

**“DEMOCRATIC” FOREIGN POLICY MAKING AND THE THABO MBEKI  
PRESIDENCY: A CRITICAL STUDY**

By

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## Summary

South African foreign policy is not made in a bubble; as a democracy since 1994, its outward orientation is theoretically subject to lobbying and pressure from outside groups as well as jockeying among bureaucratic entities. This study applies the principles of Foreign Policy Analysis, a theoretical framework that attempts to unpack the processes through which governments' foreign policies are made, to South Africa to determine whether foreign policy making is in reality open to outside inputs, or whether the foreign policy arena—as in many countries globally—is an elite reserve. The thesis has a specific focus on the 1994-2008 period, during which time Deputy President (1994-99) and later President (1999-2008) Thabo Mbeki dominated government's foreign policy formulation, to determine whether South Africa's democratic transition was accompanied by “democratization” of the foreign policy making process compared to the apartheid government. In addition, the thesis sought to disaggregate the various actors involved in the process—both from the influencing and decision making sides of the coin—to analyze their individual roles in influencing foreign policy, both pre- and post-1994.

The thesis found that the dominant actor in South African foreign policy, both before and after 1994, was the national leader (Prime Minister before 1984; President thereafter) or, on occasion, his chosen delegate if the leader was disinterested in the external realm. This is in part because South African Constitutions vest most decision-making power in the executive, in line with international norms, but also due to a lack of pressure by non-governmental actors. While South Africa's post-apartheid dispensation allows for greater inputs by the public and other outside actors, the practice of influencing foreign policy—either through the ballot box or through concerted pressure between elections—changed very little. Public engagement on foreign policy, already weak, did not improve after 1994. Parliament, despite having a dedicated committee on the issue, showed itself largely disinterested, as did the broader ANC. The press, business, the ANC, and most civil society organizations similarly showed little desire to weigh in on foreign policy beyond isolated instances. Only academia consistently attempted to influence policy during the Mandela and Mbeki administrations, with mixed results. Ultimately, blame for this lack of change appears to lie mostly with outside actors themselves, who during the first 14 years of democracy failed to take advantage of political space opened to them.

In examining Thabo Mbeki specifically, the thesis found that he took advantage of this leeway to dominate the foreign policy debate and rarely went out of his way to open the foreign policy debate any more than he had to. He gave short shrift to the inputs of pressure groups; had no time for the press or business; and dominated the ANC and its parliamentary caucus. Mbeki had a clear and well-defined worldview, and he had little time for people or organizations with decidedly different views. That said, those close to Mbeki, and even outsiders—notably from the academic community—paint a far more nuanced picture of the man, as someone who would listen and engage with others on foreign policy, at least if he believed they had done their homework on the issues in question. Hence, portrayals of Mbeki as a “dictator” in the foreign policy realm appear to be overstated.

## **Key Terms**

International relations; foreign policy; Thabo Mbeki; South Africa; Zimbabwe; Foreign Policy Analysis; International Relations Theory; diplomacy; political analysis; African National Congress

**Declaration: 4632-6847**

I, *John Alan Siko*, declare that **“DEMOCRATIC” FOREIGN POLICY MAKING AND THE THABO MBEKI PRESIDENCY: A CRITICAL STUDY** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

15 July 2012

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Two books, cited liberally in this text, gave me the inspiration to tackle the topic of South African foreign policy through the Mbeki period, Ned Munger's 1965 *Notes on the Formation of South African Foreign Policy* and Deon Geldenhuys' 1984 *Diplomacy of Isolation*. My thanks go out to both authors. I never got the opportunity to meet Dr. Munger, an American who passed away in 2010, but I did have the good fortune to interview Dr. Geldenhuys, who was extremely gracious in sitting for an interview.

My interviewees, all 113 of them, deserve tremendous thanks for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet in person (more than 100 of them), talk on the phone, or take my questions by email. Their insider inputs and anecdotes provided me a wealth of information about the foreign policy decision-making process, both past and present, which in turn enriched my analysis. While all interviewees were a huge help, I want to particularly thank Niel Barnard, Pik Botha, Pallo Jordan, and Aziz Pahad, all of whom gave me more than three hours of their time in one-on-one interviews.

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## Acronyms Cited in Thesis

ACCORD	African Center for Constructive Resolution of Disputes
AISA	Africa Institute of South Africa
ANC	African National Congress
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BLSA	Business Leadership South Africa
BNC	Bi-National Commission
BOSS	Bureau of State Security
BUSA	Business Unity South Africa
CCR	Center for Conflict Resolution
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
CONSAS	Constellation of Southern African States
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPS	Center for Policy Studies
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa (predecessor to SACP)
CSAS	Center for South African Studies
CSIR	Council on Scientific and Industrial Research
DA	Democratic Alliance
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DIA	Department of International Affairs (ANC)
DIP	Department of Information and Publicity (ANC)
DONS	Department of National Security
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EU	European Union
FAK	Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Organizations (translated)
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FRELIMO	Liberation Front of Mozambique (translated)
G-8	Group of 8
G-77	Group of 77
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
GEAR	Growth, Employment, and Redistribution
GPA	Global Political Agreement
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
IDP	Institute for Defense Policy
IGD	Institute for Global Dialogue
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
IRPS	International Relations, Peace, and Security
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
ISSUP	Institute for Strategic Studies-University of Pretoria

JCPS	Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MI	Military Intelligence
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe (ANC armed wing)
MONUC	United Nations Stabilization Mission for Congo-Kinshasa (translated)
MP	Member of Parliament
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (translated)
MRG	Military Research Group
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCACC	National Conventional Arms Control Committee
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labor Council
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development
NIA	National Intelligence Agency
NICOC	National Intelligence Coordinating Committee
NIS	National Intelligence Service
NP	National Party
NSC	National Security Council
NSMS	National Security Management System
NWC	National Working Committee
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PAFMECSA	Pan-African Freedom Movement for East Central and Southern Africa
PCAS	Policy Coordination and Advisory Services
PCFA	Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PRAU	Policy, Research, and Analysis Unit (DFA)
PSU	Presidential Support Unit
RAU	Rand Afrikaans University
RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance (translated)
RI	Republican Intelligence
SAAF	South African Air Force
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACOB	South African Chamber of Business
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SADF	South African Defense Force
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SALC	Southern Africa Litigation Center
SANDF	South African National Defense Force

SANEF	South African National Editors Forum
SASS	South African Secret Service
SPLM	Sudanese People's Liberation Movement
SSC	State Security Council
SWAPO	Southwest African People's Organization
TEC	Transitional Executive Council
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (Rhodesia)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (translated)
UP	United Party
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Every day, governments around the world make decisions about their external relations, be they related to bilateral or multilateral issues. The means by which they make these decisions differ drastically; there is no “one size fits all” model, both in terms of constitutional frameworks and common practices. Overall, there is a global tendency for the making of foreign policy to be an “elite” domain, dominated by senior governmental decision-makers. The degree to which extra-governmental actors can influence foreign policy differs across countries and temporally within them, but even among outsiders, influence also tends to be elite in nature, with the relevant issues often little understood outside of specialist areas in government, academia, and civil society. Public opinion is generally most concerned with domestic concerns, although issues like warfare (as in the United States during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars) and regional integration (as in Europe today) can on occasion resonate with voters, affecting their daily lives.

The main goals of this study are twofold; first, to determine whether South Africa’s foreign policy making process effectively democratized after 1994 and secondly, to disaggregate the various actors involved in the process—both from the influencing and decision-making sides of the coin—to analyze their individual roles in the process of foreign policy democratization, both pre- and post-1994. This chapter will lay the theoretical groundwork for the study as well as its parameters. To start, this chapter will explain the need for this study and justify its primary focus on the post-1994 period. Next, it will examine the issue of participatory, or “democratic,” foreign policy making through the lens of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), a theoretical approach that will help provide the definitional framework for the study. It will then move to the study’s specific research questions, describe the research methodology, lay out ethical considerations and challenges, and conclude by laying out the structure of the thesis.

### 1.2 Rationale for the Study

The period in the run-up to South Africa’s 1994 political transition was full of great hopes by academics, civil society actors, African National Congress (ANC) members, and others with an interest in foreign policy that the new ANC government would pursue drastically different

external policies than that of its National Party (NP) predecessor. On this point, their expectations were met. Pretoria moved from policies of regional destabilization to regional integration and assistance; demilitarized and ended its nuclear program; advocated the promotion of human rights and political democracy; and generally sought to be a well-integrated member of the global community, particularly the global “South.”

These actors (for lack of a better term) also advocated the need to “democratize” foreign policy making, making it more participatory and open to inputs from broader society as well as ensuring legislative oversight to prevent the executive from foreign policy unilateralism. The aim of this thesis is to examine the degree that this “democratization” occurred during the 1994-2008 period. It will examine the constitutional and legalistic framework of foreign policy making, assessing to what degree South Africa allows for broad-based policy inputs, but more importantly will look at the practice of foreign policy—even if not explicitly required to do so, did the key decision makers on foreign policy seek out and weigh outside inputs, as befitting South Africa’s post-apartheid democratic dispensation?

The 1994-2008 period was selected because it represents the period in which Thabo Mbeki—Deputy President from 1994-99 and President thereafter—was the dominant foreign policy maker in South Africa. Although Nelson Mandela was ostensibly the predominant decision-maker during his Presidency—and his inputs will be examined throughout—he was primarily focused on domestic issues, particularly those related to national reconciliation, designating Mbeki as his *de facto* Prime Minister. More importantly for the purposes of this discussion, Mbeki—head of the ANC International Affairs from 1989-94 and long one of the movement’s key foreign policy formulators—dominated the foreign policy making sphere. Hence, for purposes of this study, the entirety of the period of study can be considered the “Mbeki era” of South African foreign policy formulation.

Obviously, there is no clear way to determine whether policy making is truly participatory or democratic—it is a highly subjective issue, the views on which differ depending on one’s role in the process. Policy pronouncements seldom mention the processes by which they were reached, how the metaphorical “sausage” was made. Even the decision-makers can have difficulty

determining (or remembering) the degree to which they weighed certain inputs or listened to outside voices. The best the analyst can do is to discuss the question of participation with the actors involved in the process—both in making and influencing policy—to gain their impressions on how they played a role, cross-referencing their thoughts with extant literature on the topic.

The question of participation also is subjective in regard to comparison; lacking a clear basis for definition, one can only assess Mbeki's foreign policy making compared to something else. Hence, this study will compare the foreign policy making practices of the 1994-2008 period with those of the 1948-94 minority government in an effort to determine whether the post-1994 period has seen meaningful moves toward a more participatory and open policy making environment in the external arena. The Mbeki era will be the main focus of the research, but pertinent comparisons will be made throughout the thesis regarding whether the role of various actors has changed over time.

To assess the roles of various pertinent actors, the thesis is arranged to examine them individually. Chapters will explore the means by which public opinion, civil society, media, academia, businesses, Parliament, the ruling party, and government bureaucracies were able to make inputs on foreign policy decisions through the years and whether they felt these inputs had much impact. A final chapter will examine the role of the executive—mainly focused on Thabo Mbeki—in responding to these inputs, assessing what determines whether outside actors have influences on executive foreign policy decision making.

Although this study will examine South Africa's external relations pre- and post-1994—with one chapter devoted to an overview of them—it is not an examination of South African foreign policy, *per se*. Much ink has been spilt on the “what” of South African foreign policy; we intend to focus on the “who” and the “why.” Specifically, it is an examination of the decision-making process in South Africa, the interaction between people representing various actors and how they were able to influence one another. The ultimate goal is for the reader to leave with a far better understanding of how the South African policy making process—specifically on external issues, but also more broadly—has unfolded through the years and how it has changed since 1994.

### *1.3 Why Examine the Mbeki Period?*

Before moving forward, it is important to rationalize why the Mbeki era has been chosen for study. Three reasons come to mind. Firstly, as mentioned above, this study will help unravel the degree to which the foreign policy making process was truly democratized between 1994 and 2008, particularly in comparison to the pre-1994 National Party government. This is important not only because South Africa's foreign policy has ramifications for the country's domestic situation and its global standing, but because it provides insights into the broader questions of policy making in a democratic South Africa vis a vis the era of minority rule. Although this study does not seek to compare South Africa's domestic and foreign policy formulation structures, the two are likely to have commonalities that deserve further study. Hopefully, this examination will prove useful for future assessments of the broader policy making process. In addition, this assessment of South Africa's first 14 years of democracy also will help scholars put into context the post-Mbeki period, helping them determine whether the foreign policy decision making of Kgalema Motlanthe, Jacob Zuma, and future Presidents was more or less participatory than that of Mbeki.

Secondly, the 1994-2008 period was selected because of Thabo Mbeki's keen interest in and extensive activity in relation to external issues. Before his ignominious resignation from the presidency in September 2008, Mbeki was known throughout the country and across Africa as one of the most foreign policy-oriented leaders the continent had ever known. (Olivier, 2003: 818; Stober and Ludman, 2005:72) Mbeki was the driving force behind the 2001 rollout of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the transition of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU), two initiatives designed to promote good government and economic development on the continent while tying the two concepts inextricably together. He committed extensive time—and South African resources—to resolving conflicts in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan, showing himself unafraid to commit South African troops for peacekeeping operations in those troubled states. Mbeki notably did not set his sights only on the continent; during his presidency, South Africa was involved in efforts to make peace in the Middle East, sought to prevent the 2003 Iraq War, and was an active, if controversial, participant during its 2007-2008 tenure on the

UN Security Council. Understanding why Mbeki pursued the policy directions he did, and who had an impact on them, is key to comprehending the foreign policy of this era.

A third reason for the study is the simple fact that Mbeki's foreign policy decision-making process and their openness to outside inputs has received relatively little study to date, particularly since he left office. While in office, Mbeki and his closest advisors would discuss (often defensively) the policies the government pursued toward issues like Zimbabwe or the Middle East, they revealed little publicly about the policy making process. Esteemed political analyst Richard Calland in his book *Anatomy of South Africa: Who Holds the Power?* presented one of the more revealing vignettes about the inner circle's foreign policy debates:

*An informal subcommittee, hastily pulled together the previous evening by Frank Chikane, director-general in the presidency, to discuss the worsening crisis in the Middle East in 2003.*

*'So' began Mbeki. 'What position do we take on this?'*

*There was silence from the collection of ministers and advisors. Then one of the advisors raised his hand and began to speak.*

*'Mr. President, I think ...'*

*'No,' interrupted Mbeki, 'you speak last.'*

*On this issue, Mbeki knew the advisor's position already. Moreover, he knew that the two of them shared the same view, and he wanted to avoid a phenomenon known as 'groupthink' - a psychological concept adapted by an American political scientist in the 1960s to explain the failure of President John F Kennedy's Cuban policy at the time of the Bay of Pigs. This phenomenon occurs when a small group of like-minded people meet to make a key decision and, instead of testing hypotheses or fundamental assumptions and analyses, end up simply affirming each other's preconceived views, thus promoting a poor decision making process (Calland, 2004:15).*

An illuminating account, but one made far more interesting by the dearth of similar reports over a nearly decade-long presidency. However, now that Mbeki has been out of office for more than three years, the time would appear ripe for a closer examination of these processes. Mbeki and his closest advisors are no longer bound by the strictures of office, and outsiders who sought to

influence the President have no more need to hold back their accounts of proceedings. So this **thesis** aims to provide an “insider” account to how the decision-making process actually unfolded.

#### *1.4 Defining “Democratic” Decision Making in a Foreign Policy Construct*

To examine the degree to which the foreign policy debate was or was not opened up during the Mbeki administration, one must first ask what, exactly, constitutes “democratic” foreign policy making and how this study will assess it. Democratic foreign policy decision making is a theoretical construct that has received relatively little attention to date in academic literature; so little in fact that the concept remains open to interpretation. Johnson in his chapter in the 2001 compilation *South Africa’s Foreign Policy: Dilemmas of a New Democracy* enunciates three different models for conceptualizing democratic foreign policy:

--A liberal or “good citizen” model that emphasizes states as bearers of individual rights and freedoms, focusing on the promotion of “democratic” rights within nations

--A model that views democratic foreign policy as seeking to transform the international collective mindset of democracy, seeking to make the global system more “democratic”

--A third model that is more concerned with procedural democracy in the domestic political system and the priority of domestic obligations and duties of government over the discharge of international commitments (Johnson, 2001:15).

Much has been written about South Africa’s (often uneven) application of the first two models in its foreign policy, such as its promotion of “democratic values” like respect for human rights and its efforts to reform global governance systems to give poor countries more of a voice (Barber, 2004:88-91). However, it is the third model that is of interest for this study, as it asks, quite basically, to what extent the broader electorate and other appropriate actors are able to weigh in on and influence a country’s foreign policy decision making. This model is predicated on a definition of “democracy” that goes beyond narrow definitions of the concept, such as Huntington’s argument that democracy constitutes “the central procedure of democracy is the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people they govern” (Huntington, 1996:6-7). Rather, this study will provide democracy a more inclusive definition as proposed by

Diamond, Linz and Lipset, which include:

--Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organizational groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power through regular, free and fair elections.

--A highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies such that no major (adult) social group is prevented from exercising the rights of citizenship.

--A level of civil and political liberties—freedom of thought and expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and demonstrations, freedom to form and join organizations—sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (Diamond et al., 1988:6).

Diamond, Linz, and Lipset emphasize the mechanics of feedback between election cycles, ensuring that through continual participation in governance and the personal freedom necessary for citizens to provide honest and regular feedback to their elected representatives, citizens (and groups of citizens) can influence policy debates, including those about foreign policy. It is this framework that will help answer the key question of this thesis, which is how did Thabo Mbeki take on board the inputs of the various domestic actors that had an interest in South African foreign policy issues?

In addition, it must be clarified what is being spoken of in referring to “foreign policy” in this study. Breuning writes that foreign policy “is defined as the totality of a country's policies toward and interactions with the environment beyond its borders” while Banjo further describes it as a “framework outlining how the country will interact, relate and do business with other countries and with non-state actors in a mutually beneficial ways and within the context of a country's national interest and economic prosperity” (Breuning, 2007:5; Banjo, 2009:61). Such affairs are conducted by entities of the state with competencies in the foreign policy arena, including the office of the head of state and departments that cover Foreign Affairs, Defense, Intelligence, Trade, and possibly other issues. Both of the afore-mentioned definitions have merit, although both are lacking in that they ignore non-state actors’ abilities to conduct independent foreign policies, as did the ANC during its 1960-1990 exile from South Africa.

Pfister, in examining the foreign policy of the ANC in exile, offers a more nuanced definition in describing foreign policy as “the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations” (Pfister, 2005:4).

It is perhaps worth asking at this juncture why the idea of “democratic” foreign policy matters in a South African context—is there any inherent need that a government take on board the opinions of a broad cross section of its population in the external arena? As will be discussed below (notably in section 1.5), it was a long-standing view among International Relations theorists that such participation is both unwelcome and unwise for the crafting of “sound” foreign policies that respond to national, rather than popular, interests. However, the idea of a “democratic” foreign policy has particular resonance in post-1994 South Africa, given that the ANC’s decades-long struggle for democratic, majority rule was predicated on the ideal that all South Africans would have a voice in the crafting of the country’s policies, both domestic and foreign. Hence, even though foreign policy tends to be an elitist field due to the specialized knowledge necessary for its undertaking, the idea that its formulation be at least theoretically open to all South Africans is an important element of the ANC’s stated democratic aims. Therefore, this study asserts that such democratic bona fides are important given that, per ANC dictums, all South Africans should have the right to participate in the crafting of foreign policy.

#### *1.4.1 Foreign Policy Analysis as a Framework for Assessing “Democracy” in Policy Making*

To assess the degree to which South African foreign policy making was democratic and open to outside participation, this study will use the theoretical construct of Foreign Policy Analysis. Defining FPA is no simple task, due to the breadth of the topic, but it can be explained most generally as the study of how and why states (and in some cases non-state actors) make foreign policy decisions, with a specific focus on the decision-making processes of the actors involved. The need to focus on the decision maker was summed up by Frankel in his seminal 1963 study on foreign policy making in noting that, “‘State decisions’ are not made by states but on their behalf, by individuals and by groups of individuals” (Frankel, 1963:2). Breuning provides another useful definition, noting that FPA “assumes that individual decision makers, either alone or in groups, make foreign policy decisions. It also assumes foreign policy decisions are usually determined by a complex interplay of multiple factors” (Breuning, 2007:21). Unless one

understands the motivations, constraints, biases, and influences on the decision maker (or makers), one cannot understand the rationale behind the final decisions. Having such knowledge is not only important for those looking backward (like historians), but also for analysts looking forward, as such an understanding is critical for predicting future state behaviors where the same actors are involved. As noted by leading FPA scholar James Rosenau, “the field does have a central focus – the plans and actions of national governments oriented toward the external world” (Rosenau, 1987:8). FPA scholarship seeks to understand how these plans and actions are formulated, and it is in applying these questions to the South African policy environment that will allow us to assess the degree to which the foreign policy sphere was democratized after 1994.

Although authors and historians have long written about the role of human actors in the context of state decision making, a structured study of FPA as a discipline did not begin until after World War II (Hudson, 2008:12). Up to that point, most analysis of international relations viewed states as unitary actors, largely ignoring the role of human decision makers and domestic actors in the formulation process. The predominant realist constructs of international relations theory reinforced this notion in that its overarching focus on the interests of states in the international arena minimized the focus on the domestic actor (Hudson, 2003:2). After the war, however, some scholars began to take a more nuanced approach to this issue, with the understanding that the domestic actors, ranging from heads of state to the broader public, had an impact on such things as the conceptualization of national interest and the ordering of foreign policy priorities. The goal was to get inside the “black box” of state decision-making behavior and better understand how it worked.

The first serious attempt to understand these dynamics was undertaken by American academics Snyder, Bruck, and Sabin in their 1954 article “Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics” and their subsequent 1962 book *Foreign Policy Decision-Making*. In the article, they laid out their theoretical approach as follows:

*We adhere to the nation-state as the fundamental level of analysis, but we have discarded the state as a metaphysical abstraction. By emphasizing decision making as a central focus we have*

*provided a way of organizing the determinants of action around those officials who act for the political society. Decision-makers are viewed as operating in a dual-aspect setting so that apparently unrelated internal and external factors become related in the actions of the decision-makers. Hitherto, precise ways of related domestic factors have not been adequately developed (Snyder et al., 1954:53).*

Despite the fact that FPA scholarship has branched out in many different directions (to be discussed below) since this first piece was published, the article entrenched the notion of a need for a “bottom up” approach to international relations, whereby the human actor remains central to the discussion.

#### *1.4.2 FPA’s Relationship with International Relations Theory*

In relating to the larger field of International Relations (IR) Theory, FPA is in many ways like a square peg in a round hole. The dominant paradigms within IR Theory—including realism, liberalism, and constructivism—do, like FPA, seek to explain how states interact within the broader international system. However, these paradigms generally do not delve into the micro level issues surrounding decision making, rather taking a more macro perspective that still largely takes a state-centric perspective. They do little to delve into domestic politics that drive the foreign policy debate. As an example, Morgenthau’s discussion of “national interest” makes it sound as if such interests were self-evident; rather, there exist extensive debates within governments and within societies around the world about what at the end of the day ultimately is a state’s “national interest” (Morgenthau, 1948:147). Hence, the need to move away from the classic realist “billiard ball” view of the state as a unitary actor in the international system is quite necessary.

Hence, the relationship between FPA and IR Theory is a complex one, and it is not entirely clear how FPA fits into the broader IR Theory picture. As Engstrom has noted, FPA “simply deals with those things IR cannot explain,” further noting that IR theories’ big picture, macro focus means it can only deal with long-term trends in a very general fashion (Engstrom, 2008). Hermann and Kegley add that what sets FPA apart from more mainstream IR is this insistence that, as they put it, “compelling explanation (of foreign policy) cannot treat the decider

exogenously” (Hermann and Kegley, 1994:7). In theory, FPA analysis can be applied to existing IR theoretical approaches, and such an approach is quite necessary to put analytic “meat” on their theoretical skeletons.

#### *1.4.3 FPA as a Subset of Public Policy Studies*

FPA can also, and more convincingly, be viewed as a subfield of public policy studies. Probably the best definition of public policy comes from Dye, who wrote quite simply that, “Public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not do” (Dye, 1998:2). Another definition that perhaps adds more detail to the discussion comes from Eulau and Prewitt, who note, “Policy is defined as a ‘standing position’ characterized by behavioral consistency and repetitiveness on the part of both those who make it and those who abide by it” (Eulau and Prewitt, 1973:465). This raises the important element of public participation in the process, which in democracies goes beyond the simple election of governments, as citizenries around the world remain engaged on policy issues even between election cycles. As Parsons notes, “The idea of public policy presupposes that there is a sphere or domain of life which is not private or purely individual, but held in common” (Parsons, 1995:3).

Public policy studies also have common ground with FPA in the sense that both are heterogeneous theoretical approaches. There is no grand theory associated either with public policy or FPA; rather, both examine the individual elements of the policy making process and seek to explain the interrelationship of the involved actors. “No one theory or model is adequate to explain the complexity of the policy activity of the modern state,” wrote Parsons in his 1995 study of public policy. “The analyst must accept the pluralistic nature of the inquiry, both in terms of the interdisciplinary quality of investigation and the need for a hermeneutic tolerance of diversity. The analysis of public policy therefore involves an appreciation of the network of ideas, concepts and words which form the world of explanation within which policy making and analysis takes place” (Parsons, 1995:73).

There has been increasing recognition in recent years of the pertinence of foreign affairs to the public policy debate. “In the past, policy studies concentrated on domestic policies such as housing, health issues, education, environmental matters or immigration. Foreign policies were

treated as the domain of diplomacy and diplomats, the Presidency and officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who were solely responsible for them,” noted South African scholar Dirk Kotze, referring specifically to South Africa but also more broadly (Kotze, 1999:10). Furthermore, he adds, “Many foreign relations issues involve trade, cultural exchange, immigration, military or health policy matters. In this course public policy is therefore not limited to domestic policy matters” (Kotze, 1999:11). Given these congruencies, FPA certainly can be viewed as a meaningful subset of public policy studies, and in a more clearly pertinent way than as a subset of IR theory.

#### *1.4.4 Limitations of FPA*

Before moving onto a discussion of what FPA has to say about the various actors involved in the foreign policy making process, it is worth a brief examination of the main shortcoming of FPA, which is the difficulty in unearthing the copious amount of relevant information necessary to do a comprehensive study (Hudson, 2003:9). Notes Breuning, “As observers, we are not privy to the debates that occur among high-level decision makers. We sometimes get a glimpse of them when decision makers write their memoirs after leaving government service or when we get access to declassified documents” (Breuning, 2007:57). The former issue of decision maker recollection is problematic in that different decision makers often have differing views of the same policy process, either due to differences of perspective, memory lapses, or desires to save face. Researchers need to examine a great deal of this source material and conduct large numbers of interviews to get a balanced picture. Access to information is also problematic. Declassification processes can take decades, and even then, accidental or purposeful government obfuscation can prove a further roadblock. Apartheid South Africa provides a key example of the latter, whereby during a six to eight month period in 1993, the old National Intelligence Service alone destroyed about 44 tons of official documents and microfilm, including records of the decision-making State Security Council Secretariat (Africa, 2009:68). That said, even official documents tend to obscure the debates and occasionally brutal interpersonal and inter-organizational battles that occur in the policy making process.

#### *1.5 Literature Review*

The topic of democratization of foreign policy making has a long history in FPA and broader political science literature. Alexis de Tocqueville's famed 1835 *Democracy in America* was one of the earliest works in the political science canon to address the issue; he notably dismissed broad-based participation in foreign policy making as a dangerous concept. Such opinions—particularly in regard to public opinion, which will be addressed more specifically in the following chapter—remained the dominant paradigm through the 1960s, with “realist” thinkers like Morgenthau advocating that governments should steer the foreign policy views of their citizenries, not vice versa (Morgenthau, 1948:147). Another prominent realist, Max Beloff, wondered in print in 1955 whether “the whole search for a truly democratic foreign policy is based upon an illusion as to its possibility?” He further emphasized his opinion on the matter by stating, “I have no hesitation in avowing my conviction, that it is most especially in the conduct of foreign relations that democratic governments appear to me to be decidedly inferior to governments carried on upon different principles” (Beloff, 1955:26). Pahre later characterized the fears of the realist school as revolving around the concept that an “uninformed public may make unreasonable demands on foreign policy makers, harming foreign policy effectiveness. These demands may be impractical, may fail to consider trade-offs among several goals, or be time-inconsistent in that they do not anticipate the effects of today's demands on tomorrow's policy choices” (Pahre, 2006:196).

However, from the 1970s onward, critics began to question the realists' skepticism of broad-based participation on the grounds of principle—particularly on the grounds of Abraham Lincoln's assertion that democracy is “government of the people, by the people”—but also on the grounds of efficacy (Masiza, 1999:2). The leading proponent of this idea was George, whose “multiple advocacy” argument is perhaps the nearest definition to “democratic” foreign policy as proposed by this study. Multiple advocacy, according to George, was formulated in response to his assertion that foreign policy blunders are made by leaders' inattention to or ignorance of dissonant opinions and seeks to ensure “that all views held by individuals within the analytic system will be granted serious attention” (George, 1972:753). Rather than focus on participation from the angle of the public writ large (in fact George is vague in identifying the pertinent actors beyond the executive), he focuses on the actors who have inputs to make into the foreign policy debate and advocates that they all should have a voice in the policy making process.

