democratic values was put forward with the same vigour as the ANC's statement on foreign policy, which indicated that, "South Africa will not be selective and afraid in raising the issue of human rights violations"²¹. This course of action from South Africa created a perception that it would not sacrifice the principles enshrined in its foreign policy documents in favour of economic and political expediency.

¹⁸ Mills, G. 2000. *The Wired Model: South Africa, Foreign Policy and Globalisation*. SAIIA & Tafelburg: South Africa, p. 264.

¹⁹ Gough, D. "Mandela hits out at Burundi's warring leaders", in *Mail & Guardian*, 17 January 2000.

²⁰ Seymour, V. "Global Dialogue, human Rights and Foreign Policy: Will South Africa please lead?" in *Southern Africa Perspectives*, No. 55, 1996. Cape Town, p. 2.

²¹ ANC, 1993. *Foreign Policy Perspective in a democratic South Africa*, p. 1.

South Africa also showed a holistic approach in its desire to promote democratic principles externally. It based its relations with Southern Africa and Africa on the liberal principles of democracy. In its approach to regionalism within SADC for instance, South Africa advocates for an integration process predicated on democratic values rather than on militaristic approach²². Inside South Africa the consolidation of democracy has been pursued concurrently with economic empowerment and creation of an equitable society. This approach emanated from a realisation that democracy is intangible and will have no meaning if the lives of South Africans are not directly improved. It is in this context that as early as 1994 the government introduced a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)²³. In its relations with Southern Africa, South Africa operates within this perspective of ensuring that democracy is augmented by economic development. It is reflected in the foreign policy discourse that South Africa is committed to the development of Southern Africa. This is done with a view to laying a foundation conducive to the pursuit of democratic values of human rights, peace and equity²⁴.

Africa is also placed at the top of the progressive agenda emanating from South Africa's internal disposition towards liberal principles. In the immediate aftermath of the 1994

²² Venter, D. "South Africa's foreign policy in a time of change: The African Dimension", in Journal of the Third World Spectrum 5, No. 2, Fall 1998, p. 2.

²³ RDP was a government-initiated programme aimed at developing the country's human resources so that they contribute to the re-building of South Africa. It was a bottom-up approach in that the community played a vital role in deciding what measures had to be taken in meeting their needs. By the same token South Africa sought to involve Southern Africans in an amicable way in the re-building of a sub-region that had once been devastated by South Africa's apartheid state. On the definition of RDP see Lehloesa, T. South Africa's Growth and Redistribution Strategy in the context of Structural Adjustment Programmes. Rhodes University MA Thesis: South Africa, p 9.

²⁴ ANC, 1993. Foreign Policy Perspective in A Democratic South Africa. ANC foreign policy document, December 1994.

elections South Africa joined the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)²⁵. It did so with the objective of promoting human rights, democratic consolidation and peaceful resolution of conflict that afflicts Africa. Its foreign policy approach to Africa is that which seeks to transform Africa into an entity that is free, peaceful and vibrant²⁶. It is in this context that South Africa's foreign policy with respect to Africa is centred on a desire to promote an African renaissance. Africa is seen as a victim of an unequal global economic and political system. Given its domestic policies and belief in equality South Africa seeks to combat global inequality that continues not only to marginalise Africa, but which also makes the promotion of democracy impossible.

South Africa's commitment to liberal democratic principles is being thwarted by the realities of the foreign policy environment within which it operates. The initial position of participating in the promotion of democracies in Africa and across the world has become too idealistic due to the lack of suitable foreign policy environment both in Africa and in the international system in general. In the context of Africa the promotion of liberal values is constrained by a need for economic development, without which democratic principles become meaningless. This has led to a South African foreign policy that seems to pay lip service to the promotion of democracy while preoccupying itself with an agenda that prioritises economic issues over liberal principles. This has created an

²⁵ The OAU was transformed into an African Union at two-day extraordinary meeting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) held in Sirte, Libya. See Mail & Guardian, "Death of OAU Birth of AU", 27 May 2001.

²⁶ ANC, 1993. "Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa", ANC foreign policy document, December 1994.

impression that South Africa's foreign policy is ambiguous in that it rhetorically asserts liberal principles while it is geared towards wealth creation²⁷.

The international system also imposes limitations on South African foreign policy. South Africa is new in international politics and is in the process of finding its feet in a complex international political economy dominated by the rich. South Africa's geographic location in the world's least developed continent compels it to preoccupy itself with issues of economic development at the expense of a progressive agenda adopted soon after 1994. It is argued here that this ambiguity between foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour is thus not of South Africa's own making, but a product of foreign policy environment within which South Africa operates. At this juncture we undertake to scrutinise the ambiguities of South Africa foreign policy with a view to evaluating and offering a convincing account of South African foreign policy problems as it gradually becomes part of the international system.

3.3 Explaining the inconsistencies in South African foreign policy behaviour

The international foreign policy environment within which South Africa operates does not always allow for the implementation of South Africa's foreign policy goals. It is the restraints imposed on South Africa by the political and economic structure of the

²⁷ The ambiguity in South African foreign policy is clearer when the Mandela foreign policy committed to democracy, peace and respect for law is compared with the emerging foreign policy doctrine of an African Renaissance. This emerging doctrine departs from pure preoccupation with liberal principles to include issues of economic development. See Landsberg, C & Hlophe, D. "The African Renaissance as a modern South Africa foreign policy strategy", Centre for International Studies and Research publication, October 1999.

international system that lead to it proclaiming liberal values that it cannot practically implement. The international system of the 1990s was characterised by changes that gave both space and limitations on what countries can achieve. On the one hand, it has brought about democratisation in many parts of the world such as Africa²⁸. On the other hand, the international system has been restructured in a manner that has deepened the North-South divide restraining those at the receiving end of a globalising world from having a meaningful voice. Situated in the developing world, struggling to deliver to its electorate and to consolidate democracy at home, the restraints imposed on South Africa by the international foreign policy environment weigh more heavily.

The changes of the 1990s heralded in an environment in which international events were no longer defined by state boundaries. But the manner in which the international political and economic system has been restructured seems to impose limitations on states. The end of conflict between forces of capitalism and communism and demise of apartheid in South Africa brought about euphoria. However, the post Cold War- post-Apartheid order seems to have brought new constraints that thwart attempts by South Africa to export democracy, good governance and the human rights culture. South Africa's foreign policy discourse is such that it gives the impression that South Africa will speak out and condemn human rights abuses. However, South Africa's initial attempt to extend liberal values, entrenched in its domestic policies, to its foreign policy has not been successful. In practice there has been a contradiction between the stated foreign policy goals and

²⁸ Ajulu, R. 1995. "South Africa and the North/South: Pragmatism versus Principle", in Landsberg, C, le Pere, G, van Nieuwkerk, A. *Mission Imperfect: Redirecting South Africa's Foreign Policy*. Foundation for Global Dialogue and Centre for Policy Studies: Johannesburg, p 46

foreign policy behaviour²⁹. A number of criticisms have been advanced against the inherent contradictions in South Africa's foreign policy.

On the issue of human rights opposition parties argue that South Africa lacks coherent foreign policy. It is also argued that a number of incidents demonstrate that South Africa has only made a general commitment to human rights. It lacks specific methods to speak against and combat human rights abuses³⁰. Joining the international system has proven not to be as easy as most South Africans thought it would be at the demise of apartheid. The excitement of 1994 seems to have underestimated the limitations imposed on South Africa's will to navigate for itself an international role that is consistent with its internal democratic disposition.

Before South Africa can succeed in finding a meaningful role in the international system, the ambiguities inherent in its foreign policy behaviour have to be conceptualised. It is through the understanding of the factors restraining it from acting consistently that a coherent foreign policy can be formulated. Even though the current analysis offers an insight into foreign policy problems, a more theoretical understanding is required. A broad analysis put forward by scholars like Ajulu and Davies is more appealing and consistent with the goal of this research. According to Ajulu the explanation for the lack

²⁹ Williams, P "South African Foreign Policy: Getting Critical?" *Politikon* (2000), 27 (1), p. 88. Nkuhlu provides another interesting account on blunders of our foreign policy. See Nkuhlu, C. 1995. "South Africa and the North/South: Pragmatism versus Principle". Chris Landsberg, Garth le Pere and Anthoni van Nieuwkerk, *Mission Imperfect: Redirecting South Africa's Foreign Policy*. Johannesburg: Foundation for Global Dialogue and Centre for Policy Studies, p 53-58

³⁰ Bosman, J. "SA Government Applying Double Standards. Human Rights Only Applicable to South Africans", Media Release by Federal Alliance, 8th December 1999. On the ambiguity characterising South Africa Foreign Policy also see Ryall, D. "Caught between two worlds: Understanding South Africa's Foreign Policy Options", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1997, p. 397

of direction in South Africa's foreign policy lies in the "complex international terrain and limitations it imposes on South Africa"³¹. Davies also argues that due to constraints in the international system, "not all foreign policy opportunities that became apparent with the end of apartheid can be easily exploited"³².

The one aspect of foreign policy in which South Africa behaves in a manner inconsistent with its foreign policy goals has been the area of human rights. In this context, South Africa has been unable to coordinate its trade policy in arms in a manner that reflects on its commitment to human rights. South Africa sought to adhere to the arms trade criteria, set by the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC), not to sell to regions at war³³. South Africa has adhered to this policy on arms trade in the transfer of arms to some parts of the world. What remains a problem is the fact that it has not been in a position to synchronise this policy with its position on issues of human rights and peace. Despite the restrictive nature of the policy on arms trade, it has not been applied consistently. Arms have been transferred to countries in conflict such as Angola, the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), India, Pakistan, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and Uganda³⁴. This has created a perception that the country's trade policy on arms is incoherent and is implemented in a manner that lacks harmony with South Africa's commitment to human

³¹ Ajulu, R. 1995. "South Africa and the North/South: Pragmatism versus Principle", in C. Landsberg, G. le Pere and A. van Nieuwkerk. *In Mission Imperfect: Redirecting South Africa's Foreign Policy*. Foundation for Global Dialogue, and Centre for Policy Studies: Johannesburg

³² Davies, R. "South Africa's Economic Relations with Africa: Current Patterns and Future Perspectives", A. Adebayo. 1996. *South Africa and Africa: Within or Apart*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, p. 167

³³ Mills, G. 2000. *The wired model. South Africa, foreign policy and globalisation*. SAIIA & Tafelburg Publishers Limited: South Africa, pg 265

³⁴ Bondi, L. "A question of principle: Arms trade and human rights", in *Human Rights Watch Report*, Vol. 12, No. 5(A), October 2000 (www.hrw.org/reports/2000/safrica). Trade to such countries as Rwanda and Uganda is likely to escalate regional instability and is against the Policy on Arms Trade restriction of avoiding transfer of arms where it would contribute to violation of human rights and violation of

rights. In a nutshell there is a need to coordinate the policy on the sale of arms in manner that reflects on the country's foreign policy commitments to human rights, democracy, peace and peace building³⁵.

The arms industry is a lucrative aspect of South Africa's economy. South Africa is compelled to make hard choices between preaching liberal principles and pursuing its national economic interest. It seems the international system is such that if South Africa were to adhere to its principles at the expense of arms trade it will forego much needed revenue³⁶. Its economic position will be weaker rendering it incapable of playing a meaningful role in the renewal of Africa let alone in international affairs. The international system is such that there is a conflict between South Africa's foreign policy principles and the economic imperatives. It is because of this problematic reality that South Africa behaves inconsistently.

Despite the stated commitment to the cause of human rights, South Africa has also been unable to out rightly condemn and distance human rights abusers. Some figures that have appalling human rights records have been welcomed and afforded safe haven in the country. One such case has been that of an infamous Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam who was given medical treatment in South Africa. Despite demands by

fundamental freedoms. See Chapter 6 of the White Paper on the South African Defence Related Industries ([www.defence.gov.za/external/external.asp?id=1000](#))

³⁵ South Africa's arms trade should be carried out in a manner that shows commitment to human rights and creation of a peaceful world. See IGD, "South Africa's foreign policy mood: Moral internationalism or Commercial Realism?" Global Dialogue, Vol. 3.1 March, 1998.

³⁶ South Africa seems to be in a moral dilemma as arms trade allows for economies of scale and creates employment. See Richard Meares, "The Moral Dilemma of Frankenstein", Business Report, 3 September 1997 and Shelton, G. "South Africa's Arms Industry. Exports will determine the future", in Global Dialogue, Vol. 4.2 August 1999.

Ethiopians for his extradition South Africa chose to keep him in the country³⁷. In this case the principles underpinning foreign policy were compromised in favour of an old friend who gave support to the ANC under apartheid. It seems that South Africa has difficulties in harmonising its moral principles with a need to keep relations with old friends. Its foreign policy after 1994 is not entirely defined and informed by the liberal principles. It is also driven by imperatives of the international system that have defined friends and enemies³⁸. It is against this background that the South African government has been accused of giving in to political reasons rather than the values it seeks to promote externally and upon which it is founded.

The other important area in which South Africa has been criticised and which can be explained within the context of the hypothesis adopted here is that of conflict resolution in Africa. South Africa has played a crucial role in the resolution of conflicts in Africa and the implementation of ceasefire agreements. It has been instrumental in the Lusaka peace initiatives creating a framework within which crises can be resolved³⁹. South Africa has also been active in facilitating the negotiated settlements in Angola, Zaire, the DRC, Mozambique, the Comoros and Burundi⁴⁰. In all these examples, South Africa has been informed by its desire to play the role of a mediator seeking to end conflicts

³⁷ World Tibet Network, "South Africa divided by Foreign Policy of ANC", December 1999.

³⁸ The international system is such that South Africa has to maintain relations with those who assisted in the struggle against apartheid and who still share common interests with it in a world divided between the North and the South. See Makoa, F. "South Africa's foreign policy towards the rest of Africa", in African Foreign Policies in the 21st Century. Working Papers compiled by Africa Institute: Pretoria, p.41.

³⁹ le Pere, G., Lambrechts, K. & van Nieuwkerk, A. "South Africa's foreign policy challenges in the new millennium", in Global Dialogue, Vol. 4.3, December 1999, p. 5.

⁴⁰ See Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining Ambiguity? South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power", A paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference, University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), 8-10 September 2001, p. 14

amicably rather than through imposed conditions. It has been informed by its transition from apartheid to democracy, which was achieved through negotiations.

South Africa's foreign policy in the area of peacekeeping and conflict resolution in Africa has its failures. Despite its catalytic role in the signing of ceasefires, the expectations that were created after 1994 have not been met. South Africa's desire to play the role of a peacemaker that does not impose itself on others prevents it from having a substantive impact on conflict resolution. Its diplomatic approach during the 1998 Congolese conflict fell far short of matching the stated commitment to African affairs. Given its commitment to amicable conflict resolution in Africa it was incumbent of South Africa not only to mediate in the conflict, but also to provide adequate material assistance for realisation of peace and stability. South Africa supported Kabila in 1997, but failed to act decisively against him when he undermined the democratic principles he flaunted when he was fighting against Mobutu. South Africa's lack of direction in this regard reflected on South Africa's inability to operate in accordance with its human rights principles. As a country that is inextricably linked to Africa, South Africa has no choice but to make friends in the continent thus neutralising its morally charged foreign policy.

The Zimbabwean crisis is one other case in which South Africa's foreign policy principles have not been rigidly applied. South Africa's foreign policy stance towards Zimbabwe has been that of "quiet diplomacy" in that it has not been speaking out against human rights abuses conducted by Mugabe's Zanu-PF. This foreign policy approach has undermined South Africa's commitment to liberal values. South Africa's stance towards

Zimbabwe could be understood in the context of limitations imposed on it by the foreign policy environment within which it operates. Zimbabwe is a Southern African country with which South Africa seeks to forge amicable economic and political ties. It is a realisation by South Africa that outright condemnation could endanger peaceful relations between these itself and Zimbabwe. This means that South Africa faces a challenge of striking a balance between being a unifying force in Africa and a custodian of liberal values.

It seems South Africa has to do more than just facilitating transformation towards democracy and the signing of ceasefire agreements. More often than not, those involved in the conflict pay little attention to ceasefire initiatives, thus thwarting South Africa's attempt to involve itself in the amicable resolution of conflicts⁴¹. This has been a challenge facing South Africa's middle power inclination towards collective rather than a unilateral approach to resolving African conflicts. South Africa's caution not to impose itself on African countries and its neighbours makes its role in Africa weak. However, this soft approach creates an impression that South Africa is not committed to democratic values as it claims in its foreign policy discourse. South Africa is also committed to African Unity as demonstrated by its active role in projects such as African renaissance. The aspiration to create solidarity necessary for African unity on the one hand and attraction of foreign direct investment on the other, is a contradictory one. It makes South

⁴¹ South Africa is perceived by some as possessing the capacity to bring peace in Africa. However, others perceive it as a country that can impose itself on others. This leads to South Africa adopting a cautious stance in Africa. It seems the African foreign policy environment also restrains South Africa's foreign policy aspirations. See Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining Ambiguity: South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power", A paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), 8-10 September 2001, p. 10.

Africa's foreign policy weak and incapable of consistently adhering to its stated goals in Africa and Southern Africa. What seems to be a foreign policy failure is a function of an environment within which foreign policy is exercised.

Major inconsistencies in South Africa's foreign policy behaviour have also been in the area of economics. South Africa's middle power position makes it an ambiguous player in international affairs. On the one hand it seeks to have influence in the South, where it can form coalitions it needs to reform international institutions. On the other it is a middle power that can relate to Northern states where it also seeks to wield some influence in defining economic relations between these states and the South. As a country that has just emerged from decades of isolation there has also been a desire to get back onto the international stage, since 1994⁴². South Africa's straddling⁴³ position between North and South is epitomised in the adoption of, "liberal democratic reforms, deregulation, and privatisation"⁴⁴ which all open the country to Northern investment. This ambiguous position creates an impression that South Africa is not as committed as it was initially to Africa and its elevation from the margins of the global economy. It seems that South Africa pays only lip service by saying it sees itself as part of Africa. It is in this context that its commitment to an African development is perceived as a rhetorical device.

⁴² Ryall, D. "Caught Between Two Worlds: Understanding South Africa's foreign policy options", in Third World Quarterly, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 400.

⁴³ This term is used by Hussein Solomon referring to South Africa's foreign policy that seeks to reconstruct Africa on the one hand and play embrace the North on the other. See Solomon, H. "South African foreign policy and middle power leadership", Fairy God Mother: Hegemon or Partner. ISS Monograph No. 13, May 1997.

⁴⁴ Ryall, D. "Caught Between Two Worlds: Understanding South Africa's foreign policy options", in Third World Quarterly, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 402. Also see Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining Ambiguity: South Africa and

Furthermore, South Africa's democratic credentials make it an access point for Northern states seeking to invest in Africa. This also leads to a South Africa that is straddling between the North and South. Its position as a middle power that is capable of forging relations with Northern states leads to ambiguity emanating from the amalgamation of two different foreign policy environments. The challenge that this foreign policy environment imposes on South Africa is that of maintaining a balance between achieving economic growth by forging relations with the North while playing a major role in the upliftment of Southern states, particularly those in Africa⁴⁵.

The lack of consistency between foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour can further be explained in the context of South Africa's economic position. South Africa requires foreign direct investment from the North, while at the same time it seeks to uplift Africa. Its relative weak economic position vis-à-vis the North requires it to forge relations and in the process attract investment for itself. The global economy is such that it is impossible for South Africa to enclose itself in a 'cocoon' if it is to harness the benefits of the world economy, sometimes at the expense of its commitment to Africa⁴⁶.

the projection of pluralist middle power". A paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), 8-10 September 2001, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Ryall, D. "Caught Between Two Worlds: Understanding South Africa's foreign policy options", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 402. South Africa is caught between being an African or Southern state and middle power pursuing an influential economic position in the global economy.

⁴⁶ The North is the centre of wealth, which has to be kept as close as possible if South Africa and Africa are to gain economic benefits from them. See Bischoff, P-H. Explaining Ambiguity: South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power". A paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), 8-10 September 2001, p. 7.

The international system according to Bischoff continues to be the one characterised by permanent disorderliness in that states are still left to fend for themselves⁴⁷. It can then be argued that the international state of affairs is such that the weak in the South are co-opted in an international system dominated by the rich. South Africa finds itself squarely placed on such an international system in which it has to attract investment if it is to survive. In an international environment of this nature principles of human rights and democracy mirrored in South Africa's foreign policy conflict with its economic priorities. The lack of consistency in South Africa's foreign policy is thus a function of an international environment that forces the country to preoccupy itself with economic survival at the expense of principles that ought to underpin its foreign relations.

Africa is also increasingly being politically and economically marginalised. The loss of strategic importance by the developing world, especially Africa seems to have intensified in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War⁴⁸. International political events seem to be dominated by the most powerful states in the world such as the United States⁴⁹. South Africa is compelled to preoccupy itself with strengthening its political and economic position in a world dominated by few rich countries of the North. In its attempts to play a meaningful role internationally it has to contend with forces that not only marginalise it,

⁴⁷ Bischoff, P. 1995. "Democratic South Africa and the world one year after: towards a new foreign policy. Centre for Southern African Studies: Bellville.