Multiple advocacy, as proposed by George consists of three elements designed to promote “a balanced, open, and managed process of debate, so that no relevant assessments will be submerged by unchallenged premises or the bureaucratic strength of opposing officials”:

--All actors being granted equal weight; provided relevant information, competence, and analytic capacity; and having equal powers of persuasion.

--Head of state participation in the policy making process, ensuring he or she hears all relevant opinions.

--Time for adequate debate and give-and-take (George, 1972:759).

George’s proposal to ensure that the executive hears all relevant voices in the foreign policy arena before making a decision is the crux of the idea of “democratic” foreign policy, as proposed here. However, it also raises the necessary question of whether multiple advocacy, as proposed by George, is a realistic goal in a democracy, a pre-cursor to the larger question of whether a truly “democratic” foreign policy is possible. The latter two principles are not unrealistic in theory, but difficult to systematize—how does one compel a head of state to spend a certain amount of time on foreign policy, much less identify a specific group of actors who must be engaged? The first principle, however, is most problematic. All actors in the foreign policy debate are not created equal. A Foreign Affairs Minister, a political science professor, and a member of a foreign policy advocacy group do not have the same information except in exceptional, controlled settings. And once again, no one can force a head of state to treat all of the same, giving their views and advice equal weight.

The principles of multiple advocacy offer an idealized version of what a truly democratic foreign policy might look like, particularly in regard to its very basic premise that leaders should listen to pertinent foreign policy actors. Its particulars, of course, display the complexities and difficulties associated with such a paradigm, but both principles and practice provide a useful perspective for assessing South African foreign policy making.

If there is a common thread that runs through the discussion of literature to this point, it is the

overwhelming dominance of European and—primarily—American perspectives on foreign policy making (Vale, 1990:5). This creates valid questions about the applicability of such studies. What do Woodrow Wilson, Harry Truman, and Margaret Thatcher have in common with, say, Jan Smuts, PW Botha, and Thabo Mbeki? Does the activist US Congress have any areas of congruence with the South African Parliament? And how do the levels of engagement on foreign policy among South Africans—both in relation to the white public pre-1994 and the entire populace thereafter—match up with those of the American public? These questions have received some attention from South African scholars; Nel, van Wyk, and Johnsen note that American public opinion studies could prove applicable to South Africa, on the grounds that it should not be assumed the “US public has some in-built superior ability to deal prudently with foreign policy issues” (Nel et al., 2004:52-53). For the most part, however, these issues have been understudied in a South African context.

Prior to 1994, there were relatively few academic accounts of the foreign policy making process in South Africa, with the notable exception of American academic Ned Munger’s 1965 *Notes on the Formation of South African Foreign Policy* and Deon Geldenhuys’ 1984 *Diplomacy of Isolation*; in Afrikaans, Gerrit Olivier’s *Suid-Afrika se buitelandse beleid (South Africa’s Foreign Policy)* ranks among the few volumes covering the topic. Peter Vale noted in 1990 that with few exceptions, “theoretical concerns have not engaged South African scholars,” while Anthoni van Nieuwkerk in 2006 wrote that FPA analyses of South Africa have been limited, noting that existing studies are largely descriptive and “tend to avoid methodological sophistication” (Vale, 1990:7; Van Nieuwkerk, 2006a:32). Two excellent compilations from the past decade—*Democratizing Foreign Policy? Lessons from South Africa*, (2004), edited by Philip Nel and Janis van der Westhuizen, and *South Africa’s Foreign Policy: Dilemmas of a New Democracy* (2001), edited by Jim Broderick, Gary Burford, and Gordon Freer—made valuable contributions to the examination of the “democratic” nature of South Africa’s foreign policy, but focused on a narrower conception of relevant actors (particularly with focuses on public opinion and Parliament) while not examining others of interest for this study. At the end of the day, however, a survey of South African literature leaves the reader wanting more. While certain actors (particularly the executive and Parliament) have received attention in works during the past two decades, other actors (academics, bureaucratic actors, and advisory groups, for

example) have been largely ignored. Also, no author since Geldenhuys has taken a comprehensive look at how all of the various actors involved in the policy process interact with one another in the shaping of policy. This is a notable oversight, particularly in light of the 1994 transition, and one that this study, in a small way, hopes to address.

### *1.6 Key Research Questions*

At its most basic level, this study aims to answer four key questions raised by Geldenhuys and Hennie Kotze in their 1983 study of South African foreign policy making, namely:

- Where are decisions made?
- Who makes them?
- How are they made?
- And why? (Geldenhuys and Kotze, 1983:33)

Answering these individual questions will help answer the broader overall question about the degree to which foreign policy democratized under the post-1994 dispensation. Digging down, this study will seek to answer the following, more specific questions to determine the degree to which foreign policy was democratized:

- With what actors—if any—did Mbeki and his lieutenants consult when making foreign policy decisions?
- How did the interaction between the executive branch and outside actors after 1994 compare to that which took place before 1994?
- Why did certain actors have more influence than others, both before and after 1994?
- Did Mbeki’s foreign policy decision-making process resemble a “democratic” model, in which more representative entities (like public opinion) have more clout than less representative ones? Or did “insiders” prevail?

### *1.7 Research Methodology*

Researching a study on the “nuts and bolts” of foreign policy making (or government policy making in any sphere) is a difficult task for several reasons. As one scholarly work noted,

“...data are notoriously hard to come by because governments are prone to suppress many things which the scholar must know and wants to know. Diplomatic records and memoirs are published years after the events occurred. Negotiations are held in secret or semi-secret. Security regulations—necessary and otherwise—hide many vital facts. Busy administrators have been known to have little sympathy for the scholarly curiosity of the academic man” (Snyder et al., 2003:52). Even primary data, like diplomatic cables or policy pronouncements, generally do not delve into the process by which the decisions were reached; the finished products do not reflect the debates that shaped them. Given these difficulties, “it can be quite difficult to figure out whether a foreign policy decision was based on sound analysis and careful thought” (Breuning, 2007:5).

Another problem in analyzing process and decision making is that published academic and journalistic works on foreign policy (particularly in South Africa) focus on analyzing the outputs rather than examining the policy making process. Most accounts, past and present, have avoided the decision-making aspect of foreign policy, focusing instead state-centric conceptualizations of international relations theory (such as post-1994 characterizations of South Africa as a “regional hegemon” or “global middle power”). Munger’s 1965 *Notes on the Formation of South African Foreign Policy* is a notable exception; another is Geldenhuys’ 1984 *The Diplomacy of Isolation*, which took actor-based approaches to studying the making of apartheid-era foreign policy. There is as yet no definitive work on post-1994 foreign policy making.

Hence, understanding the process of making policy (foreign or otherwise) is very much qualitative and subjective in nature, demanding that the researcher seek out data that helps explain the process. Some of this can be gleaned from primary and secondary sources. Documents from the ANC’s Mayibuye Archive at the University of Western Cape, for example, provided some useful insights into ANC foreign policy making in exile. However, the most fruitful body of literature for understanding the foreign policy decision-making processes of South African leaders is that of biography and autobiography. Some biographies of South Africa’s leaders—like Hancock’s *Smuts* and Pottinger’s *The Imperial Presidency: PW Botha, the First Ten Years*—are well-researched and provide outstanding insights into their subjects’

decision-making styles, as do accounts by senior government officials and other insiders with key insights into their principals' thinking.

Mbeki has particularly benefited from this biographic attention, with Mark Gevisser's 2007 treatment *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* ranking among the most insightful biographies ever published in South Africa. Other attempts—notably Pottinger's uneven and hypercritical *The Mbeki Legacy* and Roberts' hagiographic *Fit to Govern*—have been weaker but still have yielded useful nuggets of information. Studies of Mbeki also have benefited from a mid-2000s renaissance in South African political writing that produced such works as Calland's *Anatomy* and Gumede's *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC*. These “journanalytic” accounts yield a wealth of personal accounts and vignettes about Mbeki that prove very valuable for this study.

However, just three years after Mbeki left office, there have been few “insider” accounts of the working of his Presidency, leaving many blanks in the narrative of how policy was formed at the top and how outsiders influenced it. To fill them in and provide the “inside story” behind the decision-making process, this thesis relied heavily on interviews with the various participants in the process, both pre- and post-1994. Between January 2010 and August 2011, the author interviewed 113 people who have been involved in South African foreign policy, dating back to the pre-1948 era. The interviewees represent a broad cross section of the “foreign policy community,” including actors from each of the subsets of domestic actors that have been identified, and they were selected because they brought unique insights to the foreign policy-making process, either as insiders or outsiders. Several interviewees were representative of two or more foreign policy actors during their careers (such as academia and government), and these interviews proved particularly insightful.

Nearly all of the interviews were conducted face to face, ranging from 20 minutes in length to over four hours; a few were by telephone or email. The face-to-face contact was beneficial in that it allowed the interviews to be free flowing and more of a conversation than a simple recitation of questions. Several interviewees also revealed involvement in foreign affairs previously unknown to the author, opening up new lines of questioning. Interviews were loosely

structured. In advance, the author sketched out a few specific questions focused on the interviewees' involvement in the South African foreign policy debate and their degree of personal interaction with key government decision makers (or in the case of decision makers like Pik Botha and Aziz Pahad, their interactions with influencing actors). However, with some exceptions, these questions were left open ended to allow the interlocutors to tell their stories. These interviews will be quoted extensively in the forthcoming chapters, allowing them to tell the history of the foreign policy making process in their own words.

It is worth adding a final note on the methodology. While researching and writing this piece during 2009-2011, the author was serving as a diplomat accredited to the US Consulate in Cape Town; he previously served (2004-2006) at the US Embassy in Pretoria. The author made painstaking efforts to separate his professional and academic undertakings, and in particular avoided seeking out sitting government officials to avoid crossing professional lines. That said, the author did seek out several professional contacts for interviews and also did not hide his research from professional contacts in government, several of whom volunteered to be interviewed. This work does not reflect any official US Government views.

### *1.8 Ethical Considerations Taken Into Account*

Several steps were taken to ensure the data collected in interviews adhered to the highest ethical standards. Interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study and told that the final product may end up being published. All face-to-face and phone interviewees were informed that they were being recorded and told that their responses were, unless otherwise indicated, considered "on the record. None had any problems with this. Responses, particularly those quoted directly in the text, were carefully transcribed and reviewed for accuracy. A handful of interviewees, not more than a half dozen, asked to go "off the record," not to be revealed as the source of a quotation, or have the tape recorder turned off during the interview. To accommodate these wishes, certain quotations are sourced as the "Author's private archive." In addition, this designation was used in several instances where the author deemed an interviewee's response as potentially inflammatory or possibly damaging to the career of that person or his/her organization.

### *1.9 Challenges and Limitations of This Study*

The qualitative nature of the data used for this study generated several challenges for the author. First and foremost, it is acknowledged at the outset that interviews provide a highly subjective view of the foreign policy making process. Government principals in particular have axes to grind and reputations to uphold; principals close to Mbeki were particularly keen to portray themselves and their political master in a good light. Other interviewees, particularly older ones, struggled to recall certain details, or confused historical facts. To address these challenges, a “trust but verify” principle was adhered to during this process, with interviewee anecdotes cross-referenced whenever possible against other recollections or published accounts. While not all anecdotes and opinions related by the interviewees could be cross-referenced or independently verified, a good faith effort was made by the author to do so. Obvious cases of “axe-grinding” either were excluded or were properly caveated.

Another obvious challenge was access to principals, particularly those from the Mbeki administration. The author sought out an interview with President Mbeki for more than 18 months, and communicated with the former President via his personal assistant, but unfortunately these efforts were unsuccessful. Attempts to interview other members of Mbeki’s “inner circle”—like Frank Chikane, Mojanku Gumbi, and Joel Netshitenzhe—also were unsuccessful, although they and others graciously responded to emails and cited time constraints, rather than an unwillingness to speak, as the reason for declining interviews. A key difficulty faced by the author was being based in Cape Town during this period, and not Johannesburg; despite frequent travels to the Highveld, there was not enough time to talk to these principals, most of whom were based up north.

That said, the overall success rate in seeking out interviews was more than 80 percent; only a handful of those contacted rejected an interview out of hand or did not respond. Many Mbeki-era principals—Aziz and Essop Pahad, Smuts Ngonyama, Mosiuoa Lekota, Pallo Jordan, and others—did agree to interviews that were tremendously illuminating. In addition, the author had a high degree of success in interviewing pre-1994 principals—including Pik Botha, Niel Barnard, and Jannie Geldenhuys—as well as lower-ranking but nonetheless influential figures. The interview success rate of those outside government—academics, civil society figures,

journalists, businesspeople, and so on—was greater than 90 percent. Hence, while access to key figures was a challenge, the overall accessibility of the subjects was not.

### *1.10 The Structure of the Thesis*

To address the research questions and explore the roles of various actors in the foreign policy making process, this study is organized as follows. The second chapter, following this introduction, will provide the conceptual and analytical framework for the study, examining the uses of Foreign Policy Analysis in this study as well as explaining why the various actors covered in this study were selected. The third chapter will provide an overview of South African foreign policy from 1948 through 2008, with an emphasis on the post-1994 period, to provide a background for readers not intimately familiar with the topic. This chapter also will touch on issues related to outside participation in foreign policy making.

Chapters 4 through 11 will examine each of the actors selected for this study. Sequentially, they will look at civil society and public opinion; the press; academia; business; Parliament; ruling parties (including the ANC in exile); government bureaucracies; and the executive. The structure of each chapter will give a brief historical overview of each entity and the degree to which they have influenced past South African administrations before turning to their relative influences post-1994. Each chapter will conclude with a judgment on the degree to which each actor influenced Mbeki, and how this influence varied from the pre-1994 dispensation. Lastly, the final chapter will present conclusions **as to** whether the Mbeki era did or did not democratize South Africa's foreign policy making landscape.

### *1.11 Conclusion*

As noted earlier, unpacking any public policy decision-making process is a difficult task due to a dearth of source material until long after the fact, differing accounts of the process, desires to conceal debates and arguments for political or personal purposes, and a whole host of other reasons. In addition, on foreign policy matters in particular, decision makers occasionally justify decision-making opacity on national security grounds. Such excuses can sometimes hold water in the immediate term, but democratic governance rests on the principle that citizens have the right to understand why their governments make decisions. Ultimately, this study hopes to

provide some clarity on this process for readers in South Africa and abroad as well as make some small contribution to the body of literature on this topic.

## **Chapter 2: Analytical Framework for Assessing Foreign Policy Democratization**

### *2.1 Introduction*

Having provided in the opening chapter an overview of the aims of this study and a definition of the theoretical framework—Foreign Policy Analysis—that underpins it, the aim of this chapter is to flesh out how this study will determine whether South African foreign policy making is or is not democratic in nature. As noted in section 1.10, this study will take an actor-driven approach examining the impact of eight different groups and entities, both inside and outside government, on foreign policy making by the head of state, which in South Africa makes the final decisions on external issues. This actor-based approach was guided by the tenets of FPA—which analyzes the role of individual sub-national entities in the making of foreign policy rather than analyzing the process from a state-centric perspective—as well as a desire to isolate and examine the key foreign policy role players in a democratic society.

The question of “who matters” in a democracy’s foreign policymaking is not necessarily a simple question. Public opinion, for example, would seem to be the most inherently “democratic” driver of policy making in any sphere—one would expect that a government practicing democratic foreign policy making would seek the buy-in of the majority of its citizens. That said, foreign policy is not quite so simple; as will be discussed, the often-esoteric nature of foreign affairs combined with public disinterest in many external issues and a lack of organization suggest that a somewhat broader definition is necessary. Hence, other actors with a vested interest and expertise in foreign policy merit study. These include civil society, the print press, academia, and business outside government; legislatures and ruling parties that straddle the governmental and extra-governmental divide; and bureaucratic actors within government. These entities have a more coherent organization, have clear interests in foreign policy making, and tend to be more capable of influencing the executive’s foreign policy decisions. This coherence also allows for greater ease of study and the ability to disaggregate their relative influences, as well as to explore the interplay between them. The following sections will provide justifications for the inclusion of the various actors cited above as representative of a democratic foreign policy, as well as a review of appropriate FPA literature on each of them.

## 2.2 *Public Opinion as an Influence on Foreign Policy*

The debate over the appropriate role of public opinion on foreign policy making is one of the longest running in the study of FPA, predating even the theoretical conceptualization of FPA in the 1950s. This debate is by no means settled today; as Foyle notes, “Public opinion's complex influence on foreign policy continues to attract scholarly attention. While many researchers acknowledge that public opinion influences foreign policy, a full understanding of the conditions determining the public's influence remains elusive” (Foyle, 1997:141). Early foreign policy scholars of the realist school, like Morgenthau, saw public opinion as a nuisance, viewing it as a barrier to thoughtful diplomacy and impeding efforts to maintain consistency in the formulation of national interest, and believed governments should steer, and not be steered by, the views of voters (Morgenthau, 1948:147). In the 1950s, academic Gabriel Almond and journalist Walter Lippmann codified what came to be known as the Almond-Lippmann consensus, which held that public opinion was too volatile, unstructured, and incoherent to provide a sound basis for the conduct of foreign policy (Almond, 1950; Lippmann, 1955).

Western studies from the 1970s backed up by empirical data showed citizens' views on foreign policy issues were much less volatile and incoherent than assumed previously (Caspary, 1970:539; Achen, 1975:1221; Shapiro and Page, 1982:28-29). Nevertheless, there is broad agreement among scholars that there are strata of interests and influence within citizenries, generally divided into three groups. At the bottom is what Rosenau describes as the “mass public.” He describes this group as not caring much about foreign affairs, generally lacking familiarity with foreign policy issues beyond reading a headline or listening to snippets of news, and lacking the “cognitive and evaluative equipment” to make informed decisions on foreign policy matters (Rosenau, 1968:35-36). Depending on the country, scholars paint the mass public as making up between 75 to 90 percent of populations (Holsti, 1992:444; Dye, 1998:318). The next segment, about 10 to 15 percent of the populace, is described as the “attentive” public, a group that consists of citizens who are educated, well informed, and interested in issues beyond the state's borders who can, on occasion, raise foreign policy issues at election time (Frankel, 1963:77). Lastly, a small group of elite “opinion-makers” is the key formulator of foreign policy ideas outside of government circles and help drive “attentive” (and on occasion “mass”) public opinion, often through the media (Rosenau, 1968:71).

The degree to which governments actually do take public opinion into account when making policy is less clear, and cannot be answered with any degree of universality, given its geographical, personal, and temporal aspects. However, the past 40 years have seen several examples of Western governments taking public opinion on foreign affairs into account when making decisions. Studies from the 1970s onward showed that in the United States, foreign policy decision makers and affiliated bureaucracies—particularly Defense Department, State Department, and National Security Council—paid increasing attention to public opinion on foreign policy matters, if not always bowing to it (Foyle, 1997:144-145). Meanwhile, hot button foreign policy issues like wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan have proven to be touchstone campaign issues in the United States, demonstrating the ability of external issues to trump domestic concerns on occasion.

Unfortunately, there are few studies of public opinion and foreign policy in the developing world; all of the above-mentioned studies focused on the United States and Western Europe, as has the vast majority of scholarship on the issue. This suggests significant potential to explore the relationship between public opinion and the foreign policy sphere in South Africa and the developing world more broadly. Hence, the discussion in chapter 4 will closely examine this relationship in South Africa, both past and present, with an eye toward analyzing citizens' interest in foreign policy, the degree to which it is a contentious issue, and the means and extent to which the South African Government has taken these views on board, both before and since 1994.

### 2.3 *Civil Society*

Civil society groups in this context refer to any organization that tries to influence or pressure governments on specific foreign policy issues. In a sense, they are organized sub-sets of the “opinion-making” public, as these organizations' leadership tends to be among the best informed and passionate about the issues that concern them. In general, their broader membership further includes members of the “attentive” public, giving them additional weight in seeking to influence government policy. Examples of these pressure groups—which can be broadly lumped under the umbrella of civil society—include organized labor, cultural organization, religious entities, and

advocacy groups. Academia, think tanks, and political parties also can be considered pressure groups, although for the purposes of this study they will be considered separately. Not all of these groups are primarily focused on foreign policy; rather, most focus on external issues only when they impact on the group—organized labor seeking to scupper trade pacts that would threaten domestic jobs would be one example. There are advocacy groups solely focused on foreign affairs—the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a key advocate of closer ties between the United States and Israel, is one notable example—although they tend to be the exception rather than the rule.

There is not a great deal of coherent research on the issue of pressure groups and their relationship to foreign policy in large part because numbers are so large and their aims so diverse. However, in South Africa in particular, these groups deserve significant attention. South Africa has a vibrant civil society, and several of its pressure groups—most notably the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)—have significant influence on government policy. COSATU and others also have shown strong interest in certain foreign policy issues, making the government’s interaction with them worthy of examination.

#### 2.4 *The Media*

Mass media—and in particular the print press—is the means by which the public, and most decision makers, have long received their information about foreign affairs, giving it outsized (if often ignored) influence on foreign policy debates. The same holds true for nearly all elements of public policy; as Parsons notes, the media ultimately determine what is “newsworthy” and thereby dictate the parameters of policy debates (Parsons, 1995:107). Studies in the 1970s by McCombs and Shaw in the United States found that the more attention that was given to an issue by the media, the more does the public regard it as being a high agenda item, and vice versa. They concluded that the “mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes towards the political issues” (McCombs and Shaw, 1972:178). These studies predate the Internet and even the rise of satellite television, both of which provide consumers of news many more choices and more diverse perspectives on issues. However, the print media still tends to be the source of most serious, “opinion-making” journalism on foreign

policy and external issues, and will be the primary focus of study in examining South Africa given that the print press is the primary medium that covers foreign affairs in a serious way.

Less clear, and the topic of extensive debate, is why the media elevates some stories and not others into the public consciousness, a debate that can be divided into skeptical and idealistic schools of thought. The skeptics, cognizant of mass media's ownership by large conglomerates seeking profit, need to "produce problems" in order to "manufacture" news, ensuring that consumers by their newspapers or watch their programs day after day. Skeptics therefore take the view that media reporting should be viewed with suspicion, as it can irresponsibly sensationalize issues to bolster circulation figures and boost profits (Parsons, 1995:107). This line of thinking also proposes that the media can exclude ideas from circulation to minimize public discourse that its corporate owners might not find appealing. Idealists, on the other hand, focus on the investigative capacity of the media in drawing much needed attention to social problems and policy issues worthy of attention (Parsons, 1995:109).

The question raised above has particular salience to the role of the media in reporting on international affairs. The media has played an important role in influencing foreign policy debates since photos and accounts of the Crimean War in British newspapers raised awareness of the realities of that conflict (Frankel, 1963:72). War reporting since then (on the Anglo-Boer War, the World Wars, and in the United States, the Vietnam War) has emerged as the best-covered subcategory of foreign affairs reporting. This coverage has proven beneficial to governments in allowing them to sell their policies (such as in the case of "embedding" journalists in the 2003 Iraq campaign), but has also been dangerous to their careers as well. President Lyndon Johnson's 1968 decision to not seek re-election was likely tied to influential TV anchor Walter Cronkite's critique of the Vietnam conflict earlier that year. Ultimately, this coverage was able to not only shape public opinion, but also exert pressure on decision makers.

A question arises, however, about the role of the media as an influence on the public beyond the realm of war reporting in the international arena. Already the point has been made that foreign affairs tends not to be an issue of great engagement by the "mass" public, a group that nonetheless remains a significant consumer of print, radio, and television news. So why would

media groups devote much time and energy to foreign affairs issues if they do not sell? With the advance of the internet in Europe and the United States, shrinking print circulations (and declining revenues) already have forced prominent American newspapers to eliminate foreign bureaus and cut foreign correspondents. Given these cutbacks, it remains to be seen the degree to which the press will continue to be an effective influence on the public in the coming years, particularly if it devotes fewer resources to the issue. Equally worrying is the degree to which the public will be exposed to quality reportage that allows it to make informed decisions.

Lastly, one must examine the “upward” influence of the media. Although decision makers around the world carefully monitor their domestic press to ensure that the court of public opinion stays favorable on foreign policy issues, it should be noted that the relationship between the press and the decision maker is not solely one of unidirectional pressure via the public. As Hill notes, “the press has long been used to launch diplomatic trial balloons, and not infrequently information is released which has only the most tenuous relationship to the truth.” He further notes that members of the media can in some cases also have direct contact with decision makers and other influential members, providing journalists with an opportunity to influence the policy discourse, not to mention an opportunity for policy maker “trial balloon” launches (Hill, 2003:276-277).

Ultimately, the increasingly diffuse press is a difficult animal on which to keep a handle; it has multidirectional influence that varies across countries and differs depending on issues. In examining the role of the press on South Africa’s foreign policy debates, this study will seek to answer some of the questions raised here, notably the areas in which the country’s print press has had influence on foreign policy both “upward” and “downward”; the degree to which foreign policy issues are and were covered in the mass media; how media outlets determine which foreign policy issues to cover; and what foreign policy topics “sell.”

## 2.5 *Academics*

The influence of academics on foreign policy decision makers is an issue that has received limited study compared to some other actors, but one that is of great pertinence to the foreign policy debate for a variety of reasons. Firstly, this group generally comprises the *crème de la*

*crème* of the opinion-making elite, the group that approaches foreign policy debates in the most sophisticated and informed fashion. Unlike pressmen, parliamentarians, and pressure groups, academics tend to have greater independence to express their beliefs without the career pressures (respectively selling newspapers, getting re-elected, and finding donor funding) of the other groups. This is not universally the case—think tanks certainly face funding pressures, and academics are often offered jobs within government foreign policy structures—but on the whole the reward structures for foreign policy scholars emphasize the production of high-quality work that, despite expressing viewpoints, maintains academic integrity.

This expertise and integrity is what allows the academic community influence both downward (on the public), across the range of non-decision making actors, and upward onto government bureaucracies and decision makers, although the degrees of this influence are not easily quantifiable. For both the “mass” and “attentive” publics, the appearance of an academic expert on a topic—particularly if he or she is able to engage the consumer through accessible writing or a telegenic personality—can plant new seeds of thought and possibly start a discourse.

Affiliation can be key in this process; given that even the least engaged members of the public are familiar with institutions like Harvard or Oxford, giving the editorialist greater cache in the public eye. This scope of cache expands with the “attentive” public, possibly including lesser known universities and think tanks like the American Council on Foreign Relations or UK’s Chatham House. Similarly, across the sphere of non-decision making actors, journalists, MPs, and pressure groups often cite sympathetic academic opinions to bolster their own arguments.

The issue of “upward” influence is more interesting for this study, and one that has received far more study than the “downward” projection. Parsons asserts that the Victorian attitude of John Maynard Keynes and others that the ultimate aim of the scholar is to formulate and disseminate ideas that will shape the policy process remains the primary focus of think tanks and academics to this day (Parsons, 1995:169). However, scholars are undecided **on** the degree to which academics actually do influence foreign policy decision makers, and they are quick to point out that such influence ebbs and flows across countries, administrations, and time periods. Frankel noted that while in specialized areas—like nuclear strategy—and areas where the decision maker has no clear preference, expert opinion can exercise very significant influence, he further noted

that “it is extremely difficult to estimate its impact in every single case and hence even more difficult to generalize about it” (Frankel, 1963:39).

Two significant issues stand in the way of greater engagement between decision makers and academics—what will be termed as here “mutual incomprehension” and time. George has written extensively on the former issue, which refers to the inability of decision makers and academics to “bridge the gap” between their disciplines. Each looks at the other with a degree of suspicion and disdain. Academics, according to George, “aim at increasing general knowledge and wisdom about international relations,” and often look askance at their policy making brethren as too often swayed by political considerations rather than objective analysis (George, 1994:153).

Decision makers, on the other hand, “are more interested in the type of knowledge that increases their ability to influence and control the course of events,” and look at academic attempts to theorize about foreign policy with a mix of amusement and derision (George, 1993:9). Whereas academics think policy makers are too focused on politics, those in power do not think the academics think about it enough—after all, the politics were necessary to get into power in the first place! As George notes, the decision maker “views statecraft as an art, not a science” and often thinks academics minimize the human factor of decision making. Furthermore, George asserts that policy makers often view scholarly studies with suspicion, particularly from think tanks that engage in advocacy as well as academic study (George, 1993:10).

George believes that bridging the gap between these two cultures is necessary for decision makers to make better, more informed decisions about foreign policy, but he acknowledges that the reward structures of each will make it difficult to do so. It is also unlikely that this can be done on a consistent, systematized basis anywhere in the world. Influence is a highly individualistic proposition. Some world leaders (like Woodrow Wilson, previously head of Princeton University) come from academic traditions and will value intellectual engagement on foreign and other policy issues, but others (George W. Bush springs to mind) hail from decidedly anti-intellectual traditions and will be less likely to weigh competing academic perspectives on

key issues. Even a codified structure, like a foreign affairs advisory council, cannot ensure that academics will have real influence, even with executive face time.

Time is a final issue to consider, as there is simply not enough of it for key decision makers to weigh and evaluate every possible policy option. Zbigniew Brzezinski, US President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor for the entirety of his presidency, summed this issue up nicely: "I was very conscious of the degree to which my intellectual arsenal was becoming depleted in the course of a continuous race against time. There was hardly ever any time to think systematically, to reexamine views, or simply to reflect. A broader historical perspective and a sense of direction are the prerequisites for sound policy making, and both tend gradually to become victims of in-house official doctrine and outlook and of the pressure toward compromise" (Quoted in George, 1994:151). Outsiders seldom comprehend the time crunch faced by senior, and even not-so-senior, foreign policy makers. Even working 80+ hours a week, the ceaseless crunch of meetings and administrative matters (in addition to being a government's senior diplomat, a Foreign Affairs Minister also must manage an organization of several thousand employees, with its attendant headaches) leave decision makers very little time to actually think about the intricacies of their desired policy outcomes. Hence, even decision makers receptive to new ideas have no time or energy to take them on board, particularly if they cannot be captured in two bullet-pointed pages.

As with civil society and pressure groups, South Africa has a rich academic culture in regard to foreign affairs, with a host of universities and think tanks advocating policies and available to the government for expert opinions and advice. This study will unpack how these groups have interacted with the government and whether they have been able to bridge some of the divides noted above.

## 2.6 *Business*

The role of business in influencing foreign policy debate has not received much discernable attention from scholars, at least in being specifically disaggregated from broader interest groups. Even in the United States, where commercial interests have been a key driver of foreign policy since independence, there has been little exploration of the nature of these links (Garten,

1997:67). However, the influence of business people is too great to be ignored, particularly since business money funds pretty much every other actor being explored in this study. Politicians come to the business community every election cycle for donations, and therefore have to **accede** to certain corporate demands. Business communities, like the others identified here, are too ideologically diverse to have clear cut, common interests, although on issues related to trade policy, most businesses would in theory support greater external market access and foreign policies that contribute to one's country being viewed in a positive light internationally. South African business's impact on foreign policy makes for a compelling study due to their vested interest in the issue—predicated by their rapid expansion into Africa and further a field—as well as their oft-overlooked, highly opaque role as a political party donor.

## 2.7 *Legislatures*

The degree of influence of legislatures on executives around the world is another area where generalization is difficult. In some places, the United States in particular, the influence (and more notably, the independence) of the legislature is such that it can be considered part of the government decision-making process, an actor that must be won over before a head of state makes a decision. Even in Westminster-style parliamentary systems and other European legislatures, the trend in the past two decades has been toward greater engagement on foreign policy through foreign affairs committees dedicated to overseeing and at times criticizing government's foreign policy conduct (Hill, 2003:57). However, it is debatable to what extent this greater ostensible engagement actually changes the course of policy, as well as the degree to which such engagement is even desirable. Frankel echoes a realist perspective when he refers to Parliaments as “large, clumsy bodies” whose “participation upsets diplomacy” (Frankel, 1963:25). The liberal counterpoint, as was voiced in post-World War II Great Britain, is that a strong Parliament engaged on foreign policy matters could counter unchecked executive power, particularly over such decisions as going to war (Beloff, 1955:20).

The role of legislatures' influence on foreign policy must be viewed in the larger context of their influence on public policy writ large. Norton suggests that there are three levels of parliamentary involvement in policy making: (1) policymaking legislatures, (2) policy-influencing legislatures and (3) legislatures with little or no policy impact, with a combination of codified laws and

political culture accounting for the differentiation (Norton, 2005:37). In the foreign policy realm, legislatures in most democratic countries do have specific competencies for influencing foreign policy debates, specifically passing legislation, ratifying treaties, and apportioning funds necessary for foreign policy initiatives (Frankel, 1963:16-17). However, legislatures in most democracies (particularly in Westminster-style systems wherein party whips can exert great pressure on MPs) often do not assert these powers or use them to challenge the executive on its foreign policy priorities. As Hill notes, “Given the number of occasions when even the parliaments with relevant powers do not assert themselves to halt treaties or to interrogate the foreign and defense budgets, it is clear that it will take an unusual combination of circumstances for the executive to have its agreement with another state overturned by parliament at home” (Hill, 2003:254). In general, legislatures “confirm, rather than initiate, foreign policy,” with the United States, where the Senate has the additional power to confirm ambassadors, a notable exception (Frankel, 1963:26-27).

There exist many logical reasons for a lack of legislative involvement. First and foremost, legislators’ primary concern is what gets them elected and retained in office, and foreign policy—outside of times of war or other crises—is seldom a contentious electoral issue. Secondly, legislators rarely have competencies in foreign affairs and often lack basic interest in the topic, outside of participation in trips abroad during recess sessions. Thirdly, as discussed with the issue of academic engagement, temporal and human factors cannot be ignored. A certain Speaker of Parliament may be very taken by foreign policy concerns and elevate them in the legislature, but there are no guarantees that his or her successor will share the same priorities. Similarly, “hot” foreign policy issues, like a war, can drive foreign policy matters to the front burner of legislative attention, while they would fall back in times of peace and calm.

The chapter that looks at South Africa’s Parliament will seek to unpack the questions raised above, specifically the degree to which the legislature has sought to play a policy-influencing role on foreign policy, as well as whether its inputs have been taken on board by the executive.

## 2.8 *Ruling Parties*

Evaluating the roles of ruling parties and governments in policy formulation, both domestic and foreign, has received little academic study and is tricky given the difficulty in drawing distinctions where one ends and the other begins. In some systems, the ruling party is simply a vessel for the head of state, another way for him or her to exert power. In others, well-developed party structures can provide a counterbalance to executive power, both in regard to policy issues as well as jockeying for political power. Given this, it is worthwhile to explore the role of ruling political parties as influencers of foreign policy. South Africa makes for a particularly interesting environment. Although foreign policy generally was not viewed as a factor of great dispute within the ANC during the 1994-2008 period, the party had several entities separate from government—such as its Department of International Affairs, the National Executive Committee (NEC) Subcommittee on International Relations, and other NEC committees with a role to play in the foreign policy debate—with a capacity to weigh in on foreign policy matters. It is worth exploring how these entities interacted with the government executive on foreign affairs, and whether Mbeki in particular took these inputs to heart.

## 2.9 *Government Bureaucracies*

*A government is not an individual. It is not just the president and his entourage, nor even just the presidency and Congress. It is a vast conglomerate of loosely allied organizations, each with a substantial life of its own. Government leaders sit formally on top of this conglomerate. But governments perceive problems through organizational sensors. Governments define alternatives and estimate consequences as their component organizations process information; governments act as these organizations enact routines (Allison and Zelikow, 1999:143).*

--Graham Allison, in *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1971)

Allison above introduces the concept of the bureaucracy to the foreign policy mix, and it is one that is imperative to understanding the making of foreign policy in any government. In referring to foreign policy bureaucracies, one is referring to the mass of government employees—from ministers to junior officials—who deal with issues related to the foreign policy arena. The usual

suspects in this regard include those employed by departments of foreign affairs, foreign aid, trade, defense, and intelligence, but can include actors from a host of other departments (transportation, finance, treasury, law enforcement) who might dabble in issues outside the domestic arena. With the exception of ministers, ambassadors, and some senior appointees, the vast majority of these employees are careerists who are not subject to political whims in terms of hiring and firing, but are expected to submit to the wishes of their political masters, no matter what political party is in charge. In theory, these bureaucracies are simply the implementers of the policy objectives of the executive and his chosen surrogates.

In practice, however, the picture is more complex. While ministers ensure that their foreign policy bureaucracies act upon and adapt to the broader themes of government's foreign policy priorities, the minutiae of foreign policy issues with which governments are forced to react to on a daily basis means that the foreign policy professionals tend to have a great deal of decision-making powers on a day-to-day basis. An office director or a deputy director general often will have a great deal of independence on certain issues, particularly in larger foreign affairs bureaucracies, simply because a president or foreign minister simply has too much on his or her plate to take a stance one way or the other. This is doubly true for technical issues, such as those related to the intricacies of trade policy or military cooperation agreements, where specialized knowledge is necessary.

This bureaucratization of the foreign policy process poses problems for political leaders, particularly given the growing multi-disciplinarity of foreign policy issues. A foreign assistance package spearheaded by an aid bureaucracy, for example, might need foreign affairs support for striking the agreement; trade ministry buy-in for necessary duty-free agreements; treasury support for financial arrangements; agriculture support for food aid assistance; and even intelligence insights on whether the country in question will use the aid in the intended fashion. That is a lot of actors, with different organizational interests and perspectives, which need to come to some sort of agreement. As Hill notes, this "atomization" of bureaucracies, particularly in large countries, makes formulating a coherent foreign policy more and more difficult (Hill, 2003:64).

### 2.9.1 Allison's Models

This discussion of the role of bureaucracies provides a useful segue into a discussion of Allison's models of the role of bureaucracies in the decision-making process. Allison's 1971 *Essence of Decision* (re-issued in 1999 with declassified information to test his original hypotheses) examined President Kennedy's decision making during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, wherein he was forced to respond to the discovery of missiles that could launch nuclear warheads onto US soil. The study viewed Kennedy's response through three lenses, which he broke out into models on how government's make decisions:

--Rational Actor (Model I): Governments assess risks, costs and benefits of all available options before making decisions. This model minimizes actors outside of the executive, assuming that governments act as unitary entities.

--Organizational Behavior (Model II): Governments in times of crisis will rely on organizational standard operating procedures and seek to the best near-term decision. This model acknowledges the existence of a bureaucracy separate from government decision makers, but treats it as a largely unitary entity of "loosely aligned" organizations.

--Government Politics (Model III): Government policies are the result of bargaining among the members of the larger bureaucracy. This model treats the "bureaucracy" as a multi-headed hydra, with each head having differing organizational interests that are not necessarily in concert with those of the others (Allison and Zelikow, 1999:324).

The third model is clearly the most refined level of analysis, attempting to tease out how organizational (and personal) rivalries have an impact upon policy choices. In it, as Allison notes, "each individual...is a player in a central, competitive game. The name of the game is politics: bargaining along regular circuits among players positioned hierarchically within the government." These players make decisions "according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals; players who make government decisions not by a single, rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics" (Allison and Zelikow, 1999:255). Bargaining and trade-offs are the name of the game in this model; issues such as bigger budgets and more power take precedence in this model over perceived national interest. However, as Parsons notes, this theory is difficult to prove or falsify, given the degree to which

bureaucracies—a “black box” like no other—are resistant to methodological study (Parsons, 1995:323).

Allison’s first model, a realist perspective focused on a unitary foreign policy, is largely discounted in his book and is of little interest for students of FPA. The latter two models, however, are worthy of examination, particularly in studying the policy making process in South Africa and how it has changed both pre- and post-1994. This study will examine how various actors with foreign affairs competencies in South Africa’s bureaucracy—particularly the leading officials in the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Intelligence, and Trade and Industry—have since 1994 been able to influence the executive on foreign policy making. It will explore the relationships between these bureaucracies and external actors, the executive, and one another to determine how open they were to outside influences; the degree to which they had cooperative or competitive relations; and the degree to which their principals (Ministers, Directors-General, Ambassadors, and the like) were able to influence executive decision making. These bureaucracies are in theory tasked with implementing the policy decisions made by their political masters, but given their expertise and control of a vast minutiae of decisions, they play an influencing role on policy as well, which will be the main focus of examination.

### *2.10 The Executive*

Finally, we come to the ultimate decision maker on foreign policy issues, the executive. As previously covered, a host of actors weigh in on foreign policy debates in democracies—populaces can use the ballot box to express their pleasure or displeasure with foreign policies; external actors can lobby; legislatures can oversee and in some cases block policy elements; bureaucracies can actually make a host of decisions related to minor matters; and advisory groups can have influence in shaping the most important and sensitive policy debates. However, the final decisions on overarching foreign policy direction and priorities ultimately fall to the national leader. Possibly the best summation of this principle comes from Harry Truman’s 1953 farewell address, where he said the “greatest part of the President's job is to make decisions—big ones and small ones, dozens of them almost every day... The President—whoever he is—has to decide. He can't pass the buck to anybody. No one else can do the deciding for him. That's his job” (Quoted in Breuning, 2007:85). This is doubly true for foreign affairs, given the relative

lack of engagement on the topic from the broader public and other actors, particularly in comparison to domestic affairs. And in times of international crisis, even leaders with relative disinterest in foreign affairs are forced to make decisions of great national import (Hudson, 2007:38).

FPA puts the human decision maker at the center of its study, with the assumption that individuals are at the center of the decision-making process. FPA literature for the last 50 years, particularly in the subfield of political psychology, has focused significantly on understanding why leaders make certain decisions and, more importantly, why they adopt certain models of consultation. Breuning notes that the study of leaders' decision making—the “individual” level of analysis—has tended to focus on two specific issues, namely their perceptions of the world and their individual personalities (Breuning, 2007:11-12). Each of these factors can explain something about leaders' decision-making processes.

Leaders' perceptions, which will be referred to here as worldview, certainly play a significant role in formulating their personal policy priorities and in how they define their domestic and international constraints (Hermann and Hagan, 1998:126). As for impact on the decision-making process, the worldview itself is not as important as the leaders' commitment to that worldview. A leader with strongly-held, hard-to-change views on the world probably will be less willing to take on board alternative viewpoints and, in general, would appear to be less consultative. One of the leading scholars in the political psychology field, Margaret Hermann, refers to these leaders as “crusaders” and “ideologues” who “interpret the environment through a lens that is structured by their beliefs, attitudes, motives, and passions” (Hermann et al., 2001:86-87). She notes that these leaders seldom change their attitudes and beliefs, and when they do, the changes tend to be at the margins. “Pragmatists,” on the other hand, view the world in more flexible terms, preferring to react to the realities of the situation at hand.

These differing worldviews have a significant effect on the decision-making process as well. Hermann notes that “crusader” style leaders “choose associates who define issues as they do and who generally share their goals. These leaders value loyalty and often move to shape norms and institutions to facilitate their personal goals.” Such leaders would appear unlikely to be

responsive to non-governmental actors; have strong preferences toward sympathetic elements of the bureaucracy; and probably cultivate an advisory group of “yes men” that would tend toward groupthink. The “pragmatist,” on the other hand, tends to be “consultative...flexible, and open-minded” (Hermann et al., 2001:86-87), characteristics that most likely would encourage a great deal of outreach to actors on the periphery and extensive debate among close advisors.

Leaders’ personalities are the other area that deserves careful consideration, as this issue is impossible to ignore when assessing leadership style in the foreign policy (or any other) arena (Snyder et al., 2003:131). Of course, the reader is left to ponder the immeasurably complex question of how to assess personality and what key elements of it are pertinent to assessing decision making. A host of issues have been teased out over time as possible decision-making influences, but three of them will be of focus in specifically in regard to the foreign policy field:

--*Interest*. Perhaps the most important factor that dictates the level of involvement of an executive in the foreign policy process is that leader’s level of interest in foreign policy. Quite simply, a leader interested in foreign policy will take a more active role in its formulation, a situation that most likely will coincide with other actors having less influence in the process (Breuning, 2007:31-32). Foreign policy “activist” leaders generally have such an interest because they want to do something specific, meaning that they are unlikely to be well disposed toward interference from other actors (Hermann, et al., 2001:85). Levels of interest, it is worth noting, can ebb and flow both over time and also in regard to certain issues; the complexity and breadth of foreign policy issues is, for any country, far too vast for any leader to pay attention to all of them (Hudson, 2007:38).

--*Trust*. A leader’s willingness to listen to advice depends to a large degree on the extent to which he or she trusts the source. This point is ably addressed by former American Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms, who once noted in Congressional testimony, “No power has been found to force Presidents of the United States to pay attention on a continuing basis to people and papers when confidence has been lost in the originator” (Quoted in Betts, 1978:66). Hence, leaders who trust their advisors and bureaucracies are more likely to seek out their opinions and engender real debate on issues; this trust will also determine the degree to which outside actors (like academics) are consulted (Breuning, 2007:88). Distrustful leaders—perhaps

perceiving advisors as political rivals, or as pawns of their bureaucracies—are on the other hand more likely to be resistant to meaningful engagement and consultation.

--*Delegational Comfort*. Here one refers to the degree to which a leader is comfortable delegating authority to his or her advisors and/or bureaucracies. “Some individuals revel in decision making while others assiduously shun it,” noted Frankel, and in foreign policy making processes, this preference for decision making can be used to differentiate between centralizers who want to be involved in every foreign policy debate and delegators who are happy to pass down this authority to one or more advisors (Frankel, 1963:208). Willingness to delegate may be related to disinterest or a leader’s lack of certainty in the foreign policy arena, but it could equally be the sign of a confident leader with a trusted team in place (Breuning, 2007:88).

These three issues provide a worthwhile starting point for examining how and why leaders orient their decision-making processes, and they will prove the basis for examining the relationships of South African leaders—and Thabo Mbeki in particular—with other actors in the foreign policy arena. Mbeki has been widely painted as a leader whose intense interest in foreign policy issues, as well as his years as one of the ANC’s leading foreign policy mavens, led him to keep his own counsel to the point that he gave short shrift to what outsiders told him, particularly on issues on which he had some experience (Gumede, 2005:60). While this is a difficult topic to explore given the lack of source material, to the extent possible this study will tease out Mbeki’s openness to outside inputs on foreign policy through interviews with his advisors and others close to him.

## 2.11 *Conclusion*

As pointed out in the sections above, a wide range of actors inside and outside of government play a role in shaping countries’ foreign policies. However, beside the fact that most constitutions give heads of state outsized power over the foreign policy making process, there are little other universality in regard to what actors are powerful and how their voices are taken into account. Some actors—like the media and legislatures—have received extensive study, while others like ruling parties and business have been relatively underserved in regard to academic study. Furthermore, FPA studies of the roles of various actors have been overwhelmingly of the democracies of Western Europe and the United States. There is, in short, significant room for

more study of this issue, both of less-studied actors and of the interface of actors in the developing world. This thesis hopes to shed more light on these topics in a South African context.

## Chapter 3: Narratives in South African Foreign Policy

### 3.1 Introduction

Before examining the role various actors have played through the years in shaping South African foreign policy, one must first explain the various thrusts and narratives of South African—government and exiled ANC—foreign policy throughout the country’s history. While the detailed discussion will focus on the “how” and the “why,” one cannot delve into these discussions without an overview of the “what,” the broader external aims of both the South African Government and, pre-1990, the ANC in exile. To this end, this chapter is subdivided into six parts that will provide an overview of the foreign policy priorities of the South African Government and the ANC during the past century, albeit with a focus on the post-1948 period:

--*Pre-1948 Foreign Policy.* This section will briefly discuss the origins of South African foreign policy, both pre-Union and in the 1910-48 period. This will cover South Africa’s involvement in the two World Wars and the impact of the Balfour Declaration on developing South Africa’s independent foreign policy competency.

--*The Diplomacy of Defiance, 1948-1990.* The National Party’s rule until the unbanning of the ANC was characterized by South Africa’s efforts to counter its growing international isolation and find friends wherever they could be had. Key issues to be addressed include withdrawal from the Commonwealth; growing international isolation; strained ties with the United Nations; growing estrangement from the United States and traditional allies in Europe; growing ties with other global pariahs; clandestine propaganda and sanctions-busting efforts; and Pretoria’s efforts to build ties with African states.

--*ANC Foreign Policy to 1990.* ANC foreign engagement goes back to the organization’s foundation in 1912, although this section mostly will focus on the ANC’s post-1960 attempts to seek international legitimacy as the true representative of South Africa’s people; establish representation around the world; raise money; raise awareness of and shift international opinion against apartheid; and increasingly isolate the government in Pretoria.

--*The Foreign Policy of Transition: Competition and Convergence.* This section will discuss the dominant issues of the transitional period, particularly the Transitional Executive Council (TEC)

discussions on South Africa's future foreign policy priorities and diplomatic infrastructure. It will also examine South Africa's reemergence on the global stage.

--*The Mandela Era: All Things to All People*. Nelson Mandela's 1994-99 administration saw the culmination of South African reengagement efforts and saw the country, still basking in the afterglow of its successful transition, play an active and outsized role in the international arena. However, South African foreign policy during this period also was marked by significant difficulties in balancing its idealist aims with more "realist" considerations. No longer a global pariah, South Africa was finally forced to make difficult geopolitical choices. South African responses to crises in Nigeria and Lesotho also will be examined here.

-- *Mbeki and the African Agenda*. Lastly, this section will examine Thabo Mbeki's efforts to bring peace, democracy, and prosperity to the rest of Africa while positioning Pretoria as an influential actor both globally and on the continent. South Africa's growing prioritization of the developing world; its global diplomatic expansion; Pretoria's efforts to "punch above its weight" in the international arena, on such issues as reform of global governance structures; and its shift from a human rights focus in the early period to more "pragmatic" policies in the late 1990s all will be scrutinized here. South Africa's policy toward Zimbabwe, probably the most prominent foreign policy issue since 1994, will merit particular examination, both here and in chapters to come.

### 3.2 *South African Foreign Policy to 1948*

Although the Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State from the 1840s signed treaties with other countries and sent diplomatic representatives to Europe and the United States, South Africa had no independent foreign policy decision-making competency until the Balfour Declaration of 1926 granted Great Britain's Dominions equal and autonomous status under the new Commonwealth (Vandenbosch, 1970:58). Although the Declaration stated that most foreign policy responsibility would remain in London, it allowed for autonomous Dominion diplomatic services; South Africa's Department of External Affairs was set up later that year. External affairs were generally a low priority for South Africa for most of the 1920s and 1930s, but this changed with the coming storm in Europe. The march to war raised questions about the country's autonomy in the event of war, with the two main governmental leaders—Prime

Minister JBM Hertzog and Deputy Prime Minister Jan Smuts—divided over South Africa’s obligation to back Great Britain in a conflict with Germany (Spence, 1965:8-9).

Matters came to a head with Germany’s 1 September 1939 invasion of Poland, which brought Great Britain into the war two days later. A neutrality motion put forth by Hertzog was defeated by 80 votes to 67, while a Smuts motion urging cooperation with Great Britain passed by the same margin. South Africa was at war. Despite inheriting a tiny Defense Force totally unprepared for conflict, Smuts—who emerged as Prime Minister—turned the South African force into a valuable partner for the Allies. In all, 334,000 men volunteered for service in the South African Army (including 123,000 non-white members of support units); nearly 9,000 were killed in action. At war’s end, Smuts served as South Africa’s representative at the San Francisco conference that established the United Nations, drafting the preamble to the UN Charter. Smuts’ heightened international profile, however, did him few favors at home. In the run-up to 1948 elections, the National Party attacked Smuts and his United Party for being soft on racial segregation and more focused on global statesmanship than problems at home. Although the NP and its Afrikaner Party allies only took 42 percent of the vote to the United Party’s 49 percent, their support in smaller rural constituencies allowed them to win 79 of 153 seats. DF Malan assumed the Premiership, and the era of apartheid and isolation began.

### *3.3 The Diplomacy of Defiance, 1948-1990*

The National Party government’s resistance to international pressure to reform or abolish its system of apartheid underscored South Africa’s foreign policy between 1948 and 1990; maintenance of white rule in South Africa (and Southwest Africa) was the overarching goal. As a former director of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) succinctly observed, “the South African Government’s policy abroad is to seek to maintain apartheid at home” (Quoted in Stevens, 1970:32). To this end, Pretoria engaged in an increasing sophisticated, multi-headed approach that at first utilized legalistic tactics, diplomatic overtures, and economic incentives to win friends and rebuff enemies. However, as anti-South Africa attitudes hardened by the mid-1960s, these policy options expanded to include covert action, the development of a nuclear deterrent, and the use of conventional and unconventional military force—all elements of the “Total Strategy,” which will be explained below—to show its

opponents that South Africa had no intention of capitulation. The Nationalists effectively played up the communist threat to South Africa from the Soviet-backed ANC to maintain consistently high levels of domestic support and win anti-Communist friends abroad.

### *3.3.1 The Foreign Policy of Malan and Strijdom: The Balancing Act*

South Africa's foreign policy during the Premierships of DF Malan (1948-53) and JG Strijdom (1953-58) was characterized by attempts to maintain close ties with the West, not alienate Great Britain, and establish South Africa as a player in a rapidly decolonizing Africa, all the while showing voters they would not be cowed by external pressure (Barber and Barratt, 1990:1).

Pretoria had some luck with the former two. The escalation of the Cold War helped South Africa maintain good standing with the West, as did the South African Air Force's participation in both the 1948 Berlin Air Lift and the Korean War, although Malan's efforts to make South Africa an "auxiliary" of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the southern hemisphere came to naught (Barber and Barratt, 1990:1; Steenkamp, 1980:34). For avowed republicans, Malan and Strijdom also retained surprisingly strong relations with Great Britain and dismissed calls for withdrawal from the Commonwealth. Economics was key to this; Commonwealth trade preferences, security cooperation, and access to British capital all made continued membership highly desirable (Henshaw, 1996:223).

Efforts to improve South Africa's standing in Africa, however, had less luck. In the run-up to decolonization, Malan was taken with the idea of an "African Charter" aimed at preserving colonial rule by stopping Asian immigration, keeping out Communism, and ensuring the continent remained non-militarized (Southall, 1999:7). South Africa would play a central role in this charter, offering assistance and cooperation to colonies across the continent, but European colonial powers paid it no heed (Geldenhuys, 1994:252-253). Malan's attempt to acquire control from Great Britain of the British Protectorate states—Bechuanaland, Basutoland, and Swaziland—on South Africa's borders, the independence of which he found abhorrent, similarly found no success. Strijdom, on the other hand, took a more pragmatic approach to the continent, with a focus on maintaining white rule where tenable but recognizing that independence for much of the continent was a reality. He emphasized the need for cooperation and the "hand of friendship" between South Africa and black-ruled states, and to that end established several

organizations to advance technical and agricultural cooperation (Barber and Barratt, 1990:3). Strijdom even sent senior diplomats to Ghana's independence ceremony, although he drew the line at exchanging diplomats with a black-ruled country (Barber, 1973:7). Unsurprisingly, Ghana and other new states showed little outward enthusiasm for close ties, although Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah was slow to cut trade ties with Pretoria, stating in 1957 that Ghana would not interfere in a South African internal matter (Barber, 1973:7).

### 3.3.2 *Verwoerd and the Politics of Withdrawal*

Hendrik Verwoerd's ascension to the Premiership in 1958 after Strijdom's death marked a significant shift in style from his predecessors. While both Malan and Strijdom had tried to maintain ties to South Africa's traditional allies and remain a respected member of the international community, Verwoerd was far more comfortable with a "go it alone" mentality, one that would permeate the foreign relations of his eight-year tenure. Verwoerd was firmly committed to the establishment of a South African republic, although this republicanism was not necessarily based on the assumption that South Africa would leave the Commonwealth (Stultz, 1969:9). However, Verwoerd's refusal to offer any concessions on its racial policies—or even accept diplomats from newly independent African Commonwealth members, calling them a potential "center of agitation" for attacking apartheid—raised tensions to the point of South Africa's 1961 withdrawal. The pullout was met by great consternation among English-speaking South Africans and businessmen, who feared the loss of Commonwealth trade preferences, although economic fears proved unfounded.

Pretoria's relations under Verwoerd with the increasingly vocal United Nations, however, proved more difficult. Ties to the UN were by no means cordial under his predecessors; perceived meddling in South Africa's affairs led both Malan and Strijdom to suspend South African participation in various UN bodies at points during their tenures (Barber, 2004:59). Nonetheless, relations worsened notably under Verwoerd, with both the 1960 Sharpeville massacre and the explosion of independent African states—16 in 1960 alone—leading South Africa to face unprecedented pressure in the body. The General Assembly in 1962 for the first time called on a trade and diplomatic boycott of South Africa, and the following year voted in favor of a voluntary arms embargo (De St. Jorre, 1992:9). Verwoerd responded with open contempt of the

United Nations, blaming a “Communist bloc” for attacks on South Africa, although he stopped short of total withdrawal. Verwoerd skillfully used the bugbear of communism in an effort to maintain close ties with the West, although he was unafraid to upset potential allies over matters of principle. Despite rapidly increasing US investment, particularly in the mining sector, Verwoerd scrapped the planned 1965 visit of the USS Independence aircraft carrier to Cape Town on the grounds that its racially mixed crew was unacceptable (Massie, 1997:76). He also blocked US plans to open a satellite tracking station in South Africa on the same grounds.

In Africa, Verwoerd’s policy reiterated Strijdom’s partnership rhetoric but also emphasized binding newly independent states in the subregion to South Africa. Although he expressed concern about the rapidity of African decolonization, Verwoerd was clear that he did not begrudge African states choosing independence and emphasized the “civilizing” potential of South Africa in regard to technological and economic cooperation (Verwoerd, 1966:lvi). Although he sought at first, like Strijdom, to incorporate the Protectorates, Verwoerd by 1964 dropped these efforts and instead focused on binding them closely to South Africa through economic cooperation (Davidson, 1974:10). He showed no qualms about meddling in the political affairs of South Africa’s soon-to-be independent neighbors. Seeing a potential ally in Basutoland chief Leabua Jonathan, Verwoerd allowed him and his Basutoland National Party (but not other parties) to campaign among Basuto residents in South Africa before 1965 elections, and South Africa later that year donated 100,000 bags of grain to alleviate famine gripping the newly independent state. Verwoerd later spent three and a half hours with Jonathan on 3 December 1966—four days before his assassination—discussing prospects for closer ties (Hepple, 1967:194-195).