⁴⁸ African marginality occurs against the backdrop of conflicts and wars that have afflicted Africa since the immediate aftermath of independence. See Mills, G. 2000. The Wired Model: South Africa, foreign Policy and globalisation. SAIIA: Cape Town, p. 17.

⁴⁹ International political events seem to gain weight only if they have the support of these major powers. America's refusal to accept some contents of the conference on Racism held in South Africa in September 2001 and the subsequent setbacks this has had on the conference are indicative of the influence these states wield.

but that also thwart its foreign policy goals. Due to its limited influence, South Africa is prevented by the international foreign policy environment from effectively promoting democratic values globally.

3.4 Foreign Policy Lessons for South Africa

Post apartheid foreign policy emerged at a critical juncture in international relations. A juncture that not only supported the espousal of universal liberal values, but also of complex interdependence, unpredictability and harsh competition. This unmanageable foreign policy environment determines South Africa's foreign policy behaviour. For instance, South Africa aspires to take its place in international affairs and at the same time lead Africa's renewal. It has to win friends in Africa and strike partnerships with countries of the North in order to generate wealth. The maintenance of a balance between principle and pragmatism has proven to be difficult. South Africa thus straddles between the North and the South leading to an ambiguous foreign policy owing to the two environments within which it operates. The ambivalence in South Africa's foreign policy is a function of drawing from two different and sometimes conflicting environments⁵⁰.

The enthusiasm subsequent to 1994 created a myth that rejoining the international system meant benefits for South Africa. Such a perception understated the challenges and setbacks of being part of an international system. It also led to a Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) that lacked vigilance in modelling foreign policy, because the international environment was not properly understood. The international system is not only about

opportunities, but it is also about challenges to foreign policy makers. The lesson for the South African Department of Foreign Affairs is that of understanding the complexities of the international political and economic system if realistic foreign policy goals are to be established.

Despite South Africa's desire to export its political culture globally, it is thwarted by an inevitable need to galvanise regional and international support if it is to be successful. Without such support, influence in the region will remain an unrealisable goal and prospects for attracting wealth will also be bleak. In turn the domestic and regional goals such as economic growth, unemployment and eradication of conflict will remain an unachievable wish list. Without them being achieved the intangibles such as the protection of human rights, good governance and democracy become meaningless. This means that the conduct of foreign policy is not easy, but has to be balanced such that it is not exercised in a manner that compromises all these important international agendas.

An understanding of the restraints imposed on countries like South Africa by the international political and economic system would lead to informed criticism of South Africa's foreign policy. It has been argued that South Africa continues flaunting human rights slogans as the linchpins of its foreign policy and yet fails to intervene in places afflicted by lawlessness like Zimbabwe. Relations with countries like Cuba and Libya, which are infamous for their appalling human rights records, have also been subjected to such sharp criticism. Analysed with the context of Political Structuralism this alleged

⁵⁰ Williams, P. "South African Foreign Policy: Getting Critical", *Politikon*, 2000, 27 (1) p. 76



foreign policy failure is a function of the political and the economic structure of the international system.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the principles that form the foundation of South Africa's foreign policy. It has also gone on to demonstrate the reasons for the lack of consistency between stated foreign policy goals and the actual foreign policy behaviour. It has tried to place this lack of coherence between foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour under theoretical scrutiny. In terms of this analysis, the hypothesis posed in the preliminary chapters stands. The structure of the international system, as suggested by political structuralism explains the prevalent ambiguity in foreign policy. The multi-issue agenda and globalising international system has created a challenging terrain for the development and making of foreign policy. Finally, the argument is then used to draw some lessons that such theoretical scrutiny yields. It is hoped that these will have some relevance in foreign policy analysis and making in South Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CASE STUDY APPROACH OF INCONSISTENCIES IN POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY

4.1 Introduction

Even though South Africa abolished apartheid and adopted democracy the practical application of its liberal principles became problematic. The optimism of a South Africa that would play a meaningful role in the democratisation process internationally turned into a spectacle of irony on a number of cases. This has opened South Africa's foreign policy to criticism that South Africa's behaviour does not capture the principles upon which it is purportedly founded.

This chapter tests this inconsistency by examining South Africa's foreign policy towards China, Lesotho, the Great Lakes and Swaziland. The state of democracy and politics in general in these four cases since 1994 are research topics on their own. However, here they are considered to reflect on the challenges South Africa faces in the area of foreign policy.

South Africa has conducted itself in a manner that departs from the principles of democracy, human rights, non-aggression and peace that are central to its politics. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that South Africa is not an exception in so far as the rift between foreign policy discourse and foreign policy behaviour is concerned. The importance of criticism levelled against South Africa's inability to strike a balance between discourse and how it actually behaves is acknowledged. However,

what seems to be critically pertinent is the theoretical analysis of such an inconsistency. It is within this context that in the ultimate analysis this chapter moves from the premise that South Africa is symptomatic of a country operating in an international system of states. An international system whose political and economic structure thwart foreign policy aspirations of middle powers like South Africa¹.

4.2 CASESTUDY I: Foreign Policy Towards China After 1994

South Africa's recognition of China is one of the cases that reflect on the country's inability to unambiguously implement the liberal principles central to its foreign policy. Secondly, it also serves as an insightful case for testing the validity of the hypothesis underpinning this study, that South Africa's behaviour is mostly an antithesis of its stated foreign policy principles. It is thus imperative for us to revisit the decision that was made by South Africa to recognise the People's Republic of China, in that it allows for an exposition of the inherent contradictions of South Africa's foreign policy.

The history of the division between People's Republic of China and Taiwan is documented elsewhere by experts in the field of international relations of China and the broader Asia-Pacific. Here the intricacies of this division will only be a departure from the central purpose of the chapter. A brief background will nonetheless be given

¹ Schrire and Silke argue that "for small states the restraints imposed by the international system tend to weigh more heavily". See Schrire, R & Silke, D "Foreign Policy. The domestic context", in M. Muller & W Carlsnaes. 1997. Change and South Africa's external relations. ITP: SA, p. 3.

as it pertains to South Africa's foreign policy principles². People's Republic of China in Beijing had claims over the whole of China and regarded Taiwan as province of China and the Republic of China (ROC) as a local authority of the island. Beijing (PRC) favoured the unification of the two entities on its terms³. Furthermore, they did not want any diplomatic recognition of this island. According to them coexistence of two systems, on the premise of one China, socialism on the mainland and capitalism on Taiwan was possible and the two could develop side by side for a long time without interference from either side

On the other hand, Taiwan (ROC) had since 1960s argued for self-determination. During the 1960s some native Taiwanese, upset by the rule of the mainland minority, began to call for independence from China. It was during this time that focus shifted from reclaiming the mainland to developing the island itself. Despite developments of the 1990s from military to diplomatic offensives by China against the renegade province there were still disagreements regarding the terms on which the two entities were going to be unified. Taiwan did not accept the entire proposal that was put forward by Beijing, including the "one China, two systems proposal"⁴ as it came to be known. Instead, Taiwan wanted to take its place in international relations as an independent actor in its own right.

² It seems as if South Africa completely departed from its commitment to human rights in recognition of a country that has a repressive regime that is not committed to democracy.

³ Breytenbach, W. "The Chinese Dilemma: Dual Recognition is The Ultimate Solution" in South Africa Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer 1994

⁴ Lai To, L. "A history of the PRC's Policy Towards Taiwan", in SAIIA and FGD, 1995. South Africa and the two Chinas Dilemma. SAIIA & FGD Publication (Johannesburg).

This situation created a dilemma for South Africa, a country whose main objective was to rejoin the international community without any forms of discrimination against certain states. The People's Republic of China was one of many countries that were interested in opening diplomatic ties with the new South Africa, while Taiwan on the other hand was a partner with South Africa prior the 1994 elections. The issue was further complicated by the fact that Beijing had supported anti-apartheid movements, including the ANC.

This dilemma spawned new and intense debates within the country and abroad concerning the route South Africa ought to follow. These debates revolved around the possibility of South Africa retaining ties with Taiwan at the risk of neglecting its economic interests in China. This would have been a decision contrary to that made by other nations of the world with which South Africa wants to forge friendly relations. The option of breaking ties with Taiwan in favour of China also had its problems such as closing economic links and decreasing the chance of Taiwan's independence⁵.

While the debates were going on, Chinese officials periodically visited Africa and proclaimed South Africa as a gateway to many parts of the continent. The Chinese president Jiang Zemin alluded to the importance of Sino-African relations as China shares common concerns and history of colonialism with Africa⁶. Despite this

⁵ Geldenhuys, D. 1997. The Politics of South Africa's China Switch", in *Issues and Studies* 3/7, July, p. 110.

⁶ Payne, R and Vency, C. "China's Post Cold War Africa Policy", *Asian Survey*, Sept. 1998, p 870.

commonality of interests China is a repressive government in which opposition forces are violently dealt with.

Taiwan on the other hand democratised in the 1990s to become one of Asia's free, rich and stable democracies. It also played a crucial role in funding the ANC government after 1994. All these factors ought to have counted in its favour in the recognition issue. As a country founded on principles of freedom and democracy, South Africa was expected to be inclined more towards a like-minded country. Indeed the situation was a test case for South Africa's foreign policy makers. It is at that juncture that the values of human rights, democracy, peace and respect for law should have been practically and coherently affirmed. During the consideration of People's Republic of China's recognition Taiwan had not declared itself independent of PRC. PRC could have thus been pressurised to adopt democratic politics, as was the case in Taiwan before it could be recognised.

However, this was not the case as South Africa announced its recognition of China in 1996. Upon deeper consideration of the recognition of China it seems that South Africa neglected its commitment to values of human rights and democracy. South Africa could not implement its morally charged foreign policy due to demands placed on it by political and economic imperatives. It makes economic sense to forge ties with China, which has, "1,2-billion people, fast-growing economy and a lucrative market"⁷. Furthermore, South Africa is active within international fora such as OAU, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the UN system. It is incumbent on South Africa

to ensure that it forges ties that are consistent with its role in international affairs⁸. South Africa is also one of the African countries seeking a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. China's loyalty towards Africa, its position in the UN Security Council could pay dividends towards the realisation of this goal⁹. It seems political issues amongst other factors had an influence in the decision South Africa made in favour of China. This is the reality of the international system with which South Africa's ambitious foreign policy goals need to come to terms.

South Africa's decision could also be conceptualised in terms of its economic interests. South Africa's position compels it to forge ties with partners from which it can derive foreign direct investment (FDI), without which economic demands of South Africans cannot be met. It seems that China's pre-eminent economic position had an influence on the decision to switch away from Taiwan. In addition to the size of its economy, China has a double-digit growth rate and shows signs that it is increasingly becoming one of the world's powerful economies. Its economic strength was further increased by the incorporation of Hong Kong in 1997¹⁰, making many countries around the world interested in maintaining formal diplomatic ties with it.