### *3.3.3 Vorster and the Uphill Struggle for Engagement*

Taking office after Verwoerd’s 1966 assassination, new Prime Minister John Vorster inherited a government coming under increasing attack in the United Nations, with few meaningful links to newly independent African states, and was starting to come under pressure from the political “left” in Western countries over its racial policies. More a pragmatist than an ideologue like Verwoerd, Vorster was determined to address this situation, and his “outward policy” was crafted as a means to build relationships on the continent, keep doors open in Europe and the

United States, and bolster trade and diplomatic links around the world (De St. Jorre, 1977:58). Although opposed by certain *verkrampte* (conservative) elements within the National Party, who viewed any accommodation with black Africa as a betrayal of apartheid principles, this movement was supported by an increasingly self-assured, wealthy, and urbanizing Afrikaner community that recognized the danger of being isolated from the rest of the world (Dalcanton, 1976:172).

Building ties in Africa was paramount to Vorster's foreign policy, with James Barber and John Barratt describing it as being conducted outward on the basis of three concentric circles—"greater South Africa", southern Africa, and the rest of the continent—with different motivations and tactics for each (Barber and Barratt, 1990:126). Closest to home, Vorster sought to bind the newly independent Protectorates—Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland—tightly to South Africa to ensure that they remained dependent on South African assistance for their economic development and political survival, using a 1969 renegotiation of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and 1974 creation of the Rand zone to this end (Davies and O'Meara, 1985:185). In the region, Vorster's main focus was to ensure the security of white-ruled states, particularly up through Portugal's 1975 withdrawal from Angola and Mozambique. Although Portuguese frostiness toward Pretoria limited South African assistance there, Vorster—with significant support from the white electorate—maintained consistent military and economic support for the breakaway Rhodesian government until the mid-1970s.

With regard to black-ruled states, Vorster engaged in a continent-wide charm offensive through the mid-1970s that primarily used economic incentives in an effort to win political support in African capitals. These efforts met with some success, particularly up to 1975. Provided significant economic aid, Malawi went so far as to establish formal diplomatic ties with Pretoria in 1967 and would remain one of the apartheid government's most reliable defenders for the next two decades (Bowman, 1971:8). Pretoria's approaches also were well received in several Francophone countries—notably Ivory Coast, Senegal, Gabon, Madagascar, and the Central African Republic—while Liberia, Ghana, and Kenya represented Anglophone states that showed a willingness to hear out South African approaches (Barber and Barratt, 1990:146). This diplomacy, conducted by Pretoria in utmost secrecy and spearheaded by the Bureau of State

Security and Department of Information, culminated with Vorster visiting Ivory Coast President Houphouët-Boigny and Senegalese President Senghor in 1974, as well as Liberian President Tolbert the next year (Nyangone, 2008:88). Although Pretoria's "wins" were more symbolic than substantive, South Africa's liberation movements, particularly the ANC, viewed them with concern; one ANC diplomat in 1975 said that the organization feared exclusion from every sub-Saharan state because of Pretoria's outreach (Sanders, 2006:102).

With memories of Sharpeville fading and the anti-apartheid movement still nascent in the West, Pretoria in the 1960s and early 1970s was able to maintain strong ties in the West. Pretoria's sophisticated (and well-funded) lobbying and propaganda efforts helped paint South Africa as a useful bulwark against communism, which particularly appealed to conservative governments eager to cooperate on defense matters. Pretoria tied itself more closely to NATO with its 1973 construction of the Silvermine surveillance center near Cape Town, which provided invaluable coverage of Soviet naval operations in the South Atlantic (Cobbett, 1989:226). Pretoria also built ties to other "pariah" states around the world, such as military governments in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, although neither side received many tangible benefits (Fig, 1984:20). Relations with Taiwan and the Shah's Iran were more substantive, with South Africa benefiting from access to Iranian oil—up to 90 percent of its imported crude by 1979—and Taiwanese military technology and training (Dadoo, 1997:176). Most important, however, were South Africa's burgeoning ties with Israel from 1973 onward, resulting in military cooperation that was essential to the development of South Africa's nuclear weapons program (Polakow-Suransky, 2010:6).

However, Vorster's limited progress began to disintegrate with Portugal's April 1974 coup that brought down the Caetano government. Initiated in large part by military disgruntlement over being forced to fight unwinnable wars in the country's African colonies, it led to the 1975 independence of Angola and Mozambique, putting hostile governments on the borders of South Africa and Rhodesia. Although Vorster tried to maintain his *détente* efforts with black-ruled states, including by gradually pulling back support for Salisbury, South Africa's August 1975 invasion of Angola—undertaken to support Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement against the Soviet and Cuban-backed MPLA prior to that country's November independence—scuttled any

chance that they would succeed. Operation Savannah saw approximately 3,000 SADF troops move to within 200km of Luanda, turning over captured territory to UNITA en route, but by November, the invasion led to the insertion of Cuban troops and Soviet materiel that ultimately repulsed the South African advance. Most importantly, South Africa's intervention irreparably damaged its standing on the continent, forcing all but the most slavishly devoted countries (like Malawi) to turn their backs (at least publicly) on Pretoria (Pfister, 2005:49).

The 1974-78 period also saw Pretoria lose support further afield. The UN General Assembly suspended South Africa in 1974, a ban not lifted for 20 years, while the June 1976 Soweto massacre and 1977 death of Black Consciousness Movement activist Steve Biko in police custody had even more crippling effects, galvanizing global opinion against South Africa and ushering in UN adoption of a 1977 mandatory arms embargo. This growing international isolation had the effect at home of bolstering the position of the defense establishment in the foreign policy arena; whereas Foreign Affairs, the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), and Information focused on winning friends, Defense, under Minister PW Botha, was oriented toward intimidating and undermining enemies. Interdepartmental infighting reached fever pitch by the late 1970s, but Vorster—ailing and faced with mounting political pressures—was unable to address it, leading to muddled policy making. However, the 1977 breaking of the “Muldergate” information scandal—which revealed political malfeasance in the Information Department's secret operations—quickly brought down Vorster and his allies, opening the door to Botha's ascension to the Premiership. Henceforth, the military's primacy in the foreign policy field would be unchallenged.

### *3.3.4 The PW Botha Era*

The cantankerous PW Botha assumed the job of Prime Minister in September 1978 determined to bring a new muscularity to South Africa's foreign engagement, if no significant shifts to the policy aims. While still using “carrots” to incentivize greater regional and African cooperation with Pretoria, Botha's avid use of “sticks” like regional military intervention, continued development of nuclear weapons, and covert action was meant to show the region and the world that South Africa did not intend to be bullied. The Prime Minister (State President from 1984) mustered state resources behind his “Total Strategy,” in the process giving the military and

Defense establishment a predominant position in foreign policy formulation. Perhaps even more so than his predecessors, Botha was avowedly anti-Communist and was quick to use the “red menace” to ameliorate Western pressure. Botha’s finger-wagging isolationism, however, would prove unsustainable by the end of the 1980s. Once sympathetic Western governments, banks, and businesses—under pressure from citizenries increasingly aware and critical of apartheid—enacted sanctions, withdrew investment, and refused to roll over loans. Meanwhile, huge increases in state spending, particularly on the military, combined with external economic pressure left the South African economy on the brink of collapse by 1989.

Botha entered office committed to taking forward Verwoerd and Vorster’s ideas of promoting greater partnership in southern Africa and on the continent, such as his 1979 proposal for a Constellation of Southern African States (CONSAS) that would provide up to ten regional states “a common approach in the security field, the economic field, and the political field” (Hanlon, 1986:15). However, Robert Mugabe’s victory in Zimbabwe’s 1980 election killed the concept before it could get off the ground; instead nine regional states formed the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) later that year in an effort to oppose South African imperialism and reduce economic dependence on South Africa. Botha continued earlier efforts to use economic incentives to win over hostile African states, but again these met with limited success. Given the failures of these overtures and growing concerns about ANC presence on South Africa’s borders, Pretoria increasingly turned to outright military destabilization in the region to intimidate, rather than coax, its neighbors. South African incursions and attacks were to have a devastating economic effect on the region, causing an estimated \$90 billion in damage between 1975 and 1988 (Conchiglia, 2007:237). These included periodic incursions into Angola through 1988; cross-border raids on Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe; support for RENAMO rebels in Mozambique; and economic pressure throughout the subregion (Davies, 1989:105). Pretoria also ramped up its use of unconventional operations during this time, to include often-successful assassination attempts against ANC leaders and supporters. South Africa also continued work on developing its nuclear weapons program—in close cooperation with Israel—and in 1983 initiated its chemical and biological weapons program, Project Coast (Purkitt and Burgess, 2005:148-149).

Building the capacity to carry out these operations, however, was unbelievably costly. Upon Botha taking office in the 1978/79 fiscal year, South Africa spent R1.5 billion on defense; in 1988/89, his last year, this had reached R10 billion (Mills, 2000:238). In 1982/83, defense spending accounted for 22.7 percent of the national budget and over 5 percent of GDP; it would account for at least 15 percent of the budget and 4 percent of GDP through 1990. However, this is merely the Defense budget; if non-military internal security, intelligence, and secret projects (like the nuclear program), some estimate “real” security spending to have represented as much as 30 percent of the budget and 9 percent of GDP by 1990 (O’Meara, 1996:354). Given that real economic growth had dropped to just 1.5 percent per year on average during the 1980s, this spending was unsustainable (Schrire and Silke, 1997:6).

International pressure also began to exert meaningful economic pressure on the government. Western governments and banks continued to deal with South Africa through the early 1980s—US support was crucial to South Africa receiving a \$1.1 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1982—but by 1985 public pressure to disengage from South Africa was mounting in the United States and throughout Europe (Danaher, 1984:7). Botha’s August 1985 “Rubicon” speech—which disappointed after being hyped by Pik Botha and others beforehand as a significant step toward ending apartheid—led Chase Manhattan Bank to cease rolling over South Africa’s short-term debt and stop further lending, causing a collapse of the rand and a government moratorium on taking on further international debt. Moreover, Western investors were disinvesting in droves, driven by growing public anti-apartheid sentiments and drive to boycott business and banks doing business in South Africa; between 1984 and 1989, as many as 555 foreign multinational firms left South Africa. Botha’s fervent anti-communism could no longer be counted on to preserve South Africa’s standing among even conservative governments. The 1986 US Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, a sanctions regime passed despite the veto of President Reagan, was perhaps the clearest sign that the tide of international opinion had turned irrevocably against it.

This growing pressure, in addition to fatigue from the military stalemate in Angola, finally brought Angolan, Cuban, and South African parties together in London in 1988 to settle the

future of Southwest Africa/Namibia. They agreed to the Brazzaville Protocol that December, an agreement that led to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and South Africa turning over Southwest Africa to UN control, in advance of elections and independence in 1990. PW Botha, however, would not remain in office to see it. In January 1989, 73 year-old PW Botha suffered a stroke and the following month resigned as leader of the National Party. Although Botha in his final months showed that his government was able to make hard decisions on issues like Namibian independence, but he could not make the ultimate tough call. Although he had met with Nelson Mandela and National Intelligence was talking with the ANC in exile, Botha could not to pull the trigger on the only decisions that mattered: releasing Mandela, unbanning the ANC, and finishing off apartheid. With the Berlin Wall fallen and the Soviet Union collapsing, those decisions would fall to Botha's successor, FW de Klerk.

### *3.3.5 Limited Outside Participation in Foreign Policy, 1948-1990*

The forthcoming substantive chapters will provide greater context in regard to the degree to which foreign policy making was open to outside participation during the apartheid era, from the broader public to various government departments. However, it can be noted up front that this period was characterized by a high degree of executive domination, with relatively little room for inputs from outside government, or even outside a selected inner circle within government. A significant part of this was constitutional in nature; the South Africa Act of 1909, Republican Constitution of 1961, and Tri-Cameral Constitution of 1983 all vested extensive power in the executive (the Prime Minister to 1984, State President thereafter) for making major foreign policy decisions—making war and peace, accrediting diplomats, concluding treaties, and so forth. The Foreign Minister in this dispensation was ostensibly entrusted with the day-to-day conduct of external relations, although his powers ebbed and flowed based on the whims (and trust) of the Prime Minister or President. These relationships will be discussed further in chapters 10 and 11.

Constitutional precepts were not the only limit to broader participation in foreign policy making. Also quite significant was the general lack of widespread engagement on external affairs, as well as the implicit trust placed in government by the white (and particularly Afrikaner) citizenry. As will be shown in chapters 4 through 9, few actors with vested interests in the foreign policy

process sought to influence the process, at least until the 1980s. The broader public generally showed little interest in foreign affairs, even with the country increasingly isolated internationally. This disinterest bled into the print media, which devoted relatively few resources to foreign affairs, given reader disinterest. Pressure groups were few in number. Academics were few in number during this period; some had contact with government officials, but their impacts were limited. Business, despite growing difficulties operating outside South Africa's borders, was a minor player. And Parliament—as well as the broader NP structures—displayed blind loyalty to its leadership on foreign policy, as it was not an issue with much relevance or interest to its constituencies. In sum, the apartheid era was closed to broader participation in foreign policy making, both due to barriers from above and disinterest from below. The coming chapters will tease out the extent to which this changed after 1990.

#### *3.4 ANC Foreign Policy to 1990*

The ANC's pre-1990 foreign policy can be divided into two phases. The first, from its founding until its banning in South Africa in 1960, consisted of constant—if disjointed—attempts to win friends abroad, particularly in western Europe but also, in concert with its domestic Communist Party allies, among Eastern Bloc governments. The exiled organization at first focused on survival. However, by the late-1960s, the ANC had expanded its diplomatic efforts to ensure it was viewed internationally as the sole legitimate representative of the South African people; raise necessary funds; and bring increased pressure on the apartheid government through lobbying governments and raising popular awareness of the evils of apartheid.

An elitist organization with little broad popular support for its first two decades, the ANC had a strong internationalist component from its 1912 foundation. The ANC sent a delegation to Great Britain in 1914 to voice dissatisfaction with the 1913 Native Land Act, which restricted black land ownership, but its protests were ignored (Rall, 2003:138). A subsequent delegation to Great Britain and to the Versailles Conference in 1919 that demanded an end to the color bar in South Africa was similarly ignored, despite ANC support for the war effort (Meli, 1989:49). Efforts to build ties with the Soviet Union, forged through the congress's burgeoning ties to the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), showed more promise. In 1927, ANC Natal leader Josiah Gumede followed a European tour by traveling to Moscow, where he was received by

Stalin and toured the republics. He came away convinced that the Soviet Union—with its multinational citizenry, rural poverty, and underdeveloped capitalist system before the revolution—offered a model for South Africa’s political and economic development. He returned to South Africa energized, telling crowds, “I have seen the world to come...I have been to the new Jerusalem,” and later that year won the Presidency of the ANC on the grounds that the party must take a more militant stance against white rule and work on concert with Communists (Ellis and Sechaba, 1992:75-76). This cooperation, however, would prove short-lived; a conservative faction skeptical of Soviet ties ousted Gumede as President-General in 1930, and relations with Moscow were uneven through the 1950s (Somerville, 1984:99).

The 1939 outbreak of war saw latent tensions between radicals and conservatives in the ANC come to a head over whether to advise blacks to support the war effort. The latter ultimately won the day, with the movement supporting the war effort but calling for all South Africans to be given equal rights of citizenship. The unstated hope was that this loyalty would pay benefits after the war, but these were quickly dashed; a lobbying effort by ANC President (1940-49) AB Xuma to the newly formed United Nations against the proposed incorporation of Southwest Africa into South Africa embarrassed Smuts but paid no discernable material benefits (Barber, 1973:24). Still, the post-war period saw a more internationally active ANC, particularly in regard to its ties with global anti-colonial movements. The 1955 Freedom Charter spelled out the Congress’s foreign policy tenets, notably a commitment to African self-determination and to peacefully settling international disputes, and the movement was able to send its activists abroad, where leaders like Walter Sisulu and Duma Nokwe were able to build the organization’s international profile, although not necessarily material support.

The ANC’s foreign orientation and tactics changed with its April 1960 banning, as now its external wing would have to carry the burden of keeping the organization alive and building international support (Pfister, 2003:53). This Herculean task was given to deputy president Oliver Tambo, who escaped the country in 1960 to establish the external mission tasked with raising international awareness of the South African situation, fundraising, prosecuting the armed struggle, and establishing links to newly independent African governments and other liberation movements (Thomas, 1995:26). Tambo had to do this with no existing support structures and

limited guidance from the movement in South Africa, particularly after the 1963 Rivonia arrests led to the detention of the movement's internal leadership.

Unsurprisingly, this was a difficult task, and Tambo found limited success through the mid-1970s. Western governments and populaces showed little enthusiasm for the anti-apartheid movement, and even in those Western capitals where the ANC was able to establish a presence, it made little impact. African governments provided it little material support, generally preferring to back the more radical PAC while focusing on liberation movements with more near-term potential, as in Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies (Pfister, 2003:51-53). Even allies like Zambian President Kaunda, who hosted the ANC's headquarters from 1967, were subject to South African pressure that limited the extent of their support (Macmillan, 2009:317). In addition, its efforts at armed struggle were almost non-existent, with the sole significant effort—the 1967 Wankie campaign—a disaster that led, at the ANC's 1969 Morogoro conference, to one of the most serious attacks on Tambo's leadership (Barrell, 1992:70). A sole bright spot during these years was the ANC's ability to attract Soviet backing, fostered by its South African Communist Party (the CPSA assumed this new name after it was banned and went underground in 1953) allies. This support—which included funding, educational and military training, and military materiel—was crucial to keeping the movement alive during this time (Shubin, 2008:241).

However, events in Portugal and South Africa in the mid-1970s would provide the movement a much-needed spark. The 1974 coup in Portugal that brought down the authoritarian Caetano government—touched off by a military fed up with fighting unwinnable wars in its African colonies—led to Angolan and Mozambican independence by the end of 1975, opening up two invaluable fronts to the ANC. Then, in June 1976, the Soweto riots opened the world's eyes to the human rights abuses of the South African Government and for the first time galvanized global opinion against apartheid. The ANC was quick to take advantage of both events. The movement established diplomatic and military presences in both Angola and Mozambique after independence, utilizing the former primarily for military training camps and the latter for infiltrating cadres into South Africa. Tambo leveraged Soweto to address the UN General Assembly in October 1976 on apartheid, the first time an ANC leader had been afforded that

opportunity. The UN thereafter, even in the face of Western truculence, would prove forward leaning in seeking to isolate the apartheid government and aid the liberation movements, even voting in 1979 to provide the ANC and PAC funds for their New York offices (Thomas, 1995:124).

From the late 1970s, the ANC saw its international support blossom on all fronts. Although many African states continued to show affinities toward the PAC, African support for the ANC grew after Zimbabwe's 1980 independence left only one white government on the continent; in 1983 the OAU recognized the ANC as the "vanguard of the national liberation movement" (Gevisser, 2007:374). The Non-Aligned Movement, once cold toward the ANC, gave Tambo a prime speaking slot at the 1979 Havana Conference, and the ANC expanded its ties in places like southeast Asia and Latin America (Callinicos, 2004:482). Fundraising also took off, particularly given that the ANC's budget topped \$50 million a year by the end of the 1980s (Thomas, 1995:153). Support from the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies remained key, particularly for military training and materiel (Shubin, 1996:15). However, the movement diversified its sources of support in the 1980s. Scandinavian governments—Sweden in particular—became major donors, accounting for half of its non-military aid in the 1980s (Lodge, 1987:13).

The ANC's major coup in the 1980s, however, was its expansion and deepening of its ties with Western governments, particularly the United States and Great Britain. Recognizing the "fantastic possibilities" that could result from American support, Thabo Mbeki—then head of Information—prevailed on ANC leaders to allow a US television program to shoot a documentary on the ANC in 1978, a program that portrayed the ANC as a responsible movement with viable grievances (Pfister, 2003:59). This effective image management helped the ANC in the early 1980s begin to engage regularly with Western elected officials on both the left and right; by the end of the decade Tambo had met with both US Secretary of State George Shultz and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Lyman, 2002:53). The ANC also was effective in building grassroots opposition to apartheid in Europe and the United States; the latter's African-American community emerged as a particular base of support (Lodge, 1987:17). ANC lobbying efforts were effective in effecting unofficial boycotts of South African goods, corporate disinvestment, and ultimately government sanctions. The growing international profile of the

imprisoned Nelson Mandela also helped to raise money and attention to the cause.

By the late 1980s, the ANC—through sheer survival but also the skilled international outreach of its leadership—had come to be viewed as a government in waiting, its ultimate success inevitable (Evans, 1996:253). Already engaged in secret talks with proxies of the South African Government, the movement was starting to prepare for this transition, even producing a paper called “The Foreign Policy of the Future South Africa” that elucidated a strongly anti-imperialist foreign policy in concert with the ANC’s socialist allies (Shubin, 1995:2). However, as Mbeki and many senior party leaders have recounted, the ANC was nonetheless caught off guard by FW de Klerk’s 2 February 1990 speech that unbanned it. The next four years would prove some of the most challenging in South Africa’s history, and the shaping of a new foreign policy—and new foreign policy architecture—for a democratic South Africa would prove particularly vexing.

### *3.5 The Foreign Policy of Transition: Competition and Convergence*

De Klerk’s 2 February speech and Mandela’s release nine days later sparked a period of negotiation toward a new, democratic dispensation that would last to the eve of South Africa’s 27 April 1994 elections. While the focus of these negotiations was on the shape of South Africa’s domestic dispensation, South Africa’s future foreign policy was also a topic for debate and discussion in talks between the ANC and government. The two sides, particularly until 1993, engaged in divergent, competitive international outreach aimed at winning over international support for their respective domestic positions. De Klerk during this period took advantage of his newfound stature and the global attention being paid to South Africa to travel the world and push for a repeal of sanctions, build support for free market principles, and advocate for minority rights (Landsberg, 2004:88). These efforts met with some success; the European Community started rolling back restrictions in late 1990, while President Bush agreed to rescind the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act the following July. De Klerk’s 1989 decision to end South Africa’s nuclear program and South Africa’s 1991 accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty also were praised by the West, both for ending Pretoria’s nuclear pariah status and—more quietly—for ensuring an ANC government would not have a nuclear option. Even Russia showed a surprising willingness to deal with Pretoria (Landsberg, 2004:88).

These successes galled the ANC, which in particular was opposed to early rollback of sanctions. Nevertheless, despite its slow start, the ANC also engaged in robust international diplomacy, utilizing Mandela's global "rock star" status to gin up money and support. Mandela visited 49 countries from his release through 1992 (compared to de Klerk's 32), on which he was met with massive public acclaim and largely afforded the same honors due a head of state (Pfister, 2003:65). Visits by Mandela and other top ANC officials helped slow the pace of sanctions rollback, tying them to continued progress from Pretoria, and limited visits from foreign leaders to South Africa. Most important for the ANC, however, was Mandela's unparalleled ability to raise money, which was in short supply following with the withdrawal of Eastern Bloc support and a drawdown of Scandinavian funding—90 percent of its \$27 million budget in 1990 came from foreign sources (Landsberg, 2004:106). These big numbers—\$10 million from the Taiwanese and Indonesian governments, \$5 million from Malaysia, several million from India, and countless more from private Western sources—helped the party stay afloat and later finance its 1994 election campaign (Sampson, 2000:413). The ANC's Department of International Affairs (DIA)—headed by Mbeki since 1989—also began formulating the principles of a post-transition foreign policy based on multilateralism and demilitarization in accordance with South Africa's domestic interests (Mbeki, 1994:204).

Foreign policy initiatives and discussions between the government and ANC began to see greater convergence by 1993. Foreign policy discussions in the concluding months of the transition shifted to the Transitional Executive Council (TEC), which was established in December 1993 as a precursor to the Government of National Unity and for the first time brought the ANC and government together formally for discussions on post-transition policy formulation. While most of the TEC's activities dealt with the domestic arena, three sub-councils—Foreign Affairs, Intelligence, and Defense—dealt with foreign policy issues. While it did not have the power to make or implement policy—those competencies still lay with government—the Foreign Affairs Sub-Council was able, through conferences and regular meetings and conferences, to start shaping South Africa's new foreign policy architecture, in particular the integration of ANC, PAC, and homeland foreign affairs infrastructures into the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) (Paruk, 2008:134). Ultimately, this transitional period—which came to a close with Mandela's 10 May 1994 inauguration as President—was a time of reassessment of South Africa's foreign

policy priorities and reengagement with the outside world. In the words of Deon Geldenhuys, the “diplomacy of isolation” was replaced by the “diplomacy of participation” (Geldenhuys, 1992:43).

### 3.6 *The Mandela Years: All Things to All People*

Nelson Mandela’s 10 May 1994 inauguration ushered in South Africa’s re-admittance into the global community of nations. By the end of 1994, South Africa joined or was re-admitted to 16 multilateral organizations (including the Commonwealth, G-77, OAU, Southern African Development Community, Non-Aligned Movement, World Trade Organization, and several specialized UN agencies), concluded 86 bilateral treaties, and acceded to 21 multilateral treaties and conventions. In 1990, Pretoria had only 30 diplomatic missions around the world; by 1996, this had mushroomed to 124, while governments around the world flocked to open missions in Pretoria. Pretoria also established bi-national commissions (BNCs) with several countries from both the global “north” and “south”, including the United States, Germany, China, India, and Nigeria to deepen relations. However, this reengagement meant South Africa, so long insulated from these global realities by its isolation, now had to make hard choices and take sides, a process complicated by the complex post-Cold War environment and divergent views on policy direction within the country. Mandela and his under capacitated foreign affairs team, led by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, were forced to balance a highly “idealist” foreign policy platform—undergirded by an explicit commitment to human rights—with political realities and loyalties to old friends that ran counter to its policy goals. This would prove a delicate balance throughout Mandela’s presidency, and one not fully resolved to this day.

#### 3.6.1 *Principles of a Post-Apartheid Foreign Policy*

As previously noted, the ANC from the late 1980s deliberated internally and engaged with academics and other actors in debating a post-apartheid foreign policy for the country. In foreign policy documents issued in 1991, 1993, and 1994—as well as a late 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs* credited to Mandela—the ANC laid out a post-apartheid foreign policy vision based broadly on principles of multilateralism, human rights, promotion of democracy, international law, peace, and African interests (Nzo, 1999:223). However, these broadly “idealist” goals were balanced by “realist” considerations, particularly on the economic front. While Pretoria sought

to expand its trade linkages with the global South, its main trading partners remained the United States and Europe. To balance these considerations, Pretoria adopted a position of “universality,” best summed up by Deputy Foreign Minister (1994-2008) Aziz Pahad in saying South Africa’s policy was one of “being very nice to the rich and powerful, nice to the potentially rich and powerful, and kind to old friends who are neither” (Quoted in Bischoff and Southall, 1998:156). While associating itself with the global South, and calling for an overhaul of the global economic system, Pretoria at the same time operated within the neo-liberal constructs of the WTO, accepting the so-called “Washington consensus,” and seeking out trade and investment from the North (Taylor, 2001:162-163).

### *3.6.2 The Ups and Downs of Pretoria’s Nascent African Agenda*

Africa and in particular the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were the main focus of South Africa’s foreign policy during the Mandela administration, particularly in regard to regional peacemaking and expanding economic linkages. As the ANC’s 1994 foreign policy document noted, “we have a special relationship with the peoples of Southern Africa, all of whom have suffered under apartheid.” The trick for Pretoria, however, was how to move the relationship forward without being seen as a regional “bully” in the same way as the apartheid state; as Aziz Pahad noted in 1996, “we must carry our relations with the region in a way that is not a big brother relationship. This means that because of our relative strength we don’t simply impose ourselves” (Quoted in Landsberg, 2005:10).

This would prove easier said than done, particularly in the conflict resolution realm. Suspicions of South African intentions and jealousies of the international attention paid to the country meant South Africa was often viewed as an unwelcome interloper (Cilliers, 1999:7). Angola—galled by Pretoria’s decision to invite UNITA rebel leader Jonas Savimbi to Mandela’s inauguration—paid little heed to Mandela’s efforts to mediate the conflict there, preferring to resolve the situation through force (which it successfully did in 2001) (Landsberg, 2005:16). In 1997, Mandela’s efforts to avert war in Congo-Kinshasa (which joined SADC that year) were similarly thwarted by Laurent Kabila’s judgment that he could take power in Kinshasa by force, and its peacemaking efforts after full-blown civil war broke out the following year were again ignored, with SADC members Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Angola all readily intervening against Uganda-

and Rwanda-backed rebels. Mandela's sole notable success—in concert with Zimbabwe's Mugabe and Botswana's Ketumile Masire—was in peacefully returning the democratically-elected government of Lesotho to office in August 1994 after it was illegally ousted by the King, although this success would be overshadowed by a less successful intervention in that country four years later.

Mandela's attempts to promote democracy in Nigeria and save activist Ken Saro-Wiwa from execution in 1995 displayed the difficulties South Africa would face on the continent in projecting its influence. After taking power, Mandela focused intently on getting military dictator Sani Abacha—who had seized power the previous year—to release his political prisoners and make democratic reforms (Geldenhuys, 2006:99). These efforts bore some fruit, such as the commutation of death sentences for top political opponents (including once and future President Olusegun Obasanjo), although Abacha avoided additional reforms. In October 1995, the Nigerian Government arrested environmental and political activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others on trumped up murder charges, seemingly fomented by the Shell Oil Company; they were quickly found guilty in a sham trial and condemned to death, igniting a global uproar. Despite South African efforts to free them, Abacha had them executed on 10 November. Mandela, upon hearing the news, was furious, saying that Abacha was “sitting on a volcano, and I'm going to blow it up under him,” and calling for Nigeria's immediate suspension from the Commonwealth, demanded economic sanctions, and recalled South Africa's High Commissioner from Lagos, the only African country to do so (Landsberg, 2004:176-178).

The muted African response to Mandela's call clearly demonstrated how little political capital South Africa had on the continent. The OAU dismissed Mandela's call for sanctions as “not an African way to deal with an African problem,” while a December SADC meeting to discuss the problem determined the region would take no further action on Nigeria (Alden and le Pere, 2003:22). This lack of support forced Pretoria to back down; by June 1996 Foreign Minister Nzo announced that South Africa was abandoning its hard line against Nigeria, saying it breached “the norms of African solidarity” (Quoted in Van Nieuwkerk, 2006a:144). While continuing to engage on Nigeria through Abacha's 1998 death and the country's 1999 return to civilian rule, South Africa shifted its efforts to the multilateral—and specifically African—arena,

liaising with the OAU and SADC on common positions. As Mbeki, then Deputy President, later noted, “This issue [Saro-Wiwa's execution] highlighted the potential limits of our influence as an individual country...and the need to act in concert with others and to forge strategic alliances in pursuit of foreign policy objectives” (Quoted in Gumede, 2005:178).

An even more striking example of South Africa's inability to project influence, even on its borders, came with its botched 1998 intervention in Lesotho, which further laid bare shortcomings in South African policy coordination mechanisms and displayed the perils of underinvestment in the security sector. After failed attempts to mediate a political crisis, South Africa sent 600 troops (alongside 200 from Botswana) to stabilize the country, at the invitation of Lesotho's Prime Minister. The intervention, the first foreign military excursion of the post-apartheid government, was a disaster; underestimating Basotho resistance, 11 South African National Defense Force (SANDF) troops were killed, and large parts of central Maseru were destroyed. Inter-agency coordination, particularly between Defense and DFA, was almost non-existent; a failure to inform Home Affairs of the intervention even resulted in the brief detention of BDF troops at the South African border on their way to Maseru. Although they defended its rationale, Mandela and Nzo subsequently acknowledged the intervention had been poorly handled and planned, although they did not address the degradation in SANDF capabilities since the early 1990s, an issue that would remain problematic through Mbeki's tenure.

Pretoria had more success in expanding its economic influence throughout the region, although it too was met with limited enthusiasm by its neighbors. Between 1994 and 1999, South African invested R3.5 billion in the region, with an emphasis on the construction and retail sectors, a figure that accounted for nearly 30 percent of all foreign direct investment into SADC (Alves et al., 2006:73). By 2001, total South African investment in SADC was estimated at close to R15 billion, dwarfing Great Britain, the runner-up at just R4 billion (Alden and Soko, 2005:374). This picture was repeated further afield on the continent, with total African trade rising from R11 billion in 1994 to over R28 billion by 1999 (Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan, 2001:73). However, despite the benefits of this investment, other African states bristled at what they characterized as aggressive South African business intervention that crowded out local

entrepreneurs and let South Africa establish economic hegemony in the place of military or political dominance (Mlambo, 2000:69).

### *3.6.3 Balancing Principles, Old Friends, and Finances*

Nigeria epitomized South Africa's broader difficulties in translating its stated human rights agenda into action; as Aziz Pahad stated, there had to be "interaction between theory and practice" in translating a human rights emphasis into diplomatic relations, something easier said than done (Quoted in Gumede, 2005:198-199). Even a relative "idealist" like Raymond Suttner, chair of Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs (PCFA), wrote in 1997 that, "The promotion of human rights and democracy in foreign policy is easy to state as an aspiration. It is however, difficult to implement. There are no easy answers as to how it should be done" (Suttner, 1997:300). Weapons sales were a particularly thorny topic in this regard. Armaments manufacture was (and remains) a big business in South Africa, which in 1994 was the world's tenth-largest arms producer, with an industry employing 50,000 people that boomed after the transition (Alden and le Pere, 2003:24). Although government policy was that it would act as a "responsible arms seller," South Africa in the late 1990s sold weapons to human rights abusers and countries waging wars in Africa and elsewhere (Muller, 1999:592).

In addition, the ANC government backing for "old friends" who supported the ANC during the struggle and the transition—including those with less than stellar human rights records—was another contentious issue. Mandela made clear that South Africa had no intention of abandoning long-time allies like Libya's Muammar Gadhafi, Cuba's Fidel Castro, or the Palestinian Liberation Organization's Yassir Arafat, despite Western pressure (Benjamin, 2001:159). These friendships sometimes undermined Pretoria's effort to act as an honest broker in negotiations, such as its efforts to intervene in the Middle East peace process; Israeli distrust of South African motives undermined South African negotiation efforts. That said, South African ties with Libya proved useful when Mandela convinced Gadhafi —after several years of dialogue—to hand over two suspects in the Lockerbie bombing to Great Britain in exchange for the dropping of UN sanctions, the first step in normalization of relations between Libya and the West.

Of course, even friends could be jettisoned if Pretoria's conception of national interest so

dictated, as with the South Africa's late 1996 decision (enacted the following year) to recognize China instead of Taiwan. Despite its longstanding support for the old government, Taipei donated R35 million to the ANC's 1994 election campaign, invested heavily in South Africa—both in terms of aid and business interests—and intensively lobbied the ANC to retain recognition during the transition (Bischoff and Southall, 1998:165). Moreover, Taiwan was also undergoing a period of democratization in the mid-1990s and had a respectable human rights record, both of which should have aligned it with South Africa's stated foreign policy principles, particularly in comparison to post-Tiananmen China. However, the lure of trade relations with a blossoming China, particularly after it took control of Hong Kong in 1997, was too great to dismiss. China's potential to assist South Africa in seeking a permanent UN Security Council seat were also was a consideration in its favor (Alden, 2001:132).

### 3.7 *Mbeki and the African Agenda, 1999-2008*

Thabo Mbeki's assumption of the national Presidency in 1999 meant little change to South Africa's foreign policy priorities, given that he had dominated ANC foreign policy making from the early 1980s and had played the role of *de facto* Foreign Minister and Prime Minister under Mandela. A focus on Africa under the auspices of an "African Renaissance," a push to reform global governance institutions, and a preference for extended dialogue to resolve conflict all remained at the forefront during Mbeki's Presidency. He also emphasized the need for solidarity among developing countries, as such unity was necessary to reorient global power relations between them and the West, particularly in regard to reforming global trade regimes and institutions like the UN, IMF, and World Bank (Landsberg and Monyae, 2006:142). In terms of implementation, this period was marked by greater inter-agency coordination driven by the Presidency, a translation of domestic priorities into foreign policy action, and pragmatism in terms of what could be reasonably achieved. As Selebi noted in 1999, Pretoria sought to make South Africa's foreign policy more "predictable," ensuring that it was proactive and not "colliding with events" (Quoted in Mills, 2000:300). Yet, despite its best efforts, South Africa was forced to respond to one notable event—Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis—that arose during Mbeki's tenure.

### *3.7.1 Deepening African Engagement*

Africa, as before, was the overarching focus of South Africa's foreign policy thrust. Originally mentioned by Mandela at a 1994 OAU summit, Thabo Mbeki first used the term "African Renaissance" in a 1997 speech outside of Washington DC to potential investors in the continent, and the phrase would in time come to dominate any discussion of the President's—and therefore the country's—foreign policy priorities (Hughes, 2004:79). While South African leaders had long emphasized the importance of Africa rhetorically, Mbeki was the first to devote significant financial resources toward promoting good governance, economic development, peace, and security on the continent. For Mbeki, promoting the African Renaissance was no hollow assertion; in the words of one Mbeki confidante, the President was "emotionally and intellectually committed to prove Afro-pessimism wrong" (Vale and Maseko, 1998:285). Mbeki was clear about the need to improve governance on the continent, broadly critical of African elites who acted like a "parasite on the rest of society," calling them the source of the continent's underdevelopment and calling for governments to be accountable to their populaces (Ajulu, 2001:34). In another speech, he said Africa had "no need for petty gangsters who would be our governors by theft of elective positions, as a result of holding fraudulent elections, or by purchasing positions of authority through bribery and corruption" (Quoted in Feinstein, 2007:88).

To promote his good governance agenda, Mbeki was a leading proponent of sweeping pan-continental initiatives, such as the 2002 formation of the Africa Union, its African Peer Review Mechanism, and Pan-African Parliament, set up in 2004. However, Mbeki's New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), unveiled in 2001, was his crown jewel. NEPAD was designed as a compact between Africa and the developed world, by which African states would commit to good governance, conflict resolution, and sound economic policies, while in exchange international donors would accelerate debt relief, increase assistance levels, bolster African peace support capacity, and open their markets (Landsberg, 2007:202). Implicit in NEPAD and Mbeki's broader vision for the continent was that Africa had no hope of economic development without good governance and stability. He also pushed for African states to hasten regional economic integration initiatives to boost development, although Pretoria's propensity to go it alone in trade negotiations, South Africa's skewed balance of trade with the

continent, and the growing footprints of South African firms in Africa roused suspicions and allegations of South African hypocrisy across the continent and particularly in the region (Taylor, 2006:171).

Mbeki was unafraid to put South African money on the table for his African initiatives. South Africa footed a sizable portion of the bill for NEPAD and the Africa Union, for instance, while South Africa also emerged as a donor on the continent; in 2004, its external assistance to Africa (including peacekeeping expenditures) reached \$1.6 billion, more than the 0.7 percent of GDP targeted for developed countries (Landsberg, 2007:202). However, nowhere was this commitment of resources more notable than in Mbeki's commitment of South African forces to African peacekeeping. By the time of Mbeki's September 2008 resignation, South Africa had—largely at its own expense—close to 3,500 troops deployed across the continent, mostly in Congo-Kinshasa, Sudan, and Burundi. It also played a leading role in establishing the African Standby Force and provided most of the needed financial and logistical support to the SADC Brigade. This is particularly striking considering that South Africa had almost no troops doing peacekeeping when Mbeki took office, and Defense planning documents oriented the SANDF toward domestic operations, with few resources devoted to peacekeeping (See 1996 Defense Review and 1998 Defense White Paper).

South African involvement in African peace processes was not just through the deployment of peacekeepers; Mbeki and his foreign policy team were intimately involved in trying to solve some of the continent's most intractable conflicts. There were notable successes. In Congo, Mbeki in 2001 pushed President Joseph Kabila to the negotiating table alongside rebel leaders to seek a peace settlement, culminating in the March 2003 signing of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue that led to 2006 elections. Pretoria was closely involved throughout the Dialogue. Although Mbeki had little personal involvement in Burundi, former President Mandela and Deputy President Jacob Zuma were able to see through an often-difficult peace process, ginning up Western support for the process and facilitating civil society efforts to train and reintegrate combatants (Solomon, 2002:141). Mbeki also involved South Africa in efforts to resolve conflicts in Cote d'Ivoire and Sudan, although a lack of commitment to peace processes by

combatants in those countries hindered South African efforts (Maroleng, 2005:33; Nathan, 2009:84).

### *3.7.2 Pretoria's Diplomacy Less Effective Beyond Africa*

South Africa during Mbeki's Presidency also continued its efforts to reform global governance institutions and promote conflict resolution around the world, although these efforts met with little success. Pretoria's attempts to promote its dialogue-driven transition as a model for solving other global conflicts largely failed, with actors it was seeking to influence viewing South Africa as either unwelcome or irrelevant (Landsberg, 2004:163). Despite Pretoria's continued efforts to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflagration, Israel showed little interest in engaging, viewing South Africa as an unwelcome interloper that viewed Israeli-Palestinian through the lenses of apartheid and anti-imperialism (Jordaan, 2008:555). South Africa's 2007 abstention in the UN on a US-led motion to investigate political killings in Lebanon further undermined Pretoria's attempts to portray itself as an unbiased, honest broker. Pretoria's efforts to avert the 2003 Iraq invasion were even more quixotic. Pretoria in 2002 hosted Iraqi Deputy President Tariq Aziz on a state visit, during which then-Deputy President Zuma called on the UN to drop all sanctions against Baghdad. As the march toward the US invasion gained steam, Pretoria dispatched Aziz Pahad to Iraq with a seven-member team ostensibly tasked with checking for weapons of mass destruction. These efforts, as well as strong South African criticism of the subsequent invasion, made no impact.

Pretoria's controversial tenure as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2007-2008, the first term in the country's history, was perhaps the clearest demonstration of Pretoria's difficulties in projecting its influence on the global stage. Pretoria struggled to balance its stated human rights agenda and desire to be a global normative leader with its efforts to rebalance relations between the developed and developing world. Pretoria was quick to reject what it viewed as inappropriate (and hypocritical) pressure from the West on human rights issues, which Mbeki framed as a pseudo-imperialist "tool" by Western countries to achieve their own political aims, prompting domestic and international criticisms that it was ignoring legitimate issues to please old friends and allies (Roberts, 2007:168). Pretoria during its tenure on the Council voted against a Security Council resolution urging Burma's junta to free political prisoners (alongside

only Russia and China); voted to discontinue scrutiny of human rights abuses in Iran; and blocked efforts to raise discussions of sanctions against Zimbabwe and Sudan (Van Nieuwkerk, 2007:71). Even on the Human Rights Council—which Pretoria claimed was a more appropriate venue for such discussions—South Africa opposed resolutions condemning human rights abuses in Uzbekistan and Iran (*Economist*, 2008).

### 3.7.3 Zimbabwe and “Quiet” Diplomacy

Mbeki’s inability to make progress toward solving the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe will go down in history, rightly or not, as the dominant foreign policy issue of his tenure, given that none of his other initiatives—many of which were successes—generated the same sort of international and domestic attention or criticism. While the roots of Zimbabwe’s crisis date to the early 1990s, growing public discontent over corruption, misgovernment, and poor economic conditions gave rise to growing labor-led protest later in the decade. This anti-government coalition of urbanites, labor, civil society, and white business interests in 1999 coalesced into the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition party. In a shock to the government, the MDC and its allies successfully defeated a draft Constitution in February 2000 that would have consolidated power under the President, a result that foreshadowed the results of parliamentary elections that June, in which the MDC took 57 of 120 elected seats, decimating the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) hold on that body.

The referendum loss and near parliamentary upset set off a wave of government-instigated violence against MDC supporters that would leave hundreds dead—and thousands more tortured or displaced—between 2000 and 2008, peaking in the run-ups to 2002 and 2008 parliamentary elections and the 2005 presidential poll. It also sparked Harare’s policy of expropriating commercial land from white commercial farmers, which annihilated the commercial farming sector (one of Zimbabwe’s biggest export earners), undermined food security, and forced agricultural workers out of jobs. This helped set off the country’s spectacular economic collapse; the IMF estimates that the country’s economy contracted by 40 percent between 2000 and 2007. With a mass exodus of skilled workers (up to 3 million Zimbabweans in total are estimated to have left the country) and withdrawal of foreign investment in the face of nationalization threats, Zimbabwe’s tax base withered, forcing Harare to survive by simply

printing more money, leading to hyperinflation that reached an unfathomable 89.7 sextillion percent before the US dollar was adopted in early 2009 (Hank, 2010:2).

Zimbabwe's economic collapse also had a significant impact on the region; one 2003 report estimated the loss of potential investment in the region at close to \$36 billion (Hughes, 2004:113). The direct economic impact on South Africa, however, is more difficult to measure. South African parastatals Eskom and Sasol lost hundreds of millions of rand on unpaid bills for electric and fuel supplies to Zimbabwe while Pretoria also has been forced to deal with the cost of processing, deporting, and securing its borders against millions of refugees (McKinley, 2004:359). These refugees also increased social pressures, sparking periodic outbreaks of xenophobic violence against foreign workers, Zimbabwean and otherwise. However, there also were benefits. Despite fears of a collapse in trade, South African exports to Zimbabwe in 2009 topped R13 billion, up from less than R5 million in 2000, and Pretoria maintained a massive trade surplus (Schoeman and Alden, 2003:17). The influx of Zimbabwean farm workers benefited commercial farmers, who utilized them (often illegally) for cheap labor, while the influx of skilled Zimbabwean workers to South Africa helped address the domestic skills shortage. One 2007 report estimated the impact of these immigrants was at worst neutral and perhaps slightly beneficial to South Africa's economy (Honey, 2007:3).

Given this economic and political collapse, Mbeki and his government came under intense pressure at home and abroad to address the Zimbabwe situation. A broad swath of domestic actors—including the political opposition, churches, press, and civil society—spoke out loudly against what they viewed as inaction by Pretoria toward the situation in Zimbabwe (Hughes, 2004:138). The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the ANC's partner in the ruling tri-partite alliance, was a particularly vociferous critic, with union leaders condemning Mugabe's land redistribution program from the beginning and backing its Zimbabwean labor allies. Although they did not couch their public arguments in such a way, concerns about the government's inability to address the influx of cheap Zimbabwean labor clearly were an area of concern to the federation. Even within the ANC, prominent figures like Defense Minister Mosiuoa Lekota and Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs chair Pallo Jordan broke with party practice in publicly calling for a firmer line in Zimbabwe, although they were quickly

reined in by the party and warned not to buck the consensus, at least in public (Gumede, 2005:294).

Mbeki had no great affinity toward Mugabe, who—jealous of the attention paid to South Africa—continually sought to undermine South African initiatives on the continent from 1994 and dismissing Mbeki’s African Renaissance vision as “political nonsense” (Quoted in Barber, 2004:190-191). However, Mbeki opted not to take a confrontational approach toward Zimbabwe, choosing instead a behind-the-scenes process that came to be known as “quiet” diplomacy in order to cajole Mugabe toward reform rather than publicly attack him. The roots of the policy date to South Africa’s failure in Nigeria in 1995, where overt criticism—in Mbeki’s view—hindered South Africa’s ability to influence Abacha. As Mbeki himself noted in 2002, “We could have invaded Zimbabwe as some people suggested—but what would this have achieved?... You must remember what happened to us (at the Auckland Commonwealth meeting in 1995)... We suddenly found that we were the only ones who condemned the planned hanging. As a result we learnt a valuable lesson that, especially in Africa, you cannot act alone because you will find yourself isolated and in a position similar to that of the apartheid government” (Quoted in Prys, 2007:10).

The reasons and justifications for “quiet” diplomacy were myriad. Resignation was part of it; a simple understanding that no one could force Robert Mugabe to make changes he did not want to make. Mbeki admitted as early as 2001 that Pretoria’s strategy was not yielding results, while Pahad acknowledged the following year that South Africa had run out of ideas on how to move things forward (Hughes, 2004:117). Strategic concerns clearly played a role. Mbeki’s 2002 comments reveal one of the more significant reasons behind his refusal to take a “harder line” toward Zimbabwe, namely that a tough stance there could undermine his efforts to reshape continental political and economic governance (Landsberg, 2004:174). Despite Zimbabwean antagonism toward his African Renaissance ideals, Mbeki was actively seeking continental and regional support for NEPAD when Zimbabwe’s crisis arose, as well as pushing his neighbors for a reform of SADC’s Security Organ (Schoeman and Alden, 2003:5). Maintaining stability at home was another justification for not pushing harder, as any push toward sanctions because of the belief that such a move would make the political and economic problems in Zimbabwe

worse, thereby exacerbating refugee flows (Dlamini, 2002:176). Hence, as Aziz Pahad acknowledged to a group of academics in 2004, “quiet” diplomacy may not have been a perfect option, but it was the one most conducive to ensuring continued stability in Zimbabwe (Van Nieuwkerk, 2006a:188-189).

There were also ideological reasons for this stance. While these have been overstated in the press, Mbeki and the ANC were also motivated to an extent by struggle-era loyalties to ZANU-PF, which did assist the ANC in the 1980s. In addition, many in the ANC did not care for the MDC alternative. Mbeki did not rate Tsvangirai’s leadership acumen highly, and ANC leaders were critical of the MDC’s confrontational approach with ZANU-PF and suspicious of both its ties with the West and its labor roots (Gumede, 2005:187). Zimbabwe policy was clearly shaped by an *anti-imperialist* worldview that shone through in Mbeki’s public statements. Mbeki appeared to believe that the only reason Western countries and white South Africans cared about Zimbabwe was because white people were affected. “A million people die in Rwanda and do the white South Africans care?” he asked in 2002, further stating that everyone wanted to talk about Zimbabwe “because 12 white people died” (Quoted in Gevisser, 2007:440). South African decision makers frequently stated that they would not be dictated to by the West in how they dealt with their northern neighbor; as spokesman Bheki Khumalo noted, “We’ll do things because we believe they’re correct and right,” and not to “appease the G-8 leaders” (Quoted in Roberts, 2007:177-178).

Whatever the motivations behind it, Pretoria’s stance toward Zimbabwe changed very little throughout Mbeki’s presidency. The South African Government endorsed elections in 2002 and 2005 as free and fair despite critiques of their conduct by local and international observers, but Mbeki and his deputies—notably Pahad and Local Government Minister Sydney Mufamadi—remained involved with shuttle diplomacy there throughout Mbeki’s second term. South Africa, through SADC, did criticize the June 2008 second round of the Zimbabwean presidential election—boycotted by the MDC in the face of government intimidation—as not representing the will of the Zimbabwean people, but it remained engaged behind the scenes. South African mediation proved essential to the 15 September 2008 signing of Zimbabwe’s Global Political Agreement (GPA), which still holds (if barely) at the time of writing. The GPA proved a fitting

coda to Mbeki's presidency—just five days later, Mbeki, under fire at home, announced his resignation.

Thabo Mbeki's ouster as ANC president at the December 2007 Polokwane conference and his subsequent resignation as President cannot be tied specifically to his handling of foreign policy; such issues generated relatively little heat within the ruling party. However, the widespread view that Mbeki was a "foreign policy President" and criticisms of his frequent travel did not help bolster the President's populist credentials, particularly in the face of a challenge by someone like Jacob Zuma. Although Mbeki from the start of his term tasked his foreign policy team with reconciling domestic and external priorities, his government was never able to translate his foreign agenda—particularly his continental good governance agenda—into something that translated at home (Alden and le Pere, 2010:28). Public opinion polling consistently showed issues like unemployment, crime, service delivery, and HIV being the public's main priorities; nothing in the foreign affairs realm generated that sort of interest (Mbeki, 2002:18). Mbeki's affinity for the "high" politics of the international scene perpetuated and deepened the stereotype that he was out of touch with South African realities. This alone did not lead to his ouster, but it certainly played a contributing role.

### 3.8 *Conclusion*

South Africa's foreign policy—and in particular the global and regional context in which it makes those policies—saw a massive shift after the advent of majority rule in 1994. No longer was Pretoria a pariah struggling to find friends in the world; it was now fully and completely embraced by the community of democracies. As shown, under Mbeki, South Africa embraced this reengagement and sought to take a far more active and engaged role on the international stage than it ever did under white rule. The question that will be explored for the remainder of this study is *how* Pretoria shaped its foreign policy, with an eye toward determining what actors had influence in the process and whether it was more "democratic" than under the apartheid regime.

## **Chapter 4: The Impact of Public Opinion and Civil Society on Foreign Policy**

### *4.1 Introduction*

One will begin examining the role of various outside actors in shaping South African foreign policy with public opinion and civil society, the actors representing the broadest swathes of South African society. This opinion—which takes into account the disparate whole of South Africa’s voting age citizenry—can in theory force the government to change policy direction, either through the ballot box or, as in the 1980s, through mass upheaval. This chapter will examine two key questions. First is whether South Africa’s voting public—both pre- and post-1994—has shown sufficient interest in the foreign policy debate to engineer a policy shift, impact an election, or cause a government to take a particular action. Secondly, the government’s consideration of this public opinion will be taken into account, particularly whether—and if so, how—Pretoria has sought to gauge public support for or opposition to various external policies.

This chapter also will examine the role of civil society organizations (broadly defined as non-governmental groups advocating certain policies) in the foreign policy arena, a catchall phrase that includes organized labor, churches, advocacy groups, and cultural groups, depending on the topic. Most of these groups have a domestic focus, although several have competencies in foreign policy issues as a secondary concern. This chapter will focus on the concept of these organizations as pressure groups that seek to change a government’s policies through coaxing, coercion, or outright threats. Academia and political party structures—which also can be considered part of broader civil society—will be covered in separate chapters, since, in a South African context, they play a unique and more nuanced role than the other actors under consideration. Overall, this chapter will explore how these groups have formally and informally interacted with government on foreign policy issues, and whether the government took their inputs seriously.

Public opinion and civil society are not a perfect fit from an organizational standpoint; the former is amorphous and lacks extensive commonality, while the latter by its nature is organized and pulls from specific segments of the population. That said, civil society groups in many ways

represent the front line of organized public opinion. These groups were not created by some higher power; they exist because the segments of the public concerned with certain issues saw fit to form such organizations. Specifically in the foreign policy arena—one that is elitist by nature—these groups can provide the broadest organized lobbying effort, both in terms of diversity and numbers. Hence, these groupings are in many ways the coordinated voice of public opinion—not truly representative of the public at large, but the best measure available.

The answers to these questions will help determine whether or not mass public opinion and civil society have ever played a role in influencing the foreign policy debate, or whether South African decision makers—both due to custom and the country’s political system—have been insulated from these entities in shaping foreign policy.

#### *4.2 Pre-1994 Public Apathy on Foreign Policy and Government Disinterest in Public Views*

Although hard data is limited, contemporary accounts suggest public interest in foreign policy before 1994 was quite low (Spence, 1965:100-101). According to longtime MP Japie Basson, “[Foreign affairs] didn’t excite the public. There was no wide discussion on the issues” (J. Basson interview). Here, Basson is referring to white voters, as non-white voices had essentially no impact on foreign policy decision making before 1994. Gauging non-white interest in foreign policy is difficult to measure, although there were instances where external issues gripped the black community. One notable example was the 1936 Italian invasion of Ethiopia, which resulted in a handful of mass rallies and a refusal by black dockworkers to offload Italian goods in Durban (Pienaar, 1987:55).

There was little in the way of public opinion polling on foreign policy issues until the late 1970s. Munger wrote in 1965 that the concept was so alien to white South Africans that “the European<sup>1</sup> public would be confused and uncertain if asked” (Munger, 1965:48). Limited opinion polling began in the mid-1970s, but it was not until 1982—when the South African Institute of International Affairs began its “What Do We Think?” series—that the pulse of (white) South Africans was taken on external issues. The series, which was conducted biennially through 1992, polled between 1500-2000 whites, disaggregating the results by age, language, gender,

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<sup>1</sup> “European” in this context refers to white South Africans.

income, politics, and geographic location to give the best look to date at white opinions on foreign policy. The polls indicated that while white voters were strongly anti-communist and broadly suspicious of the outside world, they were preoccupied with domestic issues rather than foreign affairs, and broader suspicion of the outside world (Du Pisani, 1988).

Even after the onset of the Cold War and myriad changes to the global governance system, foreign affairs remained a largely elite issue, except for certain communities in particular circumstances. South Africa's Jewish community was, obviously, quite interested in Israel's 1948 independence, and the Nationalist government's granting of permission to South African Jews to send funds to the new country represents a rare example of the government using a foreign policy decision to win support from a domestic constituency (Adams, 1984:9). Another issue that raised extensive public interest was Rhodesia's 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence, which was cheered by most white South Africans despite being met with chill by Verwoerd, whose measured response was calculated to not unnecessarily antagonize Great Britain (Hepple, 1967:200-201). Still, it was not an issue on which an election would be won or lost. Vorster's later calculated abandonment of South Africa's northern neighbor was largely unpopular among white South Africans, but did not result in any political fallout against him or the NP, which saw its support grow under his administration.

One notable exception where the public mood was taken into account between 1948 and 1994 was in regard to South Africa's incursions into Angola from 1975 onward, during which the government proceeded with caution to limit white casualties. Former SADF/SANDF officer Henri Boshoff remembers, "I know that during the 1980s when I was in Angola, priority number one was no casualties" (Boshoff interview). This was a particularly important consideration during the original Operation Savannah in 1975, when the SADF planned to invade Luanda on the eve of Angola's November independence. Planners estimated such an attack, by 1,500 South African troops, would result in casualties of up to 40 percent. "Even the vague possibility," writes author Peter Stiff, "that they might end up having to explain to the electorate how some 600 young, mostly white Afrikaans-speaking national servicemen had come to be killed in action or mutilated on a remote field of battle near Luanda frightened the hell out of Vorster and Cabinet" (Stiff, 2002:119). The attack was called off, and operations over the next 15 years were

designed to keep casualties to a minimum. For this reason, the fact that Angola never turned into a killing field for white South Africans *a la* Vietnam, the government was able to maintain broad support for its border operations through their late 1980s conclusion (Shelton, 1986:12).