⁷ *Mail and Guardian*, 8 December 1995.

⁸ Statements from the South African presidency imply that South Africa was driven by its role in international relations to recognise China. This is precisely consistent with what this research is advancing. South Africa's foreign policy is determined largely by the strictures of the International system. See, "South Africa's relations with The Greater China", Statement Issued by the Office of the President, 27 November 1996 (www.polity.org.za/govdocs/pr/1996/pr1127b.html)

⁹ According to Van Breda, "The People's Republic of China is already an important actor on the world stage and its size gives the country considerable weight in the international arena. With 1,2-billion people, or 20% of the world's population, it has played an increasingly active role with the United Nations since entering it in 1971. See Van Breda, N. 1996. "South Africa Should Decry China's Record", *Mail and Guardian*, 27 Sept. 1996.

The incorporation of Hong Kong into main land China led to a perceived economic pre-eminence creating a positive economic future for China and its trading partners. Could it have been a coincidence that South Africa decided to recognise China while the incorporation of Hong Kong was looming? It seems that South Africa made this decision in line with its economic interests rather than with its commitment to liberal values and to which China does not subscribe.

After 1996 trade between South Africa and China has shown a tremendous increase¹¹. South Africa was also attracted by lucrative Chinese markets and shifted focus towards the region of Asia. It would have been expected that South Africa will act in accordance with its desire of being an influential player in world affairs, by not only trading with China. But also by nudging it to be swift in the democratic agenda. This would be in keeping with South Africa's commitment to democratisation. The failure to act in this manner has led to South Africa being accused of forsaking its moral values in favour of doing business with wealthy tyrants¹².

4.3 CASE STUDY II: Foreign Policy Towards Lesotho in 1998

In 1998 Lesotho was characterised by a volatile political dispute over the results of its multi-party elections. The Lesotho Congress for Democracy under first past the post-

¹⁰ SAIIA & FGD. 1995 South Africa and the Two Chinas Dilemma. SAIIA & FGD: JHB, p. 91

¹¹ According to Business Day, 27 September 1998 South Africa China trade increased six fold in 1996

¹² See Edmunds, M & Du Plessis, C. "We'll Do Business With Any Tyrant Who Pays", Mail & Guardian, April 4, 1997.

electoral system won 79 of the 80 seats in parliament. Opposition parties¹³ claimed that there were irregularities and demanded the resignation of Pakalitha Mosili and his cabinet. They mobilised people, called for a stay away and finally threatened to seize strategic government properties¹⁴. After weeks of political unrest and failed mediation by South Africa, the situation deteriorated to a point where the police and the military could not contain it. Civil war was imminent as the Lesotho Defence force was on the brink of staging a coup¹⁵.

It is against this background of protestation and imminent *coup d'etat* that on 22 September 1998, South African paratroopers in conjunction with Botswana forces intervened in Lesotho. Their mission was carried out under aegis of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) peacekeeping initiative. This initiative was a result of a request by a Prime Minister Mosili of Lesotho for military assistance from South Africa¹⁶. The main goal of the intervention was to restore law and order.

This intervention raised a plethora of questions and criticism in South Africa and the region. These questions revolved around the legality of the operation and South Africa's involvement in a militaristic intervention that resembled an invasion. A thorough examination of the debates surrounding the intervention shows that this was

¹³ Basotho Congress Party, Basotholand National Party and Marentlou Freedom Party claimed that the elections were not free and fair. See Neethling, N. "Military Intervention in Lesotho: Perspectives On Operation Boleas and Beyond", in *Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, Issue 2.2, May 1999, p 1

¹⁴ Mathoma, P.T. "South Africa and Lesotho: Sovereign Independence or a tenth province?", in *South African Yearbook of International Affairs 1999/2000*. SAIIA: Johannesburg, p. 71.

¹⁵ "Regional Security in Southern Africa: Whither the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security?", in *Global Dialogue* Volume 3.3 December 1998.

not only regional security dilemma. It was also a serious contradiction inherent in the post apartheid South Africa's foreign policy.

The nature of the intervention, its underlying motives and its consequences, reveal the lack of a coherent foreign policy framework on the part of South Africa. Its [South Africa] involvement in Lesotho during the 1998 turmoil demonstrates the rift between foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour introduced in the preceding chapters. The lack of coherence in foreign policy becomes clearer when the Lesotho case is examined against the principles espoused in South African foreign policy documents.

The first critical point pertains to the *ad hoc* manner in which foreign policy decisions have been made and are being made in South Africa. South Africa decided not to send troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1997 in the name of a negotiated settlement¹⁷. The decision to march into Lesotho contradicted the initial commitment to a diplomatic rather than a military approach. The conflict facing the DRC was much more serious and endangered the whole region¹⁸, yet it was met with a modest response by South Africa. This adoption of an aggressive foreign policy stance towards Lesotho while South Africa claims to stand for peace and non-

¹⁶ The 1994 SADC Memorandum of Understanding appointed Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe as the guarantors of democracy in Lesotho, but during the time of the crisis Zimbabwe was already involved in the Congo Conflict hence its absence. See *Global Dialogue*, Vol 3.3 December 1998, p. 1.

¹⁷ While Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia gave military support towards containing this debilitating conflict in the DRC, South Africa ruled out military involvement in favour of a negotiated settlement. See Smith A.D "Clumsy Pretoria Adds to Africa's Troubles", *Mail and Guardian*, September 24, 1998.

¹⁸ Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda were at the brink of being pulled into the conflict in the DRC. See Mutume, G. "Pretoria Talks Rule Out Armed Intervention", *Mail and Guardian*, January 29, 1997.

aggression suggests that there is no coherent foreign policy framework¹⁹. Critics argue that South Africa participated in the armed intervention to protect narrow self-interests in Lesotho. Katse and Mohale Dams²⁰, which were at the brink of being taken over by the unruly military, seem to have been compelling factors behind the intervention. It seems that the DRC situation was not acted upon with such vigilance because South Africa does not have immediate strategic interests there. The problem here is that of being unable to strike a harmonious balance between moral principles of foreign policy and the pursuit of national self-interest.

Secondly, the immediate effect of the operation on citizens of Lesotho stands in stark contrast with what South Africa's foreign policy discourse proclaims. Maintenance of law and order and the creation of an environment conducive to peaceful resolution of the conflict²¹ were not created. Violence that characterised the aftermath of the operation resulted in a volatile political situation. The hope of achieving stability through use of aggressive means reflected the confusion that prevails in South Africa's foreign policy. The notion of a South Africa inclined towards peaceful mediation of conflicts and democratic consolidation became a hollow aspiration. The

¹⁹ This lack of coherent foreign policy framework is shown by "a tangle of inconsistencies and contradictions that have characterised South Africa's foreign policy since 1994". See Marais, H. "Diplomacy Discarded for Intervention: South Africa Carries a Big Stick", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1999.

²⁰ Katse Dams forms part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project in which South Africa invested billions of rands. It also serves as the reservoir for the whole of Gauteng Province. See Mathoma, P. "South Africa and Lesotho: Sovereign Independence or a tenth province?" *South African Yearbook of International Affairs* 1999/2000. SAIIA: Johannesburg, p. 74.

²¹ The engagement of South Africa and Botswana forces in Lesotho threw the country in an even worse political crisis. Looting and violence destabilised the tiny Kingdom. See Van Nieuwkerk, A. "The Lesotho Crisis: Implications for South African Foreign Policy", in K. Lambrecht, "Crisis in Lesotho: The Challenge of Managing Conflict in Southern Africa". *FGD African Dialogue Series*, No 2 March 1999, p. 1.

lack of a coherent resolve demonstrated by Operation Boleas²² reflected on the inability of South Africa to practically implement its foreign policy principles.

Thirdly, after 1994 South Africa proclaimed its being part of the continent and the sub-region. Its foreign policy discourse alluded to the opening of doors in a reconciliatory spirit that was not prevalent under the apartheid government. As a democratic country that went through a peaceful exchange of power, South Africa's intervention in Lesotho ought to have been guided by principles of negotiation, peaceful resolution of conflict and respect for international law²³. It ought to have approached this regional security issue in the same manner it addresses domestic disputes. On the contrary South Africa opted for an armed intervention giving itself the image of a regional aggressor reminiscent of the apartheid South Africa.

Fourthly, in the view of the Basotho and the region at large, South Africa could not swiftly implement its policy of peaceful mediation. The signs of a political crisis were visible as early as July 1998, but South Africa failed to take a decisive stance. In the build up, prior to the actual conflict, South Africa played a weak diplomatic role. The weakness is made indicative by the inability of the Langa Commission²⁴ to release it

²² The Economist published an article titled "The Regions Blundering Bully", pointing to negation of highly flaunted diplomacy in favour of a militaristic approach to conflict resolution. See *Economist*, Vol. 349, issue 8094, 14 November 1998. Operation Boleas was a code name given to the planned military intervention of 1998 in Lesotho.

²³ All these are stated aspirations of South Africa's foreign policy. See Van Nieuwkerk, A. "The Lesotho Crisis: Implications for South African Foreign Policy", K. Lambrecht, "Crisis in Lesotho: The Challenge of Managing Conflict in Southern Africa". *FGD African Dialogue Series*, No 2 March 1999, p. 1.

²⁴ The Langa Commission was comprised of a team of experts from Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe charged with the responsibility of carrying out an audit of the 1998 Lesotho General Elections. However, the Commission's ambivalence in its report tainted its credibility.

findings on time. There was a belief that the Commission was acting in favour of the LCD. This compromised South Africa's impartiality on the diplomatic front. And this lack of confidence by citizens of Lesotho in South Africa re-invigorated the discontent.

Furthermore, South Africa's involvement in the intervention was fraught with contradictions. The operation was carried out under the name of protection of democracy. The Lesotho Congress for Democracy government was not accepted as democratic in the eyes of many Lesotho citizens. It was an autocratic government that was accused of a rigorous vote rigging exercise with a view to prolonging its tenure. South Africa's intervention was thus seen as an infringement of democratic right of the people to show their discontent²⁵. Whether the elections were rigged or not the Lesotho scenario exposed the underlying South Africa's foreign policy problems. It revealed South Africa's inability to consistently apply its intentions of promoting democratic values externally.

Finally, the Lesotho intervention became a foreign policy debacle due to its questionable legality. This revealed a weakness in South Africa's foreign policy, whose discourse flaunts respect for international law as a guiding principle of state relations. The operation seems to have been a decision made by few players with no

²⁵ Many ordinary Basotho saw the invasion as a crude move by South Africa to save an unpopular and an autocratic government". See Dixon, N. "South Africa Invades Lesotho" (<http://jinx.sistm.unsw.edu.au/~greenlft/1998/336/336p21.htm>)

proper consultation within SADC and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)²⁶. This made the intervention a unilateral action shrouded in a cloak of a multilateral initiative carried under the aegis of SADC²⁷. The Lesotho intervention was more than just a regional security issue. It also revealed the rift between South Africa's foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour.