Beyond Angola, however, there is no indication that public opinion played any role in driving government policy before 1994, nor did policymakers seek out data on the public's views. No interviewees recalled Cabinet, DFA, or any other government department actively seeking out survey data on white foreign policy opinions, and it appears that no such research was conducted by government. Government communications director (1985-92) Dave Steward notes that his department from 1986 started commissioning large-scale (up to 8,000 respondents of all races) surveys on South African domestic political opinions. "In 1986, it was 62 percent for the ANC, 20 percent for the NP, and 10 percent for NP—almost exactly the same as the 1994 results," he notes (Steward interview). Foreign policy questions, however, were not asked.

Interviews with participants in the foreign policy process indicate that they saw little in the way of inputs or interest from the populace on foreign affairs. Public interest was periodic, related to specific events, and generally not sustained. As former Deputy Foreign Minister (1991-94) Renier Schoeman notes, "The breadth of awareness from *vox pop* would only come around some sort of crisis, where PW or Vorster or someone would say 'stuff off,' or there was a perceived attempt at interference in our policies. Ordinary people didn't really care, because it was quite simple—there was no choice in terms of what side you're on. Everyone was quite happy with how it was dealt with, because there was no other real response" (Schoeman interview). Former DFA Deputy Director-General Derek Auret is even more blunt in saying, "The entire citizenry of this country was neutered as far as foreign policy was concerned; they didn't know what was going on" (Auret interview).

Members of Parliament, even those with a personal interest in foreign affairs, also say that foreign policy was never a vote getter (or loser) in campaigns or between elections, with local issues taking priority. "Foreign policy never played a part in my constituency," notes longtime MP from Randfontein Boy Geldenhuys. "It's a mining constituency, so all people cared about were blasting certificates, which dominated their lives. They're not interested in Europe or

America, they're interested in blasting certificates" (B. Geldenhuys interview). While awareness of the outside world increased into the 1980s, once sanctions began to have more bite, the issue of domestic unrest and the question of negotiations with the ANC still took precedence among whites; they had more pressing issues than foreign affairs, particularly those outside the sub-region.

#### 4.3 *Civil Society's Pre-1994 Involvement in Foreign Affairs*

Few civil society organizations before 1994 focused on foreign affairs, either as a primary or a secondary concern. Examples included voluntary aid organizations that sprung up across South Africa after Rhodesia's 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence and the Israel-South African Friendship League, which was founded in 1968 (Adams, 1984:23; Good, 1973:130). These, however, were either short-lived (as in the Rhodesia example, most of which folded within a year) or limited to a small segment of the population (as with Israel). However, several extra-governmental groups dealt with foreign affairs in a secondary capacity, and these entities—notably the Afrikaner *Broederbond*, the Dutch Reformed Church, and organized labor—were far larger and more broadly influential than those bodies exclusively devoted to foreign affairs.

##### 4.3.1 *Influence of the Broederbond on Foreign Policy*

Founded in 1918 to protect the Afrikaans language and culture, the *Afrikaner Broederbond* was a secret organization with an estimated membership of 20,000—the elite of Afrikaner society—at its apex in the mid-1980s (O'Meara, 1996:46). Although a secret organization, its tentacles ran through Afrikaner society; its public arm, the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* (FAK), dictated the political direction of more than 200 public cultural, youth, religious, and civic organizations (Adam and Giliomee, 1979:250). Although the *Bond's* constitution mandated that the organization separate itself from party politics and dictated that members of Cabinet could not serve on the *Bond's* 16-member executive, every Prime Minister from 1948 to 1994 and a vast majority of NP MPs and senior officials were members of the *Bond*, at least until the rise of the *verligte* (“enlightened”) generation of NP politicians in the 1970s (Serfontein, 1979:84). Most of the top ranks of the military and intelligence community also were members (Wilkins and Strydom, 1980:10).

Despite its powerful membership, the *Bond* was not an influential body in foreign policy making. As NP spokesman Johan Steenkamp, a *Bond* member and FAK leader, remembers, foreign policy was never a hot button issue within the organization; “External policies were not a main focus. They focused almost exclusively on the internal” (J. Steenkamp interview). Although two committees—“Africa” and “Africa and the World”—focused on foreign policy and commissioned studies on a host of foreign affairs topics, both ranked among the smallest *Broederbond* committees with less than a dozen members each (although the latter included chairman Meyer and intelligence chief Hendrik van den Bergh) (Serfontein, 1979:149). All three post-1948 Foreign Ministers—Eric Louw, Hilgard Muller, and Pik Botha—were *Bond* members, although none appears to have been active in the organization’s limited foreign policy debates (Wilkins and Strydom, 1980:10). Its greatest impact in regard to foreign affairs was not as an influencing body, but rather as an information disseminating mechanism for the government; Vorster skillfully used the *Bond* to defend his Rhodesia policy against *verkrampste* attacks and reassure members that the government had a plan for the 1975 Angola invasion, while Botha later used it to propagandize for the “Total Strategy” (Serfontein, 1979:156-158; Nel, 1990: 96).

#### 4.3.2 Negligible Church Impact on Foreign Affairs

Prior to 1994, churches in South Africa played at best a negligible role in influencing the government’s foreign policy. Munger in 1965 noted that while the family of Dutch Reformed Churches—essentially the state religion of Afrikanerdom—would be expected to have some influence on foreign policy, its influencing role as an entity was non-existent (Munger, 1965:45). Boy Geldenhuys, who has a doctorate in theology and was a Dutch Reformed minister for 11 years before entering politics, echoes this view, noting that while over time churches became key actors in the domestic arena, they never engaged seriously on foreign affairs (B. Geldenhuys interview). If there was any role taken on by the Dutch Reformed Churches, it was—as with the *Broederbond*—as a disseminator of policy messages to parishioners (Nel, 1990:96).

Reformist religious elements—both dissident Afrikaners like Beyers Naude and non-white leaders like Desmond Tutu, Frank Chikane, and Allan Boesak—also had almost no impact on the government’s foreign policy. That said, these leaders played a significant role in shaping

international public perceptions of the apartheid government and, by the 1980s, were at the forefront of international efforts to isolate the government. Anglican Archbishop Tutu's stature, presence, and persuasiveness, according to his biographer, was able to convince the heads of government of both Canada and France to change their minds on imposing sanctions on South Africa (Allen, 2006:245). This "gospel diplomacy," as termed by Landsberg, also was particularly effective in the United States in raising support among the black community and among sympathetic congressmen (Landsberg, 2004:44-45). As an example of this activity, Chikane in his autobiography cites one month-long 1986 trip of church leaders that visited seven European countries to lobby MPs, foreign ministries, and even bankers to put more pressure on the apartheid government (Chikane, 1988:75).

#### *4.3.3 Foreign Policy and Organized Labor*

With the exception of the 1930s—when organized labor, black and white, took strongly anti-fascist positions and favored entry into the Second World War—South African labor groups generally did not play a role in the foreign policy process before 1994 (Geldenhuys, 1984a:165). After the war, however, labor's foreign policy influence on government more or less disappeared. Black labor movements that arose in the 1970s and grew strength in the 1980s—coalescing into the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985—did play a key role in boosting international support among external labor movements in support of the liberation struggle, but their influence on South African policy was negligible.

#### *4.4 High Hopes for Greater Public and Civil Society Impact During Transition Period*

South Africa's political transition brought great hopes that the making of policies, foreign and domestic, would be a far more participatory process than in the past. The ANC at its first post-unbanning conference in 1991, for example, resolved to utilize its Department of International Affairs to boost public awareness and participation in the discussion of foreign policy questions, and subsequent conferences have reiterated this aim. DFA in its 1995 foreign policy discussion document resolved to "actively stimulate debate on international affairs and foreign policy," while then-DFA Director General Jackie Selebi noted in 1999 an "urgent need in this country to broaden the interest in and understanding of foreign relations issues and how directly these impact on the attainment of domestic priorities" (Selebi, 1999:207). The new White Paper

process invited public comment on discussion documents, including documents covering foreign affairs, defense, and peace missions in the late 1990s with a goal of seeking “national consensus” on these issues. Academics like Philip Nel proposed the possibility of open forums on foreign policy to create room for “counter-hegemonic” voices to emerge and challenge elite opinions (Black, 1995:76).

Similarly, civil society groups entered the post-1994 dispensation believing that government would take their views seriously and give them sufficient consideration in the policy making arena, both foreign and domestic. The United Democratic Front (UDF), the leading mass democratic movement opposed to apartheid from its 1983 founding, sprang from a broad coalition of civil society organizations—including churches, organized labor, civic organizations, and others—and the ANC-led consultative process before the 1994 transition gave these groups hope that an ANC government would continue to take them seriously. These UDF activists expected a system in which inputs from civil society and the public would be continually sought and carefully considered during the decision-making process (Lodge, 1999:5). ANC conference resolutions from 1991 supported this notion, emphasizing the ruling party’s commitment to seeking input from civil society in the policy process. As will be shown, however, these high hopes for greater non-governmental influence on foreign policy making in particular would turn out to be unmet.

#### 4.5 *Public Opinion After 1994: More of the Same*

At the conclusion of the Mbeki presidency in 2008, it can be safely said that government efforts to engage the public and take its inputs into account in the foreign policy arena did not match the high-minded rhetoric of the early 1990s. Efforts to “democratize” the foreign policy debate among the public were unsuccessful; as academic Gerrit Olivier wrote in 2006, South African foreign policy “is noticeably undemocratic, a situation sustained by lack of public enlightenment, interest or participation... Lacking sufficient democratic control, the policy is essentially bureaucratic-elitist and top-down” (Olivier, 2006:181). The lack of foreign policy discussion documents during Mbeki’s administration limited the public’s ability to comment on policy direction, and the lack of a formalized system of soliciting public inputs meant DFA public education efforts—like its 2006 *izimbizo* program of public meetings—were haphazard and

inconsistent (Le Pere et al., 2008:17). Thus, as academics Garth le Pere and Brendan Vickers concluded in 2004, “Government increasingly does not appear to be consulting about its foreign policy objectives and certainly is not explaining them to the country” (Le Pere and Vickers, 2004:75).

The public’s lack of impact is clear; the reasons for it are less so. Was the public actively cut out of the foreign policy process by a government bent on asserting its predominance in this domain? Were its inputs ignored? Or rather, did the public simply not care about external issues and not push to make them a priority issue in the broader political debate? These questions must be explored to determine how the public role really factored into the foreign policy debate.

Quantitative and interview data can shed some light on the last question. Polling data from the 1994-2008 period is relatively limited on the foreign policy question, particularly in measuring prioritization of foreign issues *vis a vis* those of the domestic arena, but what data there are strongly suggest South Africans are overwhelmingly focused on domestic rather than external issues. The first and still most comprehensive survey was conducted in 1997 by Philip Nel and Anthoni van Nieuwkerk, which polled 3,500 South Africans of all races on their attitudes toward foreign policy issues. The survey found that the public considered domestic considerations—employment, crime, housing, and education—far more important than foreign policy issues like trade policy, peacekeeping, and land mines, of which only a handful of respondents (almost all from high-income groups) considered priorities (Nel, 1999:124). Nel attributed these findings to the facts that South Africa had no culture of public debate of foreign policy and, more pressingly, that most citizens “are denied the security of existence that is a precondition for an outward orientation” (Nel, 1999:124). Day-to-day survival obviously took precedence over less pressing external concerns.

Interviewees broadly supported the findings of the Nel/van Nieuwkerk poll, particularly members of Parliament asked to reflect upon the concerns of their constituents. “Foreign affairs has never been a front burner issue, not at the point at which we are,” notes longtime ANC MP from KwaZulu-Natal Albertina Luthuli, raising a point echoed by several MPs. “People are more concerned with things like social grants; it’s very remote to them. But we’re trying to

involve people in the process” (Luthuli interview) MPs also cited a rural/urban split in discussing public awareness of foreign affairs, with constituents from the latter generally more cognizant of the outside world. Former Gauteng MP and PCFA Chair Job Sithole says that in his Alexandra constituency in Johannesburg, constituents had an awareness of the outside world, but it was centered on recognition of long-term relationships from the liberation struggle with movements like Mozambique’s FRELIMO, Angola’s MPLA, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. “When you talk to South Africans about Israel, they only know Israelis are killing Palestinians. Things like Fatah, Hamas, they won’t register. They’ll only know PLO” (Sithole interview). Former Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad said constituents generally were receptive when he raised foreign policy issues in speeches, but he also contended that fostering a deep understanding of foreign policy was difficult among rural voters (E. Pahad interview).

Other interviewees said interest in foreign affairs would ebb and flow in relation to world events. Longtime KwaZulu-Natal MP and former Deputy Foreign Minister (2008-09) Fatima Hajaig recounted the following: “I remember going to a huge wholesaler around 1990, and the people working there were wearing Saddam Hussein tee shirts. I asked why they were wearing them, and they all knew, it was to protest the might of America and the Arab world in fighting the Iraq. It symbolized standing up to America” (Hajaig interview). Sithole echoes the point: “I’ve learned that foreign policy is event driven. You come home, and Israel has attacked Palestine. Everyone’s angry; they’re prepared to listen to you. But three months down the line...there’s no consistency to say how we as ordinary citizens contribute to our country’s positions. You don’t get South Africans marching about a UN vote” (Sithole interview).

Foreign affairs has not factored into any South African election since 1994, with party platforms of both the ANC and opposition parties hardly mentioning external issues. Simply put, “Where people see relevance for their own situation, they show an interest,” notes Stellenbosch political science professor Scarlett Cornelissen (Cornelissen interview). Several interviewees emphasized the need to raise public awareness that foreign policy is relevant in their daily lives. As Sithole notes, “It’s your foreign policy that commits your troops. Those troops are your kids, brothers, sisters. Why would they go to Burundi if I have no understanding of what he’s going to do in Burundi? As an ordinary person, I need to be able to relate with government’s decision to go to

Burundi” (Sithole interview). The late Henri Boshoff of Pretoria’s Institute for Security Studies questioned to what extent mass casualties on a peacekeeping mission would raise public awareness of foreign policy; “We have been lucky that we haven’t brought back a lot of body bags,” noted Boshoff, drawing a parallel to South Africa’s pre-1994 Angola experience, where the military was similarly lucky (Boshoff interview).

With the consensus view that foreign policy is generally—if not always—a low priority for South African voters, the question turns to whether government actively sought out public opinion on foreign policy and took it into account. On the former question, little appears to have been done. Former Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) official Baby Tyawa notes that the Information service since 1994 continually commissioned focus groups and public polling from reputable polling firms to take the country’s pulse on their opinions of policies and of government’s communication of those policies. However, she noted that GCIS questioning did not address foreign policy, with the focus being on domestic concerns, although she added that the Defense Force commissioned some limited internal polling on Pretoria’s peacekeeping presence in the region (Tyawa interview). Longtime Minister and Mbeki point person on foreign policy issues Sydney Mufamadi also noted that the focus of government polling tended to be on domestic matters (Mufamadi interview).

Despite having more available public polling data, government decision makers showed little inclination to use it in taking the pulse on foreign policy views of South Africans. Academic Anthoni van Nieuwkerk’s account of a presentation on his 1997 survey findings made to an audience including then-Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma shortly after she took office provides telling insights into government attitudes toward public opinion surveys:

*I start to talk about South African perceptions of foreign policy, and looked at how different ethnic groups view foreign policy priorities, and she stops me and asks where I got my information. I respond that it was a Markinor survey with 3,000+ people, and she says, “I can’t stand academics like you. I’m a trained doctor; I know methodology. There’s nothing you can tell me. Everything you say is nonsense. All of this is rubbish. We know what the people think and what they want, because they have elected us to rule the country. So we know what they*

*want. We are them, they are us, and I run foreign affairs. So I know what they want.” So, she put me in my place, and I realized this is how the heavyweights view democratic participation in foreign policy making, meaning the branches of the ANC. Don’t talk Markinor or middle class households (Van Nieuwkerk interview).*

Former Deputy Foreign Minister (1994-2008) Aziz Pahad provides a similar, if less hostile, perspective on the government view of public opinion. “You know, in reality, public opinion was not sufficiently informed to influence policy...Outside of some of the think tanks, I felt the public was not sufficiently informed to make an informed input. Except for the Middle East, where you had some Muslims make inputs. But it did not impact on policy. I find it now more as I’m out of government that you’ve got a very unenlightened public opinion on foreign affairs... There was not great influence on policy” (A. Pahad interview).

#### *4.6 More Active, but Similarly Powerless, Civil Society*

While public opinion from 1994 was accorded little weight in policy making, civil society groups during the early Mandela years did have some impact on foreign policy discussions. DFA in 1996 invited civil society organizations to weigh in on its draft foreign policy discussion document, and in September that year held a workshop to discuss and debate elements of the document, such as the definition of national interest (Venter, 2001:161). Civil society organizations also helped develop the agendas for multilateral summits, to include the Commonwealth and UN agencies (Alden and le Pere, 2003:18). Their most striking impact, however, came in their efforts to seek a ban on the use, production, and trade of anti-personnel landmines by the South African Government. These efforts, begun in 1995, brought together more than 100 organizations—including community, student, and religious groups—under the banner of the South African Campaign to Ban Landmines (Naidoo, 2004:186). It was able to mobilize the public behind the issue, organizing a write-in campaign that saw 5,000 postcards sent to Mandela urging a total ban (Nel et al., 2000:53). Despite early opposition from the Departments of Defense and Foreign Affairs—the latter of which supported the continued use of “smart mines”—the government in February 1997 announced a ban on the production, sale, and use of mines, as well as a decision to destroy existing stock.

The anti-landmine campaign would prove, however, civil society's last hurrah in the foreign policy realm until the tail end of Mbeki's administration. Given resource constraints and South Africans' overwhelming prioritization of domestic issues, organizations generally had little time to spend on external issues and devoted only limited numbers of staff to covering them. Formal government consultation continued with certain entities, but it was uneven in terms of who was included and—when it did happen—was considered by participants to be largely *pro forma*, with government already settled on its course of action. Mbeki saw no need to consult outside groups in advance of his NEPAD program, while civil society blasted Mbeki for his administration's "self-congratulating and self-legitimizing" handling of the country's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) process after it was launched in 2005 (Landsberg, 2010b:150). Civic groups also blasted Mbeki after being shut out of discussions on South Africa's Millennium Development Goals. The experiences of two such groups under Mbeki, the churches and organized labor, provide excellent insights into how his administration consulted with non-governmental actors and, in most instances, chose to ignore them.

#### *4.6.1 The Church and Foreign Policy Post-1994*

With just a few exceptions, churches and religious organizations—overwhelmingly focused on domestic issues like the needs of the poor—had little impact on foreign policy during the Mandela and Mbeki administrations. In 2001, Mbeki and Dlamini-Zuma stopped state-owned oil firm Soekor from investing in Sudan after the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference (SACBC) condemned human rights abuses there, but this was an isolated instance, and Mbeki would reverse this decision before the end of his term (Clarke, 2010:210). Mbeki met with religious leaders twice a year under the banner of the National Religious Leaders' Forum; these discussions mostly focused on domestic matters, although foreign policy issues—like the Middle East—occasionally arose (Menatsi interview). Mbeki also sought to cultivate church leaders for support on foreign policy issues with some success, like SACC Secretary General Molefe Tsele's endorsement of NEPAD (Gumede, 2005:288).

Zimbabwe, however, was the key bone of contention between government and the church during Mbeki's presidency, and one that brought him extensive criticism from the likes of Cardinal

Wilfrid Napier of Durban and Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane of Cape Town. Tutu was another strong critic, in 2003 saying, “What has been reported as happening in Zimbabwe is totally unacceptable and reprehensible and we ought to say so” (Hughes, 2004:138). Father Richard Menatsi, Secretary-General of the SACBC from 1999 to 2005, noted that during religious leaders’ biannual meeting with the President, they persistently brought up Zimbabwe for discussion, and each time it was removed from the agenda. According to Menatsi, “I was in a working group to draw up the agenda for these meetings, but the Director-General [Frank Chikane] would strike it off. Or we would get it on the agenda, and we’d find a different agenda when we got into the meetings. It was crazy” (Menatsi interview). Every once in a while the President would raise the topic, but his responses were unsatisfactory. “From time to time, the President would say ‘these issues are very complicated, we’re working on it behind closed doors,’” notes Menatsi, adding, “You could see the foreign policy was rather closely held” (Menatsi interview). In time, the formal engagement petered out; as Aziz Pahad remembers, “There was a time we were in close touch with the SACC, but as time and dynamics changed, less and less” (A. Pahad interview).

#### *4.6.2 Influence of Tripartite Alliance Partners*

Defining the ANC’s alliance partners—COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP)—as civil society organizations is a debatable proposition; one might argue that their proximity to the ANC and participation in government since 1994 should lead them to be considered as part of the system. Since 1994, many top leaders of both COSATU and the SACP—dual-hatted as ANC members—have been brought into government as civil servants, MPs, and Ministers. The impact of this move is widely debated; proponents of such close ties argue that having alliance members involved in decision making ensures that their organizational voices are considered, particularly in regard to domestic economic policy. Critics, however, have argued that such moves represent more a cooptation of alliance partners than a true partnership, claiming that alliance partner representatives in government too often have bent to government orthodoxy. They have also decried the fact that moves into government from alliance representatives have weakened the leadership pool of the SACP and COSATU, leaving them ill-equipped to formulate policy positions independent of the ANC (Gumede, 2005:135).

On foreign policy specifically, however, COSATU and the SACP since 1994 have acted more as independent pressure groups than as junior partners of the ANC, espousing views that are at times sharply different from those of the government and showing themselves unafraid to criticize government foreign policies with which they disagree. The two entities each have separate (if small and poorly funded) international affairs departments that organize campaigns around issues important to the movements. As former COSATU International Affairs Secretary Simon Boshielo notes, “We would use the *Shop Steward* [COSATU’s monthly publication] to publicize these issues. We tried to publicize these issues for COSATU members who would not necessarily have the background on them” (Boshielo interview). Although these were not frequent, COSATU during the Mbeki administration was effective in organizing marches and protests at diplomatic missions, picketing the Moroccan Embassy over its occupation of Western Sahara; the Zimbabwean Embassy for abuses there; and the US Embassy on American Middle East policy (Peete and Bateman, 2006:6).

The SACP and COSATU sought to interject themselves into government’s foreign policy debate during Mandela’s administration, with some success. As SACP International Affairs Secretary Chris Matlhako remembers, “In the period of Mandela, it was very consensus driven. The SACP could make significant inputs, such as on our policy toward China” (Matlhako interview). Both the SACP and COSATU were active proponents of the “one China” policy that was eventually announced in 1996. Raymond Suttner, chair from 1994-97 of Parliament’s Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs (PCFA) and a prominent SACP member, argued in 1994 that the alliance had independent foreign policy potential, given its partnerships around the world, and should not shy away from lobbying in the foreign policy arena, particularly on issues where the government was seen to be acting to the contrary of its stated policies or dragging its feet on implementing them (Suttner, 1996:8). The alliance’s ability to “make essential interventions that may be too sensitive or unsuitable for the government” meant that it could engage in “second track” diplomatic efforts that would advance the government’s foreign policy aims but outside of traditional channels of state-to-state engagement (Barber, 2004:88-91). To this end, both

alliance partners showed themselves unafraid to criticize government policy, such as Pretoria's handling of the 1995 Nigeria crisis<sup>2</sup>, or try to raise the profile of particular issues.

There existed several areas of difference between the alliance and government during Mbeki's administration, with the two most notable being the government's approaches toward Swaziland and Zimbabwe. COSATU from the late 1990s has worked with civil society and labor elements in Swaziland in their efforts to open up political space in that absolute monarchy, and the movement has criticized Pretoria for ignoring the monarchy's perceived repression of its political opponents (Sidiropoulos and Hughes, 2004:63). The movement repeatedly called for Swaziland's political isolation, and in 2002 demanded Swaziland's suspension from the African Union and from Mbeki's New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development due to a lack of democracy, good governance, and transparency (Ngubentombi, 2003:151). More visibly, COSATU in August 2003 and April 2006 engineered effective (if brief) blockades of the South African-Swazi border. SACP General Secretary Blade Nzimande also was particularly vocal about the need for reform in Swaziland.

While Swaziland was a top priority for the ANC's alliance partners, their efforts pale in comparison to those made toward influencing South African policy toward Zimbabwe. COSATU engagement on Zimbabwe dates to late 1999, when then COSATU President Willie Madisha visited the increasingly restive country to meet with Zimbabwean counterparts, including the then-Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Morgan Tsvangirai. The following year, National Union of Mineworkers President James Motlatsi condemned the invasions of commercial farmland by Mugabe proxies as creating conditions of "anarchy" there (Hughes, 2004:138). Both COSATU and SACP strongly and repeatedly criticized the Mugabe government's attacks on political activists, and particularly trade unionist supporters of the new Movement for Democratic Change, which won nearly half of elected legislative seats in June 2000 parliamentary elections, helmed by Tsvangirai (Phimister and Raftopoulos, 2004:399). COSATU and the SACP frequently called upon President Mbeki to alter its policy of "quiet" diplomacy toward the Mugabe government through the 2008 conclusion of his presidency, but to little avail.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3 for background on the Nigeria crisis and on other notable foreign policy issues.

There was regularized contact between alliance partners and ANC foreign policy decision makers during the Mbeki period. SACP and COSATU representatives sat on the ANC International Relations subcommittee during its monthly meetings, for example, while their representatives also were allowed to weigh in on foreign policy concerns at the party's policy and elective conferences (Hughes, 2004:29). Matlhako cites this as the key arena for engagement between the ANC and alliance partners on foreign policy (Matlhako interview). COSATU and SACP representatives frequently made submissions to the PCFA on a host of issues, while they were in regular contact with DFA, and in particular Aziz Pahad (Boshielo interview).

However, despite the regularized nature of the meetings, interviewees bemoaned what they viewed as the poor quality of the dialogue between the ANC and its alliance partners. As COSATU International Affairs Secretary Bongani Masuku notes, "The biggest problem for us was not the differences in approaches, it was the lack of space to engage," with foreign policy decision makers. Although the meetings occurred, he was less sure if his views were taken seriously—"Even if my view was not taken, was I listened to?" (Masuku interview). In addition, alliance leaders claim President Mbeki had little time for discussion with them on foreign policy issues; according to Madisha, such discussions usually were at the end of a meeting on domestic issues and consisted of Mbeki "briefing us that [the government] has moved in a certain way" (Madisha interview).

The view of COSATU and SACP leaders is that while government and the ANC were happy to listen to them on issues where there was broad agreement, they were shut down on contentious topics. As Madisha notes, "When it came to Cuba, Palestine, and many other areas, Mbeki would listen when you spoke to him" (Madisha interview). Policy toward Western Sahara and African peacekeeping were other areas of confluence. "We supported those [peacekeeping] initiatives. No one rejoices in the wars that go on in Africa," notes Masuku (Masuku interview). Contentious issues—particularly Zimbabwe—were different. "Giving advice on Zimbabwe was very difficult," remembers Boshielo. "When engaging with government, they felt they and they alone were capable of making policy on this or that issue. Our advice was ignored under Mbeki,

despite being the best-organized element of civil society” (Boshielo interview). They partly ascribe this to Mbeki’s enmity toward organized labor. “I can’t take away the fact that Mbeki didn’t like the trade union movement very much,” claims Boshielo. “Not just the movement, but the people in the movement...he didn’t treat them with respect” (Boshielo interview).

Top government and ANC foreign policy decision makers dismiss the notion that alliance partners were ignored on foreign policy. According to Presidency NEPAD advisor Cunningham Ngcukana, “Everybody, including COSATU, was taken into account on foreign affairs” (Ngcukana interview). They expressed disappointment with what they described as unrealistic demands by the partners, particularly by COSATU. “For example, on Swaziland, we would tell them, you can’t just have a blockade and then forget the issue...you have to have a systematic program. And government can’t call for an overthrow of the monarchy or send troops to overthrow the monarchy,” contends Aziz Pahad (A. Pahad interview). Mufamadi echoes this point, again using Swaziland as an example. “If COSATU comes to us and says there is no democracy in Swaziland, we must have a big demonstration about that. But you can’t expect government to be party to that, because we have other ways of dealing with the situation. We have to be sensitive about how South Africa deals with neighboring countries” (Mufamadi interview). On Zimbabwe, longtime Minister and Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee chair Pallo Jordan notes that COSATU inability to “look at the larger picture” made it difficult to work with them (Jordan interview).

Another criticism of alliance partners was the contradictory nature of some alliance demands, particularly in relation to China. Although an avid and early advocate of a “one China” policy, some elements of organized labor later came to rue this position once the implications of competition with Chinese labor became clearer (Alden, 2001:126). Notes Mufamadi, “I must say that on matters related to China, COSATU was taken seriously. But there was debate of double standard even there, where you find that COSATU would call for this very important relations with China but at the same time, when China’s encroaching at the textile level, they’d say, “No, we can’t do this, we can’t open our exchange controls, we must protect our industry”” (Mufamadi interview). In addition, alliance partners keen to criticize the West over issues like the Middle East did not seem to appreciate the potential economic implications of attacking

South Africa's biggest trading partners.

If anything is clear, it is that communication between the two sides—particularly on contentious issues—failed under Mbeki. Both sides claim in retrospect to understand the need for a delicate balance in discussing sensitive foreign policy issues, like on Zimbabwe. Masuku explains that he and COSATU fully understood that there was a need to keep the practice of South African diplomacy in Zimbabwe quiet to avoid being compromised as a mediator. However, “there must be a level of openness; it’s a people’s process, it’s not all closed. The delicate balance is needed” (Masuku interview). Jordan echoes this point, noting that taking key pressure group leaders into confidence could have paid significant benefits. Although Jordan acknowledges dangers in revealing too much and having it leaked, he contends that, “One way or the other you have to convey your thinking to these people; Tutu throwing stones at your foreign policy is not very helpful. Even if the day after he does throw stones, perhaps he throws smaller ones” (Jordan interview).

#### *4.6.3 The Chinese Arms Saga—Civil Society Gets It Right*

Despite the weaknesses and disadvantages of non-governmental organizations in the foreign policy arena, these groups did show in 2008 that they can have an impact on government policy through concerted effort. In April 2008, the Chinese cargo ship *An Yue Jiang* arrived at Durban harbor with 77 tons of weapons—including ammunition, rockets, and mortar bombs—bound for overland delivery to the Zimbabwean Government. The National Conventional Arms Control Committee approved the shipment and issued a permit for the shipment to go ahead (Dugger, 2008:3).

However, the shipment did not go undetected by local and international media outlets, which immediately jumped on the story, sparking civil society organizations to action. Religious leaders—including Tutu and the Anglican Bishop of KwaZulu-Natal Ruben Phillip—and NGOs like the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa demonstrated at Durban harbor, while a COSATU affiliate, the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union, announced it would not offload weapons at the port (Fritz, 2009:4-5). The Southern Africa Litigation Center (SALC) assembled a legal team to challenge the legality of the permitting. Within days of the

application, the Durban High Court ruled in the SALC's favor that while the arms could be unloaded, they could not be transported overland to Zimbabwe. The ship departed shortly thereafter, ultimately offloading the arms in Pointe Noire, Congo-Brazzaville, from which they were shipped to Zimbabwe.

One should not make too much of this incident's significance. Civil society did not force a wholesale change in government policy toward Zimbabwe, nor did they ultimately stop the arms from arriving in Zimbabwe. However, by uniting, raising public awareness of the shipment through effective use of the media, and focusing on a specific issue where they were able to influence the situation, these groups were able to interject themselves into the conversation and force the government to make a tactical retreat on its policy (Fritz, 2009:8).

#### *4.7 Conclusion: Why So Weak?*

Ultimately, it is clear that public opinion has never had any discernable impact on foreign policy formulation in South Africa. Before 1994, the white voting public showed little interest in foreign policy, and even when it was energized about certain issues (like Rhodesia), government largely ignored its inputs. After 1994, the now-broadened South African electorate was, if anything, less engaged on international affairs than before 1994, with domestic issues based around day-to-day survival taking priority for the vast majority, particularly non-white voters. Foreign policy issues also had no impact on election outcomes, either before or after the transition, giving the government little incentive to take public inputs into account. As one analysis from 1999 stated, "Since the experts do not have popular backing or a significant constituency, the formulators of foreign policy can afford to disregard their advice" (Masiza, 1999:3).

Civil society has fared just as badly, due to groups' general lack of focus on foreign affairs and the government's refusal to take their inputs seriously, particularly before 1994. Munger in 1965 noted that unlike in the United States, pressure and lobbying groups were not important in South Africa, noting that such efforts were "viewed at best as basically incompatible with good government and, at worst, as something evil" (Munger, 1965:51). Growing centralization of decision making within the executive after 1948, particularly during Verwoerd's administration,

was another factor that reduced the influence of outsiders (Stultz, 1969:14).

Civil society groups had similarly limited impact post-1994. Although the Chinese arms issue showed that non-governmental organizations could effectively organize around a particular foreign policy issue, few issues elicited enough attention and support for their advocates to have any real influence. Meanwhile, more broadly influential groupings—particularly churches and organized labor—were ineffective in the foreign policy arena due to the elitist nature of the debates, a lack of focus on the issues, and limited resources:

--*Elitism*. As elsewhere in the world, South African civil society's efforts to influence foreign policy are limited by the fact that they come from a "small stratum of the public whose occupational responsibilities require them to pay attention to the international scene, or whose self-image of their role and interests lead them to feel involved in foreign affairs" (Wallace, 1971:44). Despite a profusion of civil society organizations in South Africa—over 100,000 by 2000—only a handful focus to even a limited extent on foreign affairs (Habib, 2005:683). As Mufamadi notes, "Foreign affairs tends in one sense to be a relatively insulated, specialized area. Elitist...it doesn't generate the same interest as economic policy or local government. Those are issues that people deal with on a day to day basis at the ground level" (Mufamadi interview). Hence, decision makers know that they can discount the vast majority of pressure group inputs on foreign affairs, given the lack of consequences at the ballot box.

--*Prioritization*. Even for groups like the churches, SACP, and COSATU that speak out frequently on foreign policy concerns, external issues are not a top priority. Father Peter John Pearson of the SACBC notes that while the organization keeps track of foreign affairs, faith communities tend to focus on domestic issues first and foremost, particularly those related to poverty (Pearson interview). As for the unions, "I think collectively, we have not put foreign policy at the center of engagement with government," notes Masuku (Masuku interview). Given that foreign policy "is not an ordinary worker issue," the unions have focused most of their engagement with government on the domestic arena (Masuku interview). Although COSATU tried, through campaigns and editorials in its *Shop Steward* journal to raise the profile of foreign policy issues, alliance leaders acknowledge this has yielded only limited and inconsistent results.

--*Resources*. Given foreign policy's low prioritization, civil society organizations with an interest in foreign affairs—forced to balance tight budgets and competing demands—did not allocate much in the way of funding to international issues. Religious groups have only a handful of staff working on foreign affairs. COSATU has only three people, while only Matlhako handles the portfolio for SACP. As he notes, “since the unbanning, the majority of those doing international relations for SACP gravitated into the state, which meant the rolling back of the international relations of the party” (Masuku interview). Budgets are also limited, meaning groups have been unable to do effective advocacy work among its members or maintain solidarity campaigns. Madisha notes that while workers will happily “yell *amandla* and *viva* for Zim trade unions, but there are differences between supporting through action and supporting through *vivas*,” they are far less interested in contributing part of their salaries to support such action (Madisha interview).

## **Chapter 5: The South African Press and Foreign Policy**

### *5.1 Introduction*

The media, as noted in Chapter 2, has an influence on policy in democratic societies in a variety of ways, generally characterized by “push-pull” relationships both with its readership as well as with government elites. In regard to readers, media outlets have the ability—through editorial comment and news coverage—to frame policy debates for readers and influence their opinions on various issues. However, media outlets cannot get too far ahead of their consumers—they have to act as a sort of mirror. If the media outlet’s content does not resonate with readers, viewers, or listeners, those consumers will find other sources of information more in line with their thinking. Given that most of these outlets seek to make a profit (or at least not lose vast sums), retaining customers is an important consideration.

The media has an even more complex relationship with government; the two need one another, but the relationship is often antagonistic. For government officials, the media provides an outlet to sell their policies and actions to possibly skeptical voters. These officials often seek to cultivate sympathetic journalists to put a positive spin on stories or send up trial balloons on potential policy shifts to gauge public reaction. This “insider” access can prove quite valuable for selling newspapers or luring listeners, but for the journalist it also carries the risk of being viewed as a government stooge, a pusher of the party line. On the flip side, government officials can freeze out outlets viewed as unsympathetic or overly critical of policy. Doing so risks ratcheting up criticism from those outlets and leading their readers to take more critical views of government, but it also hinders the ability of those outlets to “make news,” potentially pushing readers toward more sympathetic reportage.

Media outlets everywhere, therefore, have a difficult calculus—how to make money, make friends, and make news at the same time. This has been no different in South Africa, both before and after 1994, in regard to both foreign and domestic policy. South Africa has since the 19<sup>th</sup> century had a vibrant, multilingual print press, followed in 20<sup>th</sup> century by radio, television, and more recently the Internet. It is easily the most media-saturated country in Africa. The country’s 23 daily newspapers, 25 weekly newspapers, and countless community newspapers are read by

an estimated 20 million of the country's 50 million citizens every week. Radio access is ubiquitous, while cable television and the Internet have seen significant growth since 2000. These outlets provide significant coverage (both from local and international outlets) of South African politics and policies, meaning that any citizen, rural or urban, interested in current affairs can quite easily find out what is going on in the country and abroad.

The goal of this chapter is to explore the impact of one segment of the media—the print press—on foreign policy, both in influencing the government and swaying the opinions of its readership. The established print press, consisting of newspapers and news magazines, is the focus because it has through the years devoted the most time and resources to serious consideration of foreign affairs and has been the primary destination for readers interested in external issues or South African foreign policy, serving as the “media of record.” Although radio and television have more reach in the country, their coverage of foreign affairs tends to be cursory. In addition, the print press is by far the most established entity in the South African media—television was only introduced in 1976, for example—making it convenient for making comparisons over time. The chapter will examine press relationships with decision makers—such as attempts to influence government policy and personal ties—as well as press treatment of external issues, such as the amount of coverage devoted to foreign affairs.

## 5.2 *Government-Press Relations to 1994*

South Africa's print media dates to 1800, when the Cape Colony government established the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser* to print administrative notices and other news. The medium was dominated by English-language publications until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, although this period saw the advent of Afrikaans-medium publications that tended to be more overtly political than their English counterparts. Cape Town's *Die Burger*, founded in 1915, was published by Nasionale Pers (now Naspers), a media company operated by the new National Party (formed the previous year) to publicize its events and later became the party's official organ in the Cape.<sup>3</sup> All of these papers focused mainly on domestic issues, in large part due to

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<sup>3</sup> While aimed at Afrikaans-speaking audiences, *Die Burger* was actually first published in Dutch. Its first Afrikaans-language articles did not appear until 1916, and it was not fully in Afrikaans until 1921.

the high cost of acquiring foreign stories (Pogrud, 2000:26). This only changed with World War II, which saw a strong split between pro-war English newspapers and virulent opponents in the Afrikaans press that echoed the sentiments of their political masters (Mervis, 1989:122).

The NP's stunning win in the 1948 election gave the Afrikaans press outsized power in the new dispensation. Not only did the Afrikaans press heartily support the new government, but **they** also were part and parcel of the ruling party, with all of the major publishing houses—Nasionale Pers, Voortrekker Pers, and Afrikaanse Pers (the latter two would merge into Perskor in 1971)—having extensive direct linkages to the NP political elite. New Prime Minister DF Malan's connections to Nasionale Pers are well documented, while Prime Ministers Strijdom, Verwoerd (former editor of *Die Transvaler*), and Vorster all chaired the board of directors at Afrikaanse Pers while serving as head of government (Potter, 1975:73).

### 5.2.1 *The Afrikaans Press and Government: Birds of a Feather*

Former *Beeld* editor Schalk Pienaar best summed up the relationship between the Afrikaans press and the NP government through the 1980s, describing their ties as “independence in commitment, friendship in tension” (Welsh, 2009:173-174). While opposing the party's underlying principles—such as its dedication to the Afrikaans language and Afrikaner cultural values—was forbidden, seeking to influence its policies, particularly on racial issues, was not (Dommissie, 1979:100). As long-time (1954-1977) *Die Burger* editor Piet Cillie noted, “We support the Nationalist Party. We criticize it, but to make it better. By and large, its battles are our battles” (Pollak, 1981:12). The Afrikaans press, it should be noted, was not a monolithic entity by any means, with the various publishing houses divided on regional and, later, ideological lines. Cape Town-based Nasionale Pers was notable for promoting the “Cape line” of NP thought, one that through the 1970s favored, in the words of Hermann Gilimoe, a “softer, more liberal implementation of apartheid” that attacked its discriminatory elements, such as the disenfranchisement of colored voters (O'Meara, 1996:106). The northern papers—exclusively controlled by Perskor and its precedents until the 1965 establishment of *Beeld* in Johannesburg by Nasionale Pers—were far more supportive of the *baaskaap* principles of Strijdom and Verwoerd, and through the 1980s they would take largely *verkramp*te positions on issues ranging

from reform of apartheid institutions and negotiations with the ANC (Adam and Giliomee, 1979:205).

By the 1980s, Afrikaans newspapers—even the traditional “party organs”—began to show increasing editorial independence from the National Party line, with most taking an increasingly *verligte* stance (Adam and Giliomee, 1979:233). *Beeld* from its founding had emerged as the leading “dissident” newspaper, and in 1980, editor Ton Vosloo went so far as to suggest that the government would have to negotiate with the ANC (Adam and Uys, 1988:122). “Shreds were torn from my back by PW,” recalls Vosloo about that occasion (Vosloo interview). PW Botha also took a significant step toward undoing the relationship between government and the Afrikaans press when he resigned as a director of Nasionale Pers after becoming Prime Minister in 1978 and asked his Cabinet to resign their directorships as well (Pollak, 1981:13). However, it was not until 1990, when Ebbe Dommissie took over as *Die Burger* editor, that the decision was finally made to end the newspaper’s formal relationship with the Cape NP. “There was opposition from the party,” notes Dommissie, “but if a newspaper wanted credibility, how could it be a party organ?” (Dommissie interview).

### 5.2.2 *The Afrikaans Press’ Open Door to the NP Government*

Contacts between Afrikaans editors and ruling NP politicians were generally, although not universally, frequent and close. Prime Ministers through Vorster would meet with Afrikaans editors before the opening of Parliament to inform them on legislative priorities for the forthcoming year (Potter, 1975:133). Malan would go so far as to invite Phil Weber in his role as *Die Burger* editor to the NP’s weekly parliamentary caucus meetings, although this ended under Strijdom (Potter, 1975:148). Verwoerd, despite being a former editor himself, was an exception in that he did not enjoy close ties with the Afrikaans press during his tenure, rarely granting newspaper interviews nor meeting with Parliamentary correspondents (Botha, 1967:121). Rather he tended to dictate to editors, telling them what policy would be rather than taking on board their inputs (Potter, 1975:135). Vorster, on the other hand, was far more open to the inputs of Cillie and other editors, and he enjoyed close personal ties with some journalists, notably *Die Burger* political correspondent Alf Ries (Barron, 2006). Ries travelled with Vorster on several of his trips to African countries, gaining the inside scoop, and their closeness was such

that Peter Fabricius notes he was “jokingly referred to as a secret member of the Cabinet” (Fabricius interview).

At a provincial level, editors of the provincial party “mouthpieces”—*Die Burger* in the Cape, *Die Transvaler* in the Transvaal, and *Volksblad* in the Orange Free State—were considered part of their provincial NP structures and also participated in federal party congresses, allowing them to shape policy outside the pages of the newspapers. “All of the editors had a place on the provincial organs,” remembers *Volksblad* editor Hennie van Deventer. “I was not a fully fledged member of the NP executive, but I had a secure position on the committee in the province” (Van Deventer interview). In the Cape, notes Vosloo, “the editor of *Die Burger* [Piet Cillie] would be invited on a permanent basis by the head of the provincial party to attend their monthly caucuses.” There, editors like Cillie “could influence the Cabinet ministers on various policies. These guys were hand in hand with government on formation of policy, but they rarely criticized publicly” (Vosloo interview).

Encounters between journalist and politician could be bruising, particularly between Cillie (who chaired the Nasionale Pers board of directors from 1977-1985) and PW Botha. “Oh my gosh...they had clashes! Especially at the federal congresses,” recalls *Die Burger* journalist and editor (1990-2000) Ebbe Dommissie. “At the parties, when the drinks started flowing, there would be clashes. PW was a difficult customer; if he flew into a rage, you got out of the way. But he listened” (Dommissie interview). *Die Burger* political journalist Theuns van der Westhuizen recalls another heated encounter between the two men at a gathering during a party congress in the mid-1980s, whereby Cillie gave no quarter to Botha even when verbally attacked by the Prime Minister.

The often-combative relationship between Botha and Cillie exemplifies the complexities of the NP-Afrikaans press relationship through the 1980s. As much as Botha may not have appreciated Cillie’s inputs, *Die Burger* was a key backer of his 1978 push to become party leader against Connie Mulder. Cillie, according to Vosloo, also was the key driver behind Botha’s 1978 decision to remove himself and his Cabinet from newspaper boards of directors (Vosloo interview). They could bruise each other inside the caucus, but they kept their disagreements in

house.

In recalling their relations with PW Botha, Afrikaans journalists recall not only his tempestuousness, but also his attentiveness to what was written and willingness to take their calls. He paid keen attention to what was written in the newspapers. Theuns van der Westhuizen recalls one incident involving former *Beeld* political reporter Freek Swart: “Freek and I were walking down Roeland Street to Parliament, and a police car pulls up to us. We didn’t know what was happening, but then the next minute another car pulls up, and it’s PW. He got out and walked up to Freek and said, ‘Listen, Freek, why did you write that piece?’” (T. van der Westhuizen interview). However, both Vosloo and van der Westhuizen noted that Botha would take calls from journalists and would listen to their arguments, particularly on domestic policy issues. Ries was another journalist who enjoyed good relations with PW Botha (J. Steenkamp interview). Botha’s relations with the Afrikaans press were in sharp contrast with those of de Klerk; while he would respond to their questions and interview requests, editors note that he had no close ties with any of them (Vosloo interview).

### 5.2.3 *The Other Side of the Door: The English Press and Government*

The NP’s victory in 1948 largely relegated the English press to the political wilderness for much of the next 46 years.<sup>4</sup> English papers largely supported the United Party and, later, the Progressives, although they never developed the hand-in-glove ties with those parties as those seen between the Afrikaans papers and the NP. English newspapers, the circulation of which were always far greater than their Afrikaans counterparts, were tenacious in their critiques of government policies, leading the government to either ignore them or regard them, in Gordon Jackson’s words, with “a mix of wariness, anger, or outright hostility” (Jackson, 1993:40). NP politicians generally talked down to the English press if they talked at all. Eric Louw, South Africa’s first Minister of External Affairs, was a noted government attack dog during its early years; in 1959, he blamed the English press for, “a great deal of South Africa’s internal trouble,” as well as for damaging South Africa’s image abroad (Pogrud, 2000:90).

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<sup>4</sup> In referring to the “English” press, one refers to the white English press, not black newspapers or magazines written in English. The black print press—English or vernacular—was almost completely ignored by the NP government, both on foreign and domestic issues.

One key exception to this rule was John Vorster, who understood the value of cultivating the English press. Although he once told English journalists at a press conference, “You hate me and I hate you,” Vorster also understood that the international press largely relied on copy from the English newspapers, hence influencing them could burnish South Africa’s image abroad (Horwitz, 2001:46). As *Cape Times* deputy editor Gerald Shaw recalls, “Vorster had been the most approachable of Cabinet ministers, and he remained so after becoming prime minister. Representing the *Rand Daily Mail* in the Parliamentary Press Gallery, I found him to be friendly and accessible, remarkably so, for the *Mail* was fiercely hostile to his policies” (Shaw, 2007:62). Vorster went so far as to give *Cape Times* editor Tony Heard a lengthy off-the-record interview at the Union Buildings confirming South Africa’s invasion of Angola in 1975—although the Defense Act barred Heard from printing any of it (Shaw, 1999:265). The enmity toward the English press returned, however, under PW Botha, particularly toward Heard and the *Cape Times* in regard to its coverage of foreign policy. Botha attacked the newspaper in Parliament in 1983 for its coverage of Pretoria’s regional destabilization efforts in the region, and specifically called out Heard—whom he described as “not quite normal”—for printing “common lies” (Shaw, 1999:292). Two years later, Botha had Heard arrested and charged under the Internal Security Act (although the charge was later dropped) for printing his interview with Oliver Tambo in London, as Tambo was a banned person who could not be quoted (Shaw, 1999:307).

#### 5.2.4 *Operation Savannah and the Perils of Defense Coverage*

Pretoria’s 1975 invasion of Angola—codenamed Operation Savannah—and its subsequent military operations in the region forced the press, both English and Afrikaans, to figure out how to cover the fighting without contravening secrecy legislation. Pretoria officially denied its involvement in Angola to the press; according to Rex Gibson of the *Rand Daily Mail*, PW Botha and the military brass denied that South African troops were in Angola when they were, in reality, about 30 kilometers from Luanda (Gibson interview). The truth—from overseas coverage and inside briefings like that received by Heard—quickly came out, but printing it was a more difficult matter. The Defense Amendment Act of 1967 made it illegal to publish information without the government’s permission on defense force operations and composition; information that would damage South Africa’s foreign relations; or any classified information on

defense matters (Jackson, 1993:111). The government, under the Official Secrets Act of 1956, had the power to censor such information (Potter, 1975:122).

Newspapers, therefore, had to find a balance between respecting the law—contraventions of which could mean criminal prosecution or even closure of the newspaper—and providing readers coverage of events, leading papers (particularly the English press) to use creative means of conveying information. South African newspapers, for example, cited foreign sources like the BBC and *New York Times*, which were actively covering the Angolan invasion (Owen interview). Semantics also were key: “You could not report about the movement of troops, so what we did was report about advances of the ‘allied forces,’” recalls Dommissie (Dommissie interview). *Cape Times* defense correspondent Willem Steenkamp notes that Parliamentary privilege was another useful tool: “If there was a piece of information that we could not use, we’d ask a friendly MP to state it in Parliament” (W. Steenkamp interview). Lastly, the *Rand Daily Mail* adopted a tactic from the Rhodesian press: blank space. As former Star editor Harvey Tyson recalls:

*I vividly remember the first time the Rand Daily Mail used blank space. The first victim of the war in Angola was a guy called Christopher Robin, whose death notice appeared in a paper without any explanation. The editor of the Mail, Ray Herbert, said we could not publish how or where he died, because that would contravene the Defense Act, so he took the death notice and put it on the front page with blank space and a note at the bottom saying we cannot say how he died or the circumstances (Tyson interview).*

Over time, the SADF took steps to try to win over the press, such as flying journalists and editors to the front and providing them regular, if not always enlightening, briefings. Some journalists enjoyed exceptional access, none more so than Willem Steenkamp, who also served as a reserve officer while writing his weekly column on military matters, “On Parade” (Shaw, 1999:267). Steenkamp recalls his access to the military top brass being excellent, and found them quite receptive to dissenting opinions: “I had dealings with everyone... Geldenhuys, Viljoen, Liebenberg, all these people. They were quite open to that, and they wouldn’t shout you down if they disagreed. I could say that I was hearing something on the ground different than what they

thought, and they'd listen" (W. Steenkamp interview). Although he recalls an occasional dressing down from army brass over the contents of a column, these were rare (Steenkamp, 2006:xiii).

Steenkamp's experience, however, was an outlier. Relations with top security sector officials were, in general, chilly for both English and Afrikaans editors and journalists. Longtime foreign affairs journalist Peter Fabricius remembers that outside of Foreign Minister Pik Botha, few principals of the State Security Council kept frequent contact with journalists (Fabricius interview). Van der Westhuizen describes intelligence chief Niel Barnard as "pretty closed," a characterization with which Barnard himself seems to agree (T. van der Westhuizen interview). "We never had a good relationship with the media," Barnard recalls. "Let me say very openly that we never aspired to have good relations. They took an extremely negative view when I was appointed head of the service...in *Rapport* on the Sunday after I was appointed, the headline was "Everybody's Laughing About Our New James Bond" (Barnard interview). However, Barnard adds that relations were closer with some were closer than they would appear: "There's no doubt they were well informed. One of your biggest challenges was that the media in Africa often had better contacts than our agents. Relations with them existed at an operational level...I hate to say they were being handled, but several were paid sources. They'll vehemently deny that" (Barnard interview).

While most coverage of the military and Pretoria's foreign interventions by the English press was unhesitatingly critical, the Afrikaans press tended toward "softer" coverage of the bush war, something that rankles some editors and journalists to this day. "We allowed government to lead us by the nose on the whole bush war," says van Deventer. "They allowed us to stay in the dark. They invited us to the front, and we had jolly parties, and when I see the criticism of the present generation, it pains me, because we went with those people and partied with them" (Van Deventer interview). Vosloo agrees with van Deventer's sentiments—"It was a tough time, and I'm not proud of what happened then"—although he adds that the potential repercussions of abrogating the Defense Act were a significant consideration. "You risk your whole group by breaking the rules; otherwise you become a Bram Fischer," he notes, referring to the noted Afrikaner lawyer who was imprisoned for his membership of the Communist Party and

association with the ANC (Vosloo interview). Dommissie seconds this sentiment, noting press group lawyers were very concerned with following the act, given the implications. Hence, “The raids in the region, our reporting depended on what the Defense Force told us” (Dommissie interview).

### 5.2.5 *The Media and Foreign Affairs Before 1994: Little Impact Up Or Down*

Overall, press coverage of foreign affairs before 1994 took a back seat to domestic issues. “By and large we failed to cover foreign events and foreign policy in any significant sense,” notes Rex Gibson of the *Cape Times*. “Foreign affairs has always been relegated to a left hand page, inside the paper” (Gibson interview). The English papers generally had more robust coverage of foreign issues, although this started declining by the 1970s. One reason for this was that South Africa’s growing isolation and the growing affinity of white voters for the NP started to diminish their historical connections to Great Britain (Pogrund, 2000:47). “*The Star* had an ethos that front page news was foreign, with one core reason being that many readers regarded England as home,” recalls Harvey Tyson. “That changed when I was editor, in the 1970s, and it had to change. That was old fashioned” (Tyson interview).

There were a handful of foreign issues of interest to South African readers during this period. Rhodesia from its 1965 UDI was one of the most widely covered foreign affairs issues in the press, particularly in English newspapers that generally were more strident in pushing support for the rebel government than their more cautious Afrikaans counterparts that reflected the government line (Good, 1973:129). The war in Angola also was of great interest to readers, particularly when there were South African casualties. Occasionally events in Europe—like the Prague Spring of 1968—would also generate readership. However, overall, these stories were of relatively limited interest and only for limited amounts of time; overall, “There wasn’t a very robust foreign policy debate,” notes Dommissie (Dommissie interview).

The extent to which foreign policy stayed in the picture had a great deal to do with the openness of Pik Botha, who enjoyed close personal ties to the media, both English and Afrikaans, perhaps closer than any other NP leader. Botha described both Cillie and *Rapport* editor Willem de Klerk as “great friends of mine,” and he also was very close to Ries and Gerald Shaw, both of

whom were university friends from the 1950s (P. Botha interview). In general, the media loved Pik—as his biographer notes, “Pik was always good for a story, and those stories often made the front page” (Papenfus, 2010:190). “He was an unusually accessible person,” remembers Peter Fabricius. “We in our office would ring Pik at home at 6AM, and he would take the call” (Fabricius interview). Both Fabricius and Vosloo remember that Pik had few qualms about being quoted anonymously or leaking inside information to the press (Vosloo and Fabricius interviews). That said, journalists from both sides of the linguistic divide understood that Pik’s accessibility was about winning support for his political ambitions and—particularly for the English press—disseminating the government line internationally. “Pik was sophisticated enough to try to court us, as he realized the way to get the message to the world was through the English press,” notes Fabricius (Fabricius interview).

Nevertheless, despite Pik Botha’s efforts to shape the media’s foreign affairs reporting, it had little impact on a largely disinterested public. “Foreign policy doesn’t sell newspapers,” notes longtime journalist and *Sunday Times* editor Ken Owen, whether it be the English or Afrikaans press (Owen interview). Adds van Deventer, “I can’t really think of foreign policy issues that got people interested. When local young lads were killed, that would be a lead story, but there wasn’t really an uproar. It was a way of life... We’d always go for the local story over the foreign story” (Van Deventer interview). The stories that did boost circulation, he notes, tended to be “soft” news—“things like the Royal Family and Wimbledon” (Van Deventer interview). Given this lack of interest—and the expense of covering international stories—South Africa before 1994 had relatively few foreign correspondents posted abroad, generally in Washington, New York, or London. Owen recalls that he was more or less alone during his 1969-77 tenure as a correspondent in Washington DC: “The Afrikaans papers for most of the period I was in DC didn’t have anyone” (Owen interview).

Influence by the press on foreign policy decision makers, like Pik, was even more limited than its downward influence on the readers. Within the party, while Cillie and others would and did weigh in on domestic affairs, such as reform of the apartheid system, foreign policy issues were generally not raised in these venues (Van Deventer interview). With the possible exception of journalists working for the intelligence apparatus, communication between government and the

press on foreign affairs issues was largely a one-way street. “He didn’t pick my brain,” says Owen of his relations with Pik Botha, for example, although he and several other journalists noted that they had good relations with senior DFA bureaucrats like Neil van Heerden (Owen interview). Owen also cites what he describes as amateurish coverage of foreign affairs as another reason for this lack of impact: “I used to go bonkers in Washington over the sheer lack of professionalism in publishing what I wrote, in putting smart assed Fleet Street headlines on serious stories. The result was that the bureaucrats didn’t take you seriously” (Owen interview).