4.4 CASE STUDY III: Foreign Policy Towards the Great Lakes after 1994

South Africa is situated in a continent that has become a "theatre²⁸" of conflicts in the post Cold War order. One of the major foreign policy challenges for South Africa lies in the realm of conflict resolution and peacekeeping in Africa. South Africa's post apartheid aspirations of championing a 'renaissance' of the continent have been held hostage by the escalating conflicts in the continent. It has become difficult to strike a balance between dealing with the challenges posed by conflicts and maintenance of foreign policy principles. The "African millennium" touted in the late 1990s by President Mbeki is still being delayed by the resource exhausting conflicts in the Great Lakes, Sudan, Angola and Sierra Leone²⁹. In the context of this case study the consideration of the Great Lakes political crisis affords us an opportunity not only to

²⁶ Southall, R. "Is Lesotho South Africa's tenth province?" in K. Lambrecht, "Crisis in Lesotho: The challenge of managing conflict in Southern Africa. FGD African Dialogue Series, No. 2 March 1999.

²⁷ The then acting president Mangosuthu Buthelezi consulted with a few SADC presidents, giving the impression that the intervention was sanctioned by SADC. See Seiler, J. "Is military peacemaking really possible?" *Mail & Guardian*, April 2 1999.

²⁸ Le Pere, K, Lambrechts, K and Van Nieuwkerk A. "The Burden of the Future: South Africa's Foreign Policy Challenges in The New Millennium", *Global Dialogue*, Vol 4.3, December 1999. Institute for Global Dialogue: South Africa, p. 5.

²⁹ In an address at South African Institute of International Affairs, South Africa's Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Zuma referred to the conflicts in the DRC, Angola, Sierra Leone and Sudan as the remaining challenges of South African foreign policy. See Zuma, N "Address by Foreign Affairs Minister", in *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Winter 2001, p. 21.

search for a solution. It also allows for introspection into South Africa's foreign policy inconsistencies.

A fully-fledged discussion on the intricacies of conflict in the Great Lakes warrants a research topic of its own. For purposes of relevance to this discussion the crisis in the Great Lakes will be traced back to the period after 1994. This is so due to the fact that the idea is to test the post 1994 inconsistencies of South African foreign policy.

The current conflict in the Great Lakes region started with the increasing unpopularity of the Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorial regime in Zaire. Mobutu's unpopularity increased while the 1994 genocide in the neighbouring Rwanda caused countless Hutus to seek refuge in Zaire. Mobutu supported Rwandan rebels in their strike against the Rwandan Tutsi led government. Rwanda and Uganda on the other hand sponsored a rebel group called Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) led by Laurent Kabila to overthrow Mobutu³⁰. Rwanda and Uganda had their own interests of ensuring a buffer zone around their borders, making it impossible for the rebel groups to gain easy access into their respective countries. In the face of increasing pressure, imminent military clash and Angola's involvement in backing of Kabila, Mobutu fled from Zaire on 17 May 1997. On 20 May 1997 Kabila declares himself the president and renames the country Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This signalled an intensification of African problems, which later challenged South Africa's foreign policy attempts of playing a preponderant role in the consolidation of democracy and peace in the continent.

Kabila's assumption of power which elevated hopes for democratic change in the DRC later turned into a spectacle of irony as he failed to control the Rwandan rebels. He became an enemy of his former allies, Rwanda and Uganda who began supporting an insurgency against him. He also started sponsoring and arming the rebels who were fighting against Rwanda and Uganda³¹. A situation that began as a series of unrelated domestic political problems, turned into a regional crisis as the whole of the Great Lakes region got drawn into the conflict.

The situation in the Great Lakes region not only challenged South Africa's foreign policy principles³². It also presented South Africa with an opportunity to exercise its stated foreign policy goals. However, there have been problems with the way in which South Africa exercised its foreign policy with regards to the Great Lakes region. The manner in which South Africa initially dealt with the conflict in the Great Lakes at one level shows the inability to convert principles into a coherent and practically implementable policy. It also demonstrates the constraints within which states have to exercise foreign policy. In this regard, delving into South Africa's inability to put broad foreign policy aspirations coherently into practice is not sufficient. There is a need to explain this rift between the foreign policy aspirations and the actual behaviour with respect to this particular case study at a theoretical level. In its

³⁰ Leader, J.E "The Congo Crisis" A speech Delivered at the World Affairs Council of Greater Fort Worth, Texas, 30 April 2001

³¹ Leader, J.E "The Congo Crisis" A speech Delivered at the World Affairs Council of Greater Fort Worth, Texas, 30 April 2001.

³² Conflicts of the type seen in the Great Lakes region militate against the practical implementation of the principles of human rights, democracy and good governance, which South Africa proclaims. See Evans, R "The Humanitarian Challenge. A Foreign Policy Perspective", in *African Security Review*, Vol 6, No. 2, 1997. Publication of the Institute for Security Studies: South Africa, p. 1.

ultimate analysis the chapter seeks to undertake a conceptual clarification of this apparent ambiguity in South Africa's foreign policy.

The initial foreign policy towards the Great Lakes revealed inconsistencies that are part of the difficulties involved in South Africa's search for a role in the continent³³. One of South Africa's failures in this case was the inability to get involved constructively during the transition from Mobutu to Kabila in the DRC, where the regional conflict emanated. Furthermore, given the fact that South Africa endorsed Kabila it was only logical to get involved early in the region. This way South Africa would have been able to ensure that it could play a role in the democratisation of the Congo after Mobutu. Instead South Africa seems to have been reluctant to get too deeply involved in politics of the Congo.

In 1998 when the signs of a crisis were visible it adopted a non-interventionist approach and refused to play the part of peacemaker. On the other hand Zimbabwe and Angola took the initiative of sending troops to prop up Kabila³⁴. The fragmentation within SADC regarding the DRC and Great Lakes reflects not only on a regional security problem, but also on South Africa's weak foreign policy. Given its desire to become an active role player in ridding the continent of conflicts South Africa ought to have been the provider of direction and a unifying force, rather than a

³³ According to Komegay, F. & Landsberg, South Africa's foreign policy towards the Great Lakes is linked to other regional policy issues. Despite a desire to play a meaningful role, South Africa did not want to be seen as a playing the role of bully in the region and in Africa as a whole. See Komegay, F & Landsberg, C. "From dilemma to détente: Pretoria's Policy Options on the DRC and Great Lakes" Centre for Policy Studies Policy Brief No. 11, April 1999.

³⁴ Marais, H. "South Africa Carries a Big Stick: Diplomacy Discarded for Intervention" in Le Monde Diplomatique, March 1999

complacent player. South Africa did very little to prevent developments that are not compatible with its vision in the Great Lakes.

Furthermore, squabbles between South Africa and Zimbabwe seem to have played a role in militating against a coherent policy in the Great Lakes. “Being at odds regarding the modalities for resolving the conflict in the DRC and Great Lakes”³⁵ brought problems in the search for a solution to the crisis. South Africa should have been at the forefront in establishing a framework within which consensus between SADC countries regarding conflict in Africa could be reached. However the looseness of SADC as a regional body and the diversity of views regarding what ought to be done in the Congo militated against attempts by South Africa. From a critical perspective it can be argued that South Africa ought to have reconfigured the region and formulated a consistent regional policy towards the Great Lakes. Preoccupation with regional power politics such as the one between South Africa and Zimbabwe has also diverted South Africa’s attention from the initial concerns with peace in Africa. It is now also concerned with presenting itself as a friendly partner that does not seek to dictate terms for others, while it seeks to lead at the same time. This means that the African foreign policy environment also restrains South Africa’s attempts.

Without muddling two separate case studies, South Africa’s initial stance not to get involved in DRC and Great Lakes compels us to refer to the Lesotho intervention.

³⁵ Malan, M. “Regional Power Politics under Cover of SADC- Running Amok With A Mythical Organ” *Institute for Security Studies Occasional Paper No. 35*, October 1998.

South Africa's emphasis on negotiated settlement in the DRC and Great Lakes conflicts in the name of not wanting to destabilise an already volatile situation seemed plausible. However, adopting the same approach that was discarded in the Great Lakes case towards Lesotho was a contradiction of an earlier commitment to negotiations. In the light of an unstable political situation it created, the intervention was an antithesis of what South Africa stands for in terms of its foreign policy discourse³⁶. This is yet again evidence that South Africa's foreign policy is unclear and erratic in that it is applied in a contradictory fashion in many cases³⁷.

4.5 CASE STUDY IV: Foreign Policy Towards Swaziland After 1994

Swaziland is the only kingdom in Southern Africa that has not adopted multi-party politics³⁸. There is the absence of democratic institutions and public accountability due to a system that entrusts the King with absolute power³⁹. This situation has seen the country experiencing political unrest since the 1980s. The wave of democracy that blew across the world led to such a form of authoritarian rule being challenged by forces of democracy. The 1990s saw an increasing political activity under the banner of People's Democratic Movement (PUDEMO). Pro-democracy strikes became

³⁶ According to Southall the intervention was a "diplomatic-cum military bungle, which precipitated an orgy of arson, looting, violence which left the streets of Maseru a burnt shell with mayhem affecting other towns. Southall, R. "SADC Intervention in Lesotho: An Illegal Defence of Democracy? Unpublished Paper, Department of Political Studies, Rhodes University, p. 1.

³⁷ According to Anthony Holiday, "the upshot has been that, instead of a foreign policy, we have a hopeless mix of so-called "pragmatism", so-called "realism" and general ad hocery that prevents us from making our own initiatives". See Holiday, A. "Foreign Policy? What Foreign Policy?", in Mail & Guardian, September 8, 1998.

³⁸ Africa South of the Sahara 2001 (30th ed). Europa Publications: London, p. 1128.

³⁹ The Kingdom of Swaziland has been a constitutional non-party state since 1978 with the king wielding virtually absolute power

frequent in this tiny kingdom that is partially surrounded by South Africa. The King made attempts at trying to resolve the situation by establishing a structure called the “Vusela”⁴⁰ whose aim was to deal with the transformation issues in Swaziland. However the genuineness of the King’s attempts regarding democratic reforms were soon questioned as he appointed controversial figures to the structure. Protests continued and were followed by violent response from the police. PUDEMO rejected the “Vusela” due to the failure by the King to meet their demands, which included⁴¹:

- (i) Introduction of an interim government
- (ii) Suspension of the state of emergency by the government
- (iii) A carrying out of a constitutional referendum
- (iv) An introduction of a Constituent Assembly to oversee the drafting of a new Constitution.

Subsequent deliberations by the King seemed to have been geared not towards true democratic reforms, but at strengthening the monarch. This led to further unrest in Swaziland whose far-reaching implications affected not only domestic stability, but also the region as a whole. In 1992 political activity increased with the informal alliance between Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS), Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYCO) and PUDEMO. The main task of this alliance was to push for full democratisation of Swaziland. Pressure to reform Swaziland from the international community, including South Africa, mounted in the mid-1990s. As early as 1995 Mandela attempted to play a role in the reform process in Swaziland through private meetings with the King⁴². In the same year the country was brought to a

⁴⁰ “Vusela” is a Swazi word for greetings and was used in this case to refer to a team appointed by King Mswati to carry out consultations amongst the people of Swaziland and then report back. This has been dissolved and re-formed two times due to the controversial nature of its legitimacy and commitment to constitutionalism in Swaziland.

⁴¹ *Africa South of the Sahara*, 2001 (30th ed). Europa Publications: London 1129

⁴² *North Africa Region Analysis* “Mandela and a new role for peace”, 23 August 1997.

standstill by a two-day strike organised by the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU).

Due to this increasing domestic and regional pressure to reform, the King established a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) in 1996. However, in its early stages the commission drew controversy as pro-democracy movements questioned its credibility⁴³. High-ranking figures withdrew from the commission due to its lack of commitment to change. By 1997 no progress was made and people were still being arrested for participating in political gatherings. Civil unrest ensued affecting the turnout to the 1998 elections. The Commission has to date not made an adequate report on its progress; instead, the King is still using his power to silence those who seek constitutional reforms⁴⁴.

This political state of affairs in Swaziland is not only a challenge facing Swazi citizens. It is also a challenge to the basic tenets of democracy, human rights and good governance upon which regional integration ought to be predicated. For example the manner in which power is exercised in Swaziland is the antithesis of the values for which South Africa stands. South Africa is thus being called upon to ensure that it begins preaching the values it purports to stand for in the region. As mentioned, Swaziland is the only southern African country without an elected

⁴³ The King's brother was appointed as one of the leading figures of the commission leading to lack of confidence on what it can achieve on the reformatory front. See Africa South of the Sahara (30th ed), p. 1130.

⁴⁴ A dissident group operating under the umbrella of Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN), campaigning against Mswati from offices in the South African cities of Johannesburg, Nelspruit and

government⁴⁵. It would have been expected that South Africa would put to practice its commitment to issues of democratisation, respect for law and human rights in the case of Swaziland. However, South Africa has played a modest role concerning disregard for civil and political rights in a country geographically situated literally in its borders.

The long gestation period of the constitutional reforms in Swaziland is indicative of lack of commitment to democratisation. The initial date for the report by the CRC was supposed to have been in August 1998. However the process has been moving in circles with the report date being postponed almost every year. Five years after the CRC was established next to nothing has been achieved⁴⁶. A situation of this nature calls for South Africa's constructive engagement in Swaziland. Due to its experience in the terrain of democratic transformation, its role would be invaluable in the constitutional review process. South Africa's regional policy states that it is intimately linked to Southern Africa and will conduct itself to the benefit of the region. However, this aspiration has thus far remained a rhetorical device in that it has not been put into practice in the case of Swaziland.

Durban is indicative of a lack of such rights as free speech and freedom of the press in Swaziland. See Africa News Service, February 19, 2001(www.allafrica.com/stories/200102190376.html)

⁴⁵Swazis are barred from exercising their right to elect their representatives or to change their government freely. All of Swaziland's citizens are subjects of absolute monarch Mswati III. Royal decrees carry the full force of law. The king rejected an official 1993 report suggesting multi-partism. See Hlatshwayo, V. "The Mirage of Democracy in Swaziland", in Mail & Guardian, November 8, 1999.

⁴⁶ It is clear that the review process is not going to yield results so long as those who try to initiate debate within the CRC about constitutional principles and qualitative people's input are labelled as obstructionists.

South Africa has trade relations with Swaziland through the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and SADC. The Swazi economy is heavily reliant on South African imports⁴⁷. It is at this level that South Africa could force Swaziland to consider democratic reforms. Moreover, lack of democracy and accountability in Swaziland will militate against political cooperation without which solid regional integration cannot take place. It is thus in the interest of South Africa and the region that democratic transformation becomes a reality Swaziland. It is here that South Africa's stated foreign policy goals could be put to practice. Otherwise, adherence to liberal values propounded in the South African constitution and foreign policy documents will continue to be criticised as a payment of lip service rather than a genuine commitment. Indeed, this case shows that South Africa seems to have asserted these values rhetorically since 1994 without implementing them.

Despite the adoption of a foreign policy that is sensitive to a multi-issue agenda and the non-state oriented nature of the international system, South Africa continues finding itself being militated against by enduring features of the international system. One of these features is that of enduring sovereignty of states, which continues to restrain South Africa's attempts to promote democratisation in many African countries. The flaunting of sovereignty by the Swazi government has been a militating factor against South Africa's attempts to speed up the process of democratic change in that country. As a result, seven years into South Africa's

⁴⁷ Swaziland sends over 50% of its exports to South Africa from whom it receives almost all its imports. See "Swaziland Overview", in *Mbendi Information for Africa* (www.mbendi.co.za).

democracy in Southern Africa, promotion of democracy remains an un-implemented verbal aspiration. This is a reflection not only of a failure of South Africa's foreign policy, but also of enduring statehood militating against South Africa's foreign policy geared towards a pluralistic and transnational international system.

4.6 A conceptual evaluation

Ambiguities in foreign policies of states including that of South Africa should be understood within the context of interstate politics and struggle for survival. It is here that a theoretical interpretation of South Africa's foreign policy becomes imperative. A mere exposition of cases where South Africa has behaved ambiguously and in an *ad hoc* manner⁴⁸ is an insufficient narrative of South Africa's foreign policy problems. It has to be reinforced by a theoretical conceptualisation of why South Africa's foreign policy behaviour departs from values upon which it is supposedly founded. At this juncture a conceptual evaluation that captures the stated hypothesis⁴⁹ of the research is provided. This is not done with a view to justifying South Africa's foreign policy inconsistencies. On the contrary it is done to give clarity and substance to criticisms that have been levelled against South African foreign policy makers.

In the case studies some failures resulting from the manner in which foreign policy is conducted have been identified. From a theoretical point of view these failures are

⁴⁸ Van Nieuwkerk, A. "War in the Democratic Republic of Congo- Where to South Africa? Global Dialogue Volume 3.3 December 1998

⁴⁹ The hypothesis stated in the preceding chapters of this research states that, despite being predicated on liberal principles, South Africa's foreign policy is thwarted by the realities of the international system of states.

captured by the conception advanced by political structuralism⁵⁰. It seems in all four cases that it is not a deliberate attempt by the Department of Foreign Affairs to mislead the world about South Africa's intentions. South Africa is committed to all the values stated in foreign policy documents. What seems to militate against the actual implementation of these values are restraints inherent in the international system. South Africa is not the only country that rhetorically promotes liberal principles, while acting in a manner that contradicts them⁵¹. This is evidence that the structure of the international system imposes some limitations on states, albeit in different ways, given their different power capabilities, positions and geographical location.

South Africa's attempt to promote liberal values and to play the role of a peacemaker seems to be thwarted by a number of factors. Firstly, South Africa's middle power position is critical in determining what it can or cannot achieve in the international system⁵². South Africa is situated in the developing world, yet it has features of a first world country. It is one of the economically powerful countries in Southern Africa and Africa, yet it also has more than a quarter of its population living in abject

⁵⁰ Political Structuralists view the international as anarchic and as having a decisive impact on how states behave. See Viotti, P & Kauppi, M. 1987. International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond. Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc: USA.

⁵¹ The United States of America is a typical example of this. It claims to stand for democracy, freedom, non-aggression and human rights. The most striking example is the bombing of innocent civilians in places like Iraq, the Balkans and recently in Afghanistan. This is a radical departure from the basic tenets underpinning its foreign policy.

⁵² Solomon argues that the concept of a middle power is elusive. However, it does provide an insight into South Africa's position as a new player in a globalising world. See Solomon, H. "South Africa's Foreign Policy and Middle Power Leadership" Published in ISS Monograph No 13, Fairy Godmother, Hegemon or Partner? May 1997

poverty⁵³. This makes South Africa a country straddling between the rich and poor nations of the world. In international affairs it plays the role of a conciliator between the big and small powers⁵⁴. South Africa occupies an ambiguous position within the international political economy. The occupation of this ambiguous position means that two different and conflicting environments inform South Africa's foreign policy. This leads to an inevitable ambiguity in its foreign policy behaviour⁵⁵.

Due to its middle power position and inclination towards playing a conciliatory role in international affairs South Africa extends relations to all countries of the world. It is new in international politics and can do no other, but to embrace all states, big and small in its quest to create a peaceful international system⁵⁶. It is in this context that it has not been able to keep countries like the People's Republic of China at arms length. Its position in the international system is suited to the use of diplomatic engagement rather than distancing offenders. The gap between foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour should thus be viewed in terms of South Africa's position. It should be conceptualised within the context of the limitations imposed on a middle power seeking to win friends and find a niche in an anarchic international system.

⁵³ Kalenga, P. "Trade and Industrial Integration in Southern Africa: Pitfalls and Challenges", Global Dialogue Volume 4.3 December 1999. Also See May, J. "Poverty and Inequality in South Africa", Report Prepared for the Office of the Deputy President and Inter-ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality, 13 May 1998.

⁵⁴ See Solomon, H. "South Africa's Foreign Policy and Middle Power Leadership", in ISS Monograph No. 13, Fairy Godmother of Hegemon? May 1997.

⁵⁵ Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining ambiguity? South Africa and projection of a pluralist middle power". Paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference, University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), 8-10 September 2001. Also see Vale, P. "South Africa: Understanding the Upstairs and Downstairs", in A.F. Cooper (ed). 1997. Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers After the Cold War. Macmillan Press Ltd (UK), p. 209.

Commitment to conciliation and multilateralism minimises the possibility of a country like South Africa adopting a unilateral approach in the conduct of its foreign policy. According to Solomon, “a middle power, by itself is unlikely to have overwhelming influence on the international stage. As such, middle power leadership is, in essence, multilateralist in approach”⁵⁷. This means that South Africa’s position prevents it from outrightly condemning and breaking links with People’s Republic of China. The only way that would be beneficial to South Africa would be to constructively engage with China. This is one perspective by which the decision to recognise China could be conceptualised.

Given South Africa’s political and economic priorities, it has no other choice but to forge ties with big players such as People’s Republic of China if it is to have support within international fora and achieve economic growth. South Africa also seeks to represent the developing world within structures such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The world system is such that weaker states need to act in coalition in order to have a voice in these structures⁵⁸. Forging ties with a country like China, which is sympathetic to the developing world, is one step towards consolidating a coalition of Southern states with similar interests.

⁵⁶ Bischoff, P-H & Southall, R. “Early Foreign Policy of the democratic South Africa”, in S. Wright (ed). 1999. *African Foreign Policies*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

⁵⁷ See Solomon, H. “South Africa’s Foreign Policy and Middle Power Leadership”, in *ISS Monograph No. 13, Fairy Godmother of Hegemon?* May 1997.

⁵⁸ According to Wood, “Middle powers tend to form alliances or coalitions either with great powers or states in their own region”. See Wood, B. “Towards North-South Middle Power Coalitions”, In C. Pratt. *Middle Power Internationalism: North-South Dimension*. McQuill-Queen’s University Press. London. An example is of this is that of countries like South Africa negotiating with big powers under the banner of NAM within the UN and WTO.

Economically, South Africa is not a major attractor of foreign direct investment (FDI). With the increasing marginalisation of Africa from the world economy investors have switched from Africa to the Asia-Pacific region. Other countries of the world are also consolidating bilateral and multilateral relations with the Asia-Pacific region and with China in particular. Opting for a different route, while it is in desperate need for FDI, will only be detrimental to South Africa. According to a report by the Economist Intelligence Unit, “foreign direct investment flows into the Asia-Pacific region had risen dramatically each year since 1992”⁵⁹. Countries in Africa inevitably have to learn from the Asian economies if they are to have a positive future in international affairs. South Africa is one of those African countries that have to strengthen ties with the Asia-Pacific region in order to have access to its markets. Due to China’s pre-eminent position in that region a strong relationship between South Africa and Beijing is one way to go towards the achievement of this goal. China can also serve as a gateway to this economically booming region of the world. South Africa also has to learn from the Asian Renaissance, if it is to successfully play a part in Africa’s own economic renaissance. In a nutshell, the international political and economic system is such that South Africa’s foreign policy principles are sometimes incompatible with attainment of a meaningful economic role in international affairs. It is within the political and economic imperatives placed upon a country like South Africa by the international political and economic system that post apartheid South Africa’s foreign policy ambiguities should be understood.

⁵⁹BizAsian News, 22 February 2001, Foreign Direct Investment in Asia to increase”, (http://www.bizasia.com/gen/articles/stand_art.htm?ac=13DPN-W)

The case of South Africa's foreign policy towards Lesotho in 1998 could also be interpreted within the context of an international political and economic system structured against its wishes. Given its geographic location in Southern Africa, South Africa needs to play a much bigger role in the resolution of conflicts in the sub-region. Given its economic and military capacity, situations like the Lesotho case, call for South Africa to assume the role of a leader. It is in part its dominance in terms of resources and military power within the region, that South Africa got involved in the crisis.

Moreover, South Africa seeks to champion the resolution of African crises by Africans. Given Africa's marginal position in international political and economic affairs it is the responsibility of South Africa as a regional power to ensure prevalence of stability in the region. Furthermore, instability in Lesotho would have had repercussions for South Africa as it literally surrounds this Southern African country. It is due to the recognition of geographic location and the responsibility of ensuring stability that is imperative for attraction of foreign direct investment and flow of goods within the region that South Africa took it upon itself to get involved in Lesotho.

South Africa also seeks to aid the consolidation of stable democracies in Southern Africa and Africa in general. However, the country's newness and lack of experience in international political and economic affairs also constrains it from affectively achieving its intended foreign policy goals. South Africa does not want to impose

itself on others due to its history, yet it has to play the role of a leader. Striking a harmonious balance between these two delicate arenas is also a cause of foreign policy inconsistencies. In an international system in which South Africa is required to lead, but at the same time expected not to impose itself, there can only be inevitable circumstances in which ambiguities and blunders prevail. It is in this context that South Africa's departure from the basic principles that purportedly inform its foreign policy were undermined in 1998 with regard to Lesotho.

South Africa's foreign relations should also be seen within the context of power politics whose continued dominance exist side by side with cooperation between states. Disputes between South Africa and Zimbabwe concerning the Organ for Politics Defence and Security of SADC have led to a lack of a coherent regional security approach⁶⁰. These disputes are but enduring and inherent state-to-state competitions over influence. In Southern Africa they are exacerbated by the loose and fragmented structure of SADC. Some of the fourteen members are not entirely committed to regional cooperation. In a political and economic system still governed by the pursuit of national interest states are forced to fend for themselves and South Africa is no exception. "Operation Boleas" was thus carried out in an environment that is also not immune from power politics in which states wrestle for influence. As part of this competitive environment South Africa is also compelled to struggle to assert its influence. Features inherent in the international system compel a country

⁶⁰ "SADC to wrest security organ from Mugabe", in The Zimbabwe independent, August 10, 2001.

like South Africa to behave in a manner antithetical to the foreign policy principles that espouse democracy and non-aggression.

South Africa's foreign policy towards the region is also driven by a desire to maintain stability. Political crises in Africa have led to millions of people being displaced as refugees. In the case of Lesotho the possible destination for refugees is South Africa. Despite the fact that South Africa is economically dominant in the region, it is faced by its own domestic poverty related problems. Influx of refugees into the country would place pressure on the already limited resources. South Africa's involvement in Lesotho in 1998 should be seen in the context of an aspiring regional leader attempting to avert this scenario. This means that South Africa is compelled to "sacrifice its commitment to liberal values if the maintenance of order at home becomes imperative"⁶¹.

Due to South Africa's recent assumption of a position in the international system it seems that it has not found a consistent foreign policy orientation. The *ad hoc* manner in which similar situations are acted upon differently attests to that fact that South Africa is yet to adapt in an anarchic international system. This was the case with foreign policy towards the Great Lakes region. After failing to find followers in the case of Nigeria, South Africa had to act with circumspection. Even if South Africa wants to use its foreign policy instruments it is militated against by the fact that it has to win friends and maintain solidarity in an often undemocratic and illiberal

⁶¹ Pfister, R. South Africa's Recent Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Issues and Literature, Centre for International Studies: Zurich, p. 12.

Africa. The effectiveness of South Africa's foreign policy in Africa is thus "neutralised"⁶² by the inevitable need for support and fear of being perceived as "un-African"⁶³.

This conceptual evaluation has shown that what seems to be a failure to implement foreign policy principles can be explained through an understanding of the restrictive nature of the international system. At one level, the end of the Cold War did not completely erode certain features of the international system. Whilst borders play less of a role in the North, sovereignty especially in Africa and Asia remains an enduring feature of the international system despite the much-touted fact of globalisation. However, at another level and in the context of Africa the end of the Cold War has led to the emergence of intra-state conflicts as opposed to interstate conflicts⁶⁴. The muddling of Cold War and post-Cold War features in International Relations has become a perplexing factor for South Africa's foreign policy, geared towards a transnational world. South Africa's modest role in Swaziland should be seen within the context of this complexity of the international system. Even though South Africa would like to involve itself in ensuring speedy reforms in Swaziland, the government of Swaziland is quick to refer to its sovereignty being infringed upon by South Africa. This thwarts South Africa's commitment to the promotion of democracy within Southern Africa. South Africa is thus caught between wanting to facilitate reforms in

⁶² Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining Ambiguity? South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power", A paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), p. 2.

⁶³ Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining Ambiguity? South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power", A paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), p. 13.

Swaziland and respecting Swaziland's sovereignty⁶⁵. It seems that South Africa's multilateral foreign policy will have to contend with enduring features of the international system such as sovereignty.

Many countries in Southern Africa have in the past been victims of South Africa's apartheid policies. With the demise of apartheid this legacy became a challenge to the new government's regional policy⁶⁶. It continues to affect the decision and the manner in which South Africa behaves in the region. As part of its move away from a, "dominant and coercive player to a benign hegemon"⁶⁷, South Africa is caught between wanting to be active in the region and being cautious not to dictate terms to its neighbours. This enduring perception of South Africa as a coercive hegemon makes it difficult for it to get involved in the case of Swaziland, in case it is viewed as a regional bully. Here South Africa is also limited by the fact that it has to be cautious within the region lest it be perceived as a dictator or an "alien" power.

⁶⁴ "The Strategic environment", Draft White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa, chapter 4.

⁶⁵ During a visit to the Kingdom of Swaziland South Africa's deputy President was quoted saying that, "South Africa respects the sovereignty of her neighbours and could not act as "big brother" in their affairs, and will let the people of Swaziland solve their own problems". See The Star, 21 February 2001. This appeal to sovereignty has militated against South Africa's foreign policy also in the case of Zimbabwe, where ZANU PF insists that Zimbabweans themselves should deal with the land issue without the interference from South Africa.

⁶⁶ Ralinala, R.M & Saunders, C. "South Africa's Regional Policy Approach 1994-1999", in African Foreign Policies in the 21st Century. Working Papers Published by Africa Institute: Pretoria, p. 53.

4.7 Conclusion

South Africa has the potential to contribute to the betterment of international relations. Its recent achievement and continued consolidation of democracy makes it a potential candidate for championing human rights, peaceful resolution of conflict, democracy and good governance. However, it has on a number of occasions behaved in a manner incongruent with the values for which it purportedly stands. This chapter has not only tried to demonstrate this ambiguity, but has also conceptualised it. The apparent gap between foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour is explained within the context of the structure of the international system. As a middle power, South Africa's "interests in the international system remain wide and diverse"⁶⁸. While it is geographically situated in Africa, a developing part of the world, it also has interests in the industrialised world⁶⁹. This means that it has to straddle between North and South. It is in essence operating in two different and conflicting worlds, a situation that impedes on the formulation of a coherent and consistent foreign policy.

South Africa's middle power position means that it also has to concern itself with issues of economic development both at home and on the African continent. It is this

⁶⁷ Pfister, R. "South Africa's Recent Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Issues and Literature", Centre for International Studies: Zurich, p. 14.

⁶⁸ Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining ambiguity? South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power", p. 2.

⁶⁹ South Africa is increasingly forging ties with the Northern States. The bilateral trade agreement between Pretoria and The EU is one such example, where South Africa's straddles between friends in the region and the industrialised world. See Landsberg, C & Kornegay, F. "The African Renaissance: A quest for Pax Africana and Pan Africanism", in South Africa and Africa, FGD Occasional Paper No. 17, October 1998, Braamfontein: South Africa

understanding that has prompted the African renaissance⁷⁰ project, which also informs South Africa's foreign policy towards Africa. South Africa realises that the liberal values that were touted immediately after 1994 will remain meaningless without achievement of economic well being by South Africans and Africans alike. This creates an inevitable situation in which economic pragmatism (without which the promotion of normative principles remains weak) has to be the main driver of South Africa's foreign policy. Its position as a middle power puts South Africa in a situation where it has to pursue two contradictory projects. On the one hand it has to pursue a progressive and a liberal agenda. Whilst on the other it is compelled by its position to also pursue an economic project that departs from the normative principles of democracy. This means that it has to maintain a precarious balance between liberal principles and economic expediency. In such a situation there are bound to be occasions on which South Africa is not always forthcoming with respect to the promotion of the values it adopted after 1994. It is in this context that the ambiguity of South Africa's foreign policy is conceptualised.

⁷⁰ The African renaissance project is being championed by South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki. It is informed by a belief that, "Africa's potential, both human and natural, is not measuring up to her place in the global political economy. It is within this context that South Africa has been calling for new paradigm of development in Africa. This is a development that will begin with appreciating what exists in Africa, how it can be used for development, how it can be built upon and what complimentary efforts can come from outside as determined by social forces within Africa". See Anyang' Nyong'o, P. "Preconditions and prospects of an African renaissance: A view from East Africa" in Development and Cooperation, No. 3, May/June 2001.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter undertakes to summarise the findings of this research as they pertain to the conceptual clarification of the apparent contradiction between South Africa's foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour. It is acknowledged that indeed South Africa's foreign policy behaviour is not congruent with the values upon which a democratic country is founded. However, this thesis has demonstrated that the ambiguity of South Africa's foreign policy can be attributed to the structural constraints imposed on the country by the anarchic nature of the international system. It is thus within the context of political structuralism as a theoretical framework that the apparent ambiguities in South Africa's foreign policy should be conceptualised.

One of the major concluding points put forward here is that of the lessons for South African foreign policy makers and analysts. There has been a lot of criticism regarding the incoherent and ambiguous manner in which South Africa conducts itself both in the continent and the world in general. Indeed this criticism does play a pivotal role given the fact that in a democracy foreign policy should be for the people. However, such a criticism needs to inform the country as to the paradigm that should guide it in the process of executing foreign policy. It is in this context that it is argued that there is a lot that South Africa has to learn before it can reconcile its foreign policy goals with the imperatives imposed on it by the international system. Furthermore, in an international

system dominated by major powers, a middle power like South Africa needs to fine tune its foreign policy such that it can harness the complicated international environment to its benefit.

5.2 Summary of findings

The end of the Cold War and that of apartheid in South Africa created a new environment not only for policy makers, but also for scholars of international relations. States were no longer constrained by the struggle between dominant forces of capitalism and communism. International politics went beyond the one confined to state-to-state relations, but it now saw the emergence of non-state actors. There was increasing belief among international relations scholars that, due to crumbling state borders and blowing winds of democracy, the internal disposition of states will determine how they behave.

A democratic country like South Africa for example was expected to draw on its history against apartheid and its democratic values in the conduct of its foreign relations. Moreover, South Africa's foreign policy documents after 1994 indicated a desire to base its relations on liberal principles consistent with the emerging international system. This led to foreign policy analysts declaring the declining importance of state-centred theories in favour of globalist conceptions of international relations. However, it became apparent that the immediate post 1994 euphoria had its limitations¹. Despite the stated foreign policy goals, South Africa fell short of implementing the basic principles that are

¹ Ajulu, R. 1995. South Africa and the North/South: Pragmatism versus Principle". In C. Landsberg, G. le Pere and A. van Nieuwkerk. "Mission Imperfect: Redirecting South Africa's Foreign Policy". Johannesburg: Foundation for Global Dialogue, and Centre for Policy Studies, p. 46.

supposed to guide its international relations². This has led to the problem of trying to find a conceptual framework within which the ambiguity of South Africa's foreign policy could be explained. This thesis has in part tried to gather the theoretical pieces that have been shattered by the end of the Cold War and the complexity of the international system that subsequently emerged.

It demonstrates that the structure of the international system, not domestic factors, is the key in shaping behaviour of states. But, South Africa is also a middle power located in the developing world. It has its own economic problems such as unemployment and gross inequalities³. This means that South Africa is at the bottom of a competitive and grossly unequal global political and economic system. Due to the fact that the international agenda is determined by the economically powerful there are limitations on what South Africa can or cannot achieve. Even though promotion of universal liberal values is one of its priorities, it is compelled by its position to focus on issues of economic growth that are imperative for the consolidation of democracy at home. It has to respond to undemocratic states in Africa and Asia in order to build coalitions in the South to promote change in world politics. The international system is such that South Africa is required to give secondary importance to universal liberal values if and when its survival and that of Southern states with which it shares interests becomes imperative⁴.

²See Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining the ambiguity? South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power", a paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference, University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), 8-10 September 2001, p. 2.

³Barrell, H. "Black Elite Benefit Most From Democracy", in *Mail & Guardian*, January 31, 2000.

⁴Pfister, R. *South Africa's recent foreign policy towards Africa: Issues and literature*, Centre for International Studies: Zurich, p. 14.

It has been shown that these structural constraints can be conceptualised within the theoretical assumptions advanced by political structuralism. For them, the international system is dominated by great powers, placing limitations on what middle powers like South Africa can do unilaterally. The strength of national values that South Africa espouses is minimised by South Africa's position⁵. This means that the imperatives of the international system are such that it will be counter to South Africa's national interest to focus entirely on the promotion of universal liberal values.

South Africa does not confine its quest for economic growth and development to domestic affairs. It also recognises that its political and economic elevation should take place concurrently with that of the African continent with which it is inextricably linked. By virtue of being a middle power it also plays the role of a bridge between the developing world and the industrialised one in the North⁶. While it needs solid coalition of states, which will champion the needs of the developing world vis-à-vis the North, it also has to forge relations with Northern states to strengthen its position in the international hierarchy of states. This means that in the conduct of its foreign policy it responds to two different environments, leading to the apparent ambiguity between foreign policy and foreign policy behaviour⁷.

⁵ Baylis, J & Smith, S. 1997. The globalisation of world politics: an introduction to international relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 9.

⁶ Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining the ambiguity? South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power. A paper presented at the 4th Pan-European International Relations Conference, University of Kent, Canterbury (UK), 8-10 September 2001. South Africa needs confidence of African states for example for the realisation of an African Renaissance. By the same token it cannot distance itself from the industrialised countries given its quest for foreign direct investment emanating from the North.

⁷ See Bischoff, P-H. "Explaining the ambiguity? South Africa and the projection of pluralist middle power", p. 4.

Over and above speaking on behalf of the continent and sub-continent, South Africa is also called upon to play a role in the resolution of conflicts that have been ravaging post-Colonial Africa since independence. Here it has not been able to unambiguously and consistently implement its foreign policy principles due to how it is being perceived by African states. This is due to the history of apartheid that saw South Africa engaging its neighbours in a malevolent and hegemonic fashion. It has been careful not to impose itself on its neighbours. Dictating terms will result in a perception that it seeks to conduct its relations with Africa as a regional colonial power. Due to fear of distancing potential allies South Africa has been cautious not to bluntly condemn African countries that undermine the basic tenets of democracy, as is the case with Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Libya. This means that crises that have a potential of developing into fully-fledged conflicts are not being dealt with in a manner consistent with the values South Africa espouses. It is in the context of the above attributes pertaining to the structure of the international system and African foreign policy environment that South Africa's foreign policy shortcomings should be understood.

5.3 **Recommendations for foreign policy analysis**

It seems that in formulating a coherent foreign policy, South Africa will have to reconcile its universal liberal principles with the realities of the international system. It has to be understood by foreign policy makers and analysts alike that it is within the structural imperatives of the international system that South Africa has to operate. Its middle power position and inclination towards multilateral cooperation makes it impossible for it to act

against those it considers its allies. However, when its survival is at stake South Africa does not hesitate to assert its influence even at the expense of the stated desire to resolve disputes amicably. An understanding of South Africa's foreign policy from this perspective affords us an opportunity to recognise the constraints of the international system and the challenges South Africa has to surmount in the navigation of a meaningful role as a middle power. It also gives attention to the limitation of resources necessary for the effective execution of foreign policy. It is within the context of limited middle power resources that South Africa has to operate. Its ambiguous foreign policy is thus typical of a middle power operating in an anarchic foreign policy environment particularly prevalent in Africa and Asia and whose structure determines foreign policy behaviour of states.

5.3 Theoretical Recommendations and conclusion

The lessons drawn from this research cannot be confined to issues of what should inform foreign policy making in the context of South Africa. They run deeper to include predominant theoretical debates pertinent in the study of international relations. At this juncture it is argued that the purported move of South Africa's foreign policy beyond the pursuit of national interest to cooperation and increasing relevance of globalist theories is not without limitations. It is the thorough understanding of the world within which South Africa operates that will enable the Department of Foreign Affairs to set achievable foreign policy goals. Despite the much touted need to situate South Africa's foreign policy within the theories that "share a global rather than state centric

conceptualisation”⁸, there is a need to understand and respond to the factors militating against its foreign policy aspirations. According to the conclusion drawn from the conceptual disputations between pluralism and political structuralism, it seems to be the latter that better conceptualises these foreign policy challenges. It is within the theoretical assumptions provided by political structuralism that the criticism levelled against South Africa concerning the inconsistent manner in which it has applied its foreign policy can be given substance. Criticism of South Africa’s foreign policy behaviour needs to be premised on a conceptual understanding that it is the environment within which South Africa operates that determines its foreign policy. It is only through that understanding that South Africa will be able to make sense of the world within which it has to function.

The international system is characterised by indisputable complexity in that international relations involves and is intertwined with socio-economic and socio-political issues. Despite change and the emergence of a new environment there are persistent questions and themes that require us not to discard old methods of foreign policy analysis, but to “enlarge our kit of analytic tools”⁹. It will thus be erroneous to suggest that this world can only be viewed through the prism of one school of thought to the exclusion of the others. Despite the continued relevance of political structuralism, there are indeed elements that it cannot adequately explain. It is in this context that this thesis concludes by recommending that a combination of old and new theories could serve the purpose of making sense of an ever-changing nature of international politics. A rigid approach,

⁸ Muller, M & Carlsnaes, W. 1997. Change and South Africa external relations. International Thompson Publishers: SA, p. 73.

which focuses on a single set of issues, fails to adequately explain the complex and interwoven nature of international politics. Perhaps an eclectic¹⁰ or integrative approach sensitive to both old and new issues needs to be adopted in the conduct of foreign policy analysis.

⁹ Rosenau, J. "Introduction: New directions and recurrent questions in the comparative study of foreign policy", in Kegley, C, Herman, F and Rosenau, J. 1987. New Directions in the study of foreign policy Allen & Unwin: USA, p. 3.

¹⁰ Kegley, C, Herman, F and Rosenau, J. 1987. New Directions in the study of foreign policy Allen & Unwin: USA, Part I.

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