### 5.3 *The Press and Government Since 1994: All Gloves Off*

South African journalists were hardly unfamiliar with the new ANC government when it took power in April 1994. Liberal English and Afrikaans journalists had established contacts with the ANC in exile from the mid-1980s, and party leaders like Thabo Mbeki were assiduous about keeping in touch with these journalists to ensure ANC policies were properly characterized in the press (Owen, 1988:27). Familiarity, however, did not necessarily mean trust. The major press organizations remained largely white, and Afrikaans papers felt they were particularly distrusted by the ANC due to their close relationship with the previous government. “There was a great sensitivity about any kind of criticism, which was viewed as racist,” notes van Deventer, who left Naspers in 1998 as CEO of its newspaper division (Van Deventer interview).

Nelson Mandela was an exception to this rule. “Nothing can compare to the Mandela years,” says *Sunday Times* editor Mondli Makhanya. “He would say, ‘Slam me, criticize me, whatever.’ There was much, much better access. When you went on trips with him, he always made time to say something for the journalists” (Makhanya interview). Makhanya further recalled that Mandela would almost always brief the local press corps after receiving a foreign head of state. Mandela was open to interaction with all sorts of journalists and editors, no matter age, race, or language; Vosloo, by then Managing Director of Naspers, recalls traveling with the President and having him visit the group’s Cape Town headquarters on a couple of occasions (Vosloo interview). *Business Day* journalist and foreign editor Hopewell Radebe, who broke into journalism in 1994, said that Mandela frequently gave access to junior writers like himself, much to the dismay of the bigger names (Radebe interview). Mandela also made sure that this openness filtered downward to his ministers and MPs. “During the Mandela period, you could

grab a minister in Parliament in the concourse. You could just stand there and wait long enough,” recalls Makhanya (Makhanya interview).

### 5.3.1 *Mbeki and the Press*

By all accounts, the tentative good will—or at least mutual tolerance—established between press and government during the Mandela years quickly disappeared under Mbeki (Barkan, 2005:18). Most journalists viewed Mbeki as genial and accessible to the press during his tenure as Deputy President. “I met Mbeki quite a few times,” recalls Vosloo. “Mbeki was always very affable; he loved talking to editors. We reached out to him and he responded, but he became more remote over time” (Vosloo interview). *Sowetan* and *Sunday Times* editor Mathatha Tsedu recalls traveling as part of a group of journalists with the then-Deputy President on a 1998 trip to Asia. “I flew with him, stayed at the same hotel, and in the evenings, there would be off the record briefings on the day, and what would happen tomorrow. Stuff that would not be for use was identified. It was great...we all had unlimited access” (Tsedu interview). On another occasion that year, Mbeki put in front of journalists an organogram on the linkages between Zimbabwean businessman Billy Rautenbach and the ZANU-PF regime. “He said, ‘You can’t resketch this, but you can copy the information you can use,’” notes Tsedu (Tsedu interview).

However, the Asia trip included an incident that foreshadowed the breakdown in Mbeki’s relationship with the media. After one briefing, explains Tsedu, “one guy took the information that was three times emphasized as off the record and filed the story. So, first thing, the rest of us got calls from our offices, ‘How could we miss the story?’ And Mbeki blew his top, and he decided not to have any more evening sessions” (Tsedu interview). Mbeki relented later in the trip, but the damage was done. After returning, Mbeki shut down a nascent press corps that would have focused on him, ostensibly because of criticism for favoring certain members of the media, and he would never show much trust for the media from then on.

After becoming President, Mbeki was largely inaccessible to the local press; he even stopped reading local press coverage for a time (Calland, 2004:194). Tsedu notes that Mbeki and ministers would meet periodically with the local media under the auspices of the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF), these meetings were largely perfunctory and, aside from the

first one in 2001, poorly attended by Cabinet (Tsedu interview). “He did not have many contacts in the media; an odd thing for a President,” recalls Makhanya. Makhanya described a 2002 state visit to Cuba where, on the last day, Mbeki turned down an interview request by the handful of local media who had accompanied him on the trip. “We were very pissed off, because we’ve traveled halfway across the world at great cost, and you at least want that appreciation that we’re being taken seriously. If there was a time constraint, that’s one thing, but the visit was over. He could have done it in 15 minutes” (Makhanya interview).

### 5.3.2 *The Foreign Affairs Freeze Out*

Although officials in the Presidency took cognizance of foreign affairs coverage in newspapers like *Business Day* and the *Mail & Guardian*, Mbeki largely froze out journalists in regard to foreign affairs (Calland, 2004:194; Masters, 2007:152). Notes Vosloo, “For foreign policy, what we get and what we report comes from leaks, from officials or contacts, that such and such is happening. They do briefings for the press, but it’s what they want you to know. Pretty useless” (Vosloo interview). Several journalists noted their perceptions that Mbeki did not respect the judgment of journalists, especially given that newspapers devoted so little attention to foreign affairs. Recalls Tsedu about Mbeki, “He would say, under normal circumstances, you would assume the agricultural reporter has a background in agriculture, but when it comes to politics, people don’t understand what they’re trying to do...that was Thabo’s line” (Tsedu interview).

This attitude filtered downward. Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma had, in the words of one journalist, a “don’t irritate me” mindset and had little time to interact with the press, thereby setting the tone for the rest of the department (Author’s private archive). Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad was a saving grace for journalists, however, establishing a weekly briefing for the press that he usually delivered. “Aziz was great,” says Makhanya, although he notes that Pahad “was very careful about pushing the line” in these press conferences and that they generally were not very enlightening (Makhanya interview). Still, “you always showed up; you didn’t want to not be there the one time something juicy came out of it” (Makhanya interview). Fabricius says Pahad, unlike the Minister, would take journalists’ phone calls and, on occasion, invite journalists to off-the-record briefings on various issues (Fabricius interview). Journalists describe Presidency Director-General Frank Chikane and DFA Director-General Ayanda

Ntsaluba as two other candid officials, although more off the record than on.

In the view of journalists and editors who covered foreign affairs, the government's lack of interaction with them on foreign policy represented a missed opportunity. "They did not get out their story on Zimbabwe," says Makhanya, who says "every official you spoke to had a different story about why we took our position on Zimbabwe" (Makhanya interview). Everyone would speak off the record about it, but the government struggled to formally frame its message. One journalist recalls Mbeki telling them in an off-the-record briefing in about 2003 that Zimbabwe was a very difficult situation; another notes that a senior Cabinet minister told him (again off the record) Pretoria's strategy was to wait for Mugabe to die (Author's private archive). Makhanya also notes that government missed an opportunity to sell its success stories: "Their work on the continent, that was a story they never got to tell. Burundi was an incredible achievement. DRC, I don't think it will ever be a success, but the relative stabilization was something on which they played a massive role. But it could have been done a hell of a lot better, not just with the South African media but internationally" (Makhanya interview).

Reflecting on his department's communication with the press, Pahad admits that DFA and the government writ large could have done a better job keeping the doors open, but expressed frustration with the quality of press coverage of foreign affairs, particularly by younger reporters. "The young ones are learning. You'd do a briefing, and they can't conceptualize what you are saying. We'd start sending transcripts, including the Q&As. But, even then you found they didn't understand, and the few who understood would give a twist to what you were saying," he notes (A. Pahad interview). He singled out Fabricius and Radebe as notable exceptions in the print media with the analytical capacity to dissect external issues.

### *5.3.3 Selling Foreign Affairs to a (Still) Disinterested Public*

Despite—or perhaps because of—the end of South Africa's international isolation, foreign affairs remained a tough sell for newspapers, which due to broadly declining circulation faced increasing pressure to cut costs. "You'll never sell your front page story on foreign affairs unless it's the collapse of Zimbabwe," says Makhanya. "People aren't really engaged" (Makhanya interview). Vosloo echoes this sentiment, broadening it to political issues on the whole: "A big

scandal may get you a few [extra sales], but sensation and sport sell. If the Blue Bulls win, you'll sell 30,000 more papers" (Vosloo interview). Using Zimbabwe as an example, Tsedu adds that the often slow-moving nature of foreign developments is another strike against their marketability: "[Sales] would peak when there were horrendous chapters of Mugabe's rule, and with each tick you would have huge increases. But now, until Mugabe's dead, there won't be great demand. Generally, it's just more of the same thing...A story on Myanmar will never sell on a front page" (Tsedu interview).

Given that lack of focus, newspapers in the past decade have devoted fewer resources to foreign affairs, cutting already limited coverage to the bone. Only a few newspaper groups have foreign editors, the most prominent of whom is Independent's Peter Fabricius, who adds, "I don't know if they'd replace me when I retire" (Fabricius interview). Fabricius also notes that the Independent Group—which publishes the *Cape Times* and *Star*, among others—currently has no full-time person abroad, meaning, "we've lost the South African perspective on things" (Fabricius interview). Naspers had only a correspondent in Brussels during Mbeki's tenure. This lack of a unique perspective means foreign editors are left with wire services, making the job, in the words of former *Die Burger* foreign affairs editor Jannie Ferreira, "largely a cut and paste job" (Ferreira interview). Nevertheless, print journalism remains where the action is on foreign affairs. Despite its decreasing attention, Tsedu notes, "the print press gives you the real coverage. With radio, you get headlines. Stations like SAFM may choose to make it an after 8 debate, bringing in a few of the experts to analyze the issues with some level of intelligence. But if you want to find something that covers an issue with some level of sophistication, then it's only the print press" (Tsedu interview).

#### 5.4 Conclusion: Press Never a Foreign Policy Player

Of all of the actors considered in this study, the press looks to have the least impact on the foreign affairs debate, with its lack of a "downward" influence clearly impacting its relationship "upward" with government. As noted in the previous chapter, the South African public writ large generally does not care much about the country's foreign policy or events beyond its borders. The press, in an effort to sell newspapers and advertising, takes note of this and adjusts its coverage accordingly. For government, because the press does not provide much coverage of

foreign affairs and has little influence on the reading public, the media voice is muted, allowing government decision makers to ignore calls in the media to pursue particular foreign policies. This was as much the case before 1994 as it was under Mandela and Mbeki. This press influence was even further limited after 1994 by South Africa's openness to the world. Unlike Vorster, Mbeki had no need to cultivate the local press (particularly the English-language press) to sell South African policies to the world; his willingness to prioritize talking to foreign journalists before local ones clearly displays the South African media's marginality.

The media's influence post-1994 also has been circumscribed by the lack of a "loyal" press, particularly in the print sphere. The NP always had its stable of "party organ" newspapers that it could use to sell its policies, but also take the pulse of Afrikanerdom. The ANC has no such thing, and this was reflected by the deep-seated suspicion of the press by Mbeki and others within the ANC. Private access to the President and senior officials has been severely limited, and there was no development of an "insider" relationship between certain journalists and senior ANC officials; even personal connections between some black journalists and ANC leaders appear to have been tempered by their affiliations with media groups viewed as white and opposition-aligned. Ultimately, on all matters of policy, foreign and domestic, the press has never been an influential body, and looks to be even less so in the future.

## **Chapter 6: Academia's Impact on South African Foreign Policy Making**

### *6.1 Introduction*

One might regard the inclusion of subject matter experts—either independent or affiliated with a university or think tank—in a discussion about participatory foreign policy as out of place. Few entities could be considered more elite and unrepresentative of a populace, given the specialized nature of academic study and debate. However, given the specialized and inherently elite nature of foreign policy debates, they constitute a voice that cannot be ignored, both in terms of “downward” influence on the populace and other non-government actors, as well as “upward” impact on the policy makers themselves. They find themselves called upon not only by government (in many instances), but also by non-governmental actors like the press, pressure groups, and business interests to advise and educate them.

This chapter will explore how academics, both before and after 1994, have played a role in influencing the foreign policy debate in South Africa, particularly among principal foreign policy decision makers. Specifically, it will seek to answer whether these principals consulted subject matter experts and, if so, the mechanisms by which this consultation occurred. It also will identify the most influential policy experts—both under Mbeki and his predecessors—as well as why certain experts had more access and consideration. For purposes of examining this question, this chapter will examine academic influence on foreign policy during three specific epochs: pre-1990, the 1990-94 transition period, and post-1994.

### *6.2 Academic Impact on Foreign Policy Until 1990*

The study of “international affairs”—a mix of academic disciplines looking at the outside world that include political science, history, economics, geography, and military strategy—received scant attention in South Africa before the mid-1970s, both from universities and independent institutions. University academic departments offered some courses dealing in history, geography, and politics, although these were heavily Eurocentric and almost completely ignored the rest of the world. Africa was particularly ignored, with not more than a dozen South African academics paying attention to Africa north of the Limpopo in the mid-1960s (Munger, 1965:34). The University of the Witwatersrand, through its Jan Smuts Chair in International Relations, was

the first tertiary institute to offer a separate course in international affairs, although this did not come until 1962 (Geldenhuys, 1984a:169). The first chair, British academic Ben Cockram, designed the curriculum, which former student, and later leading strategic studies scholar, Deon Fourie remembers as focused more on military and strategic issues than diplomacy (D. Fourie interview). Given this inattention, it is unsurprising, as scholar Ned Munger noted in 1965, that intellectuals were “well removed from the formation of (foreign) policy” (Munger, 1965:39).

### *6.2.1 Key Institutional Actors*

Prior to the mid-1970s, only two non-academic institutions or “think tanks” focused on external affairs. The Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) was established by Parliamentary statute in 1960 to promote the study of African affairs as well as public awareness of the continent. This status provided it government funding (which continues to this day) and, to an extent, government business through the commissioning of reports. However, as Munger noted, these services during AISA’s early years were “primarily fact producing and not policy making,” such as its compilation of the country’s finest African studies library (Munger, 1965:53). As former Executive Director (1994-99) Denis Venter—who joined AISA in 1979—remembers, the Institute was “more or less a government mouthpiece” until the late 1970s, when it began to hoe a more independent road (Venter interview).

The other institution devoted to the study of foreign affairs was the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). Founded in 1934 in Cape Town by a group of (predominantly English-speaking) politicians, journalists, and academics, the Institute was the only independent body devoted to the study of foreign affairs. It operated, however, more as an elite club and library than an academic body in its early years, not producing a paper until 1945 (“History of SAIIA”). The quantity and quality of its production improved significantly after 1967, when former Foreign Service officer John Barratt took over as National Director. Funding came almost exclusively from the English business community, and in particular from Anglo-American; SAIIA’s liberal, and increasingly progressive, worldview was much in sync with that of its patrons (Pfister, 2005:21).

South Africa from the late 1960s saw significant growth in the number of scholars and institutions focusing on aspects of international affairs, particularly from a defense and security optic. The perception of a military threat from the Soviet Union in particular helped bolster government demand for academic outputs, particularly from the South African Defense Force, as well as interest by students. Centers dealing with “strategic studies” were established at the University of South Africa, Rand Afrikaans University, and the University of Pretoria (with its Institute for Strategic Studies, established in 1977, the most prominent and long-lasting), while Potchefstroom set up a Center for International Politics (Vale, 2003:68). A burgeoning interest in the Soviet Union helped launch the Institute for the Study of Marxism (renamed the Institute for Soviet Studies in 1983) at Stellenbosch, as well as the Russian Studies department at Wits (Pienaar, 1997:130). Even less strategically important parts of the world merited institutes, such as UNISA’s Center for Latin American Studies, founded in 1984 (Leysens and Fourie, 1997:156).

The extent and nature of the relationship between these institutions and government is not entirely clear to this day. Some academics posited that they were little more than government fronts, designed to endorse South African policies with a veneer of scholarship in exchange for government funds (Geldenhuys, 1984a:169). After the “Muldergate” Information Department scandal broke in 1978, it was revealed in Parliament that the centers at both Potchefstroom and Pretoria had received covert funding from the Department of Information, which subsequently was made overt and put under DFA auspices (Leonard, 1983:177). Covert financing continued, however. Philip Nel, head of the Stellenbosch Institute for Soviet Studies from 1983 to 1992, admits that his institute received funding from Military Intelligence. “MI approached us and said they would fund us to the tune of R50,000 a year for three years, because we wanted to appoint another analyst,” Nel recalls. “The university top brass knew about the MI funding and blessed it; it was to pay for an academic, not any sort of propaganda” (P. Nel interview). Funding for institutions from National Intelligence also was widely rumored, although never proven. Niel Barnard said that NIS had “an operational understanding” with “centers of excellence with knowledge on threats to our national security,” but he would not elaborate further (Barnard interview).

That said, academics at these centers bristle at allegations that their government funding compromised their independence. Nel—who like many political scientists served his military obligation in MI and maintained contact through his reserve duties—maintains that his work at the center allowed him to influence the debate in a way that otherwise would not have been possible as an outsider (P. Nel interview). Furthermore, the funding that was received was quite small compared to what was needed for operating budgets, and dried up after the early 1980s. The institute at Pretoria, Hough recalls, ran on fumes from the time he started in 1979, surviving on fees from conferences and journal articles; even his directorship of the Institute was a part-time job in addition to departmental duties. “For funding,” he claimed, “we were on our own” (Hough interview). Nearly all of the centers and academic departments with an international focus during this period were small affairs, with none having more than a handful of researchers.

By the time of the transition, South Africa had developed a relatively small, but eminently capable, group of academics devoted to the study of international affairs and strategic studies. SAIIA during this period was particularly fertile ground for developing experts, turning out leading analysts like Deon Geldenhuys, Andre du Pisani, and Peter Vale, while other bright stars (notably Deon Fourie at UNISA and Gerrit Olivier at Pretoria) were dotted around the academic landscape. Journals like ISSUP’s *Strategic Studies* and the South African Association of Political Studies publication *Politikon* included articles on various aspects of international affairs, including the making of South African foreign policy. While the quality of work on issues and regions of the world with minimal strategic interest for South Africa was a mixed bag, work focusing on the southern Africa sub-region tended to be of high quality.

### 6.2.2 *Engaging the Executive and DFA: Challenging Propositions*

The degree of interaction between academia and government can be rather reliably measured, given the reminiscences of the various participants, although teasing out influence is a far more subjective matter. However, a high degree of interaction would, at least in theory, suggest the potential for influence, making examination of such interaction worthwhile. In all, academics—individually and institutionally—had varying degrees of access to government before 1990, depending on a mix of factors including seniority of officials, personal relations, utility of the interaction for the officials, and ethnicity.

Given the pressures and time constraints of high office, one would expect that academic access to senior government officials (particularly in Cabinet) would be far more limited than at working levels. According to a body of interviews, this hypothesis was largely borne out. The only head of state prior to 1990 who paid even some attention to academic outputs was PW Botha, who occasionally met with groups of academics (albeit not solely focused on foreign policy), approvingly cited the work of Wits professor (and Jan Smuts chair) Dirk Kunert, and found time to excoriate Deon Geldenhuys in Parliament for perceived inaccuracies in his academic work (P. Nel interview; Geldenhuys and Kotze, 1985:31). Otherwise, interviewees note that neither Foreign Ministers Hilgard Muller (1964-77) nor Pik Botha (1977-94) had much interaction with foreign affairs experts. Botha in an interview vaguely implied that he met with academics, but he offered no specifics. Others were outright dismissive of academic inputs; Deputy Foreign Minister (1984-86) Louis Nel bluntly stated, “I never paid attention to academics. You know what I read? Newspapers, and telexes from our missions around the world” (L. Nel interview).

At the working levels of government (specifically DFA), however, there was some back and forth, although it was haphazard and slow to develop. Munger noted in 1965 that the head of the Africa Institute, a government-funded body, had not met DFA’s Africa section head, even after the latter had been on the job for two years (Munger, 1965:52). This lack of interaction appeared to stem largely from disinterest by DFA in what academics had to say; as longtime diplomat Donald Sole remembers, “In my time at head office [in the 1960s], there was no great confidence in any of the institutes” (Sole interview). Interviews with academics and diplomats trace the origin of semi-regular contact to the mid-1970s, when DFA began calling on subject and regional experts for training purposes and, in some instances, for individual consultations on specific issues. However, such outreach was more the exception than the rule, dependent on personal initiative and relationships (such as with former professors from university).

By the late 1970s and through the 1980s, these interactions became more regularized. Nel remembers attending semi-regular (“maybe once a year”) conferences between academics and DFA; even Director General (1987-92) Neil van Heerden would attend (P. Nel interview). Niel

Barnard's sudden elevation from political science professor to NIS chief in 1979 also sparked more regularized interaction between the civilian intelligence service and academia: "We would have a conference at the time on something like the fighting in Angola, and we'd invite people from Stellenbosch and the Africa Institute to discuss it with us," he remembered (Barnard interview). Such sessions could be contentious. "There was one session [around 1988] that even NIS invited a bunch of academics to give talks on Marxism, revolutionary politics, and the like," recalled Nel. "It was Willie Esterhuyse, myself, Anton van Niekerk, the current head of philosophy at Stellenbosch. I remember saying that the SACP should be unbanned, and several NIS guys got up and walked out" (P. Nel interview).

Overall, however, these interactions led to far more dead ends than breakthroughs. Several academics recounted submitting papers to DFA for comment but hearing nothing back; others would attend seminars or hold seemingly productive meetings with DFA contacts, but have them come to nothing (Pienaar interview). Both Olivier and Deon Geldenhuys recall making submissions to DFA in the early 1980s on the idea of creating an academic advisory council on foreign affairs; nothing came of it (Olivier and D. Geldenhuys interviews). For academics, government was a black box—after making their inputs, they had no insights into whether their ideas were given any consideration.

### *6.2.3 The Importance of Who You Are and Who You Know*

In terms of interacting with government, all academics were not created equal—much depended on one's personal connections, politics, and ethnicity. SAIIA's government interactions are an excellent case in point. Munger famously wrote in 1965 that SAIIA's political worldview gave it the same influence on the Verwoerd government as the ultra-conservative John Birch Society had on Lyndon Johnson's administration in the United States (Munger, 1965:52). From an institutional standpoint, this view held more or less true through the 1980s—SAIIA as an actor was largely excluded from organized government symposia and did not have research commissioned by government departments like the Africa Institute. The latter was a moot point, as SAIIA under John Barratt steadfastly refused to take government (of foreign) money, a stance that made it heavily dependent on its business funders (Pienaar interview).

However, Barratt's personal connections within DFA—not to mention growing respect for SAIIA's products within the Department—allowed the Institute to retain a foothold of access with the bureaucracy and top working-level officials (Geldenhuys, 1984a:170). "Barratt had come out of the service, and he had a close personal relationship with these people," remembered close friend Peter Vale. "They were dinner party pals. Informal networks were crucial to the work of Barratt and the Institute. It seemed to me that he never crossed the road between one world and the other. With academics he saw himself as a diplomat, and vice versa. He kept this dual personality his whole life" (Vale interview). These connections allowed Barratt entrée to certain segments of the Department throughout the 1970s and 1980s, although these were not necessarily the parts that mattered. As Vale notes, "He was close to Shearer and [veteran diplomat] Don Sole and people like that, but I don't think he had an influence on policy" (Vale interview). But as for the real powers in the Department, Vale notes, "He didn't have a good relationship with Brand Fourie. He was not close to Pik" (Vale interview).

As Barratt's case illustrates, a mixture of personal ties, ideology, institutional affiliation, and ethnicity was a key determinant of whether an academic would be included in discussions or not. Barratt was a rarity in that his exceptional personal connections helped him overcome his detriments. Few other academics had such luck. As Vale notes, "I was considered by many in DFA to be sympathetic to, if not a member of, the ANC. From the time I returned from the UK as a student in 1977, even though I was at the International Institute of Strategic Studies, they never tapped into me...I was never once even invited to a cocktail party" (Vale interview). With regard to academic institutions, professors from Afrikaans-medium institutions had a leg up over their English colleagues. As Garth Shelton of Wits notes, "You'd find scholars divided into Afrikaans and English speaking universities, the former tending to be sympathetic and the latter critical. I can never remember being invited to anything before 1994, and I was at Wits ten years before that. You would see DFA folks at general conferences, but they would never ask our opinions. Most of the time they just expected it to be critical" (Shelton interview).

Meanwhile, academics at Stellenbosch, RAU, Pretoria, and Free State had far more privileged access. As with certain privileged institutes, such access led to questions in many contemporary accounts about the independence of their academic views, although Afrikaner academics

interviewed for this study contested such allegations. While the Africa Institute was alleged to have changed its views to suit government orthodoxy, Venter cited several examples where government departments complained that the Institute's work was not suitably sympathetic (Hanlon, 1986:57; Venter interview). He also contends that longtime director Erich Leistner consistently backed his researchers in conducting independent research (Venter interview). Not all Afrikaner academics were necessarily sympathetic to government views, and many were unafraid of voicing such opinions. Nel, for example, said he would use the access provided him to provide a counterpoint to orthodox views on Soviet expansionism, a line his government interlocutors did not always want to hear (P. Nel interview).

Overly dissident academics, English and Afrikaans alike, were subject to government harassment, petty and otherwise. In one of the more egregious cases, Vale—then President of the South African Political Science Association—had his passport cancelled in the 1980s (Rhodie, 1989:112). England-born Sara Pienaar, a Soviet expert who later served as SAIIA National Director, was told that her request for a security clearance was refused, preventing her from lecturing at a military course (Pienaar interview). Promotion prospects could be limited for being overly outspoken in public (Welsh, 2009:179). The state-owned media could also blackball academics if they spouted analysis countering that of the government. Fourie recalled the following telling anecdote:

*Once, there was a rumor that the USSR was selling MiG-29s to Zimbabwe, and I told an interviewer from SABC that the USSR never gave new stuff to the 3<sup>rd</sup> World, so I doubted it was true. That evening I listened to the news at five, and it said Malan said this kind of sale was typical. The only thing they used from my recording was a section on what happens if it really does eventuate, nothing that gave my opinion. Then I was dumped by the SABC entirely. A year later around Christmas, the USSR invaded Afghanistan, and the same guy phoned me, and said, "I'm sorry to use you, but no one else is in town!" He actually confessed that I was blackballed (D. Fourie interview).*

#### 6.2.4 *Were Academics Useful for Government?*

While several former government officials noted that they appreciated the specialized knowledge and expertise of academics, they also said that general academic incomprehension of how government works limited their utility. While Barnard said academics were useful in exposing his people to different views, ensuring NIS did not succumb to “tunnel vision” in its analysis, he further complained that professors “tend to talk **too** long, have an academic view of things, and don’t understand the challenges of government. They believe that if you analyze the situation, the solution will come down from the heavens. They don’t understand that mortal people are involved in the decisions” (Barnard interview). Former UN Permanent Representative and Director-General in the Presidency Dave Steward recounted another anecdote highlighting academic disconnection from government:

*I remember going to a lecture presided over by one of the luminaries in the academic sphere on international relations. He had a chart—inputs here, bureaucrats here, business, all feeds into policy formulation, being fed back to Parliament, then to the DG, and then the Minister, Cabinet, gets reformulated and comes out as policy! I stood up and said, “Do you know how policy is made in DFA?” He looked at me aghast. And I said it’s like this. I’d been working with some of the top structures while down at Parliament, Brand Fourie and them. The way it works is that the Secretary, Fourie, is very difficult to find. He speaks only to the next echelon, and he doesn’t like any of them. But he’s the only one who takes decision. So the real way policy is made is that anyone who wants anything done will try to butter up his elephantine secretary to see if you can get an appointment. Inevitably he cannot. So what he does is to wait in an anteroom with his pet project until the Secretary wants to go to the loo. And he follows him down the passage. While the Secretary is peeing, foreign policy is made. I’m not joking; this is what happens (Steward interview).*

Several academics acknowledged that their lack of access to classified information and information on breaking developments limited their contributions. However, they bemoaned perceived diplomatic arrogance in not using them in a more systematized way. While acknowledging that “ivory tower academics are too far removed to make a difference,” Deon Geldenhuys also opined “the flip side is that some bureaucrats could become very self-satisfied

and arrogant and think they knew the ways of the world because they were at the coalface” (D. Geldenhuys interview). Both academics and government officials bemoaned the lack of a “revolving door” system, as exists in the United States, that would have allowed academics the opportunity to enter government for a period of time.

#### 6.2.5 *Overstating Influence: The Case of Deon Geldenhuys*

Several accounts written during the 1980s ascribe to certain academics and institutions a rather significant amount of influence on government policy, but in retrospect these accounts—often written by non-South African analysts with little first hand knowledge—appear to have significantly overstated the role of certain academics in influencing policy. The case of SAIIA analyst and longtime RAU (now University of Johannesburg) political science professor Deon Geldenhuys is an illustrative case in point. Geldenhuys during the early 1980s published two articles on South Africa’s strategic options in the region, “Some Strategic Implications of Regional Economic Relations for the Republic of South Africa” (1981) and “The Destabilization Controversy: An Analysis of a High-Risk Foreign Policy Option for South Africa” (1982), both of which received wide notice outside South Africa given that they coincided with Pretoria’s burgeoning cross-border operations. Geldenhuys in 1984 then published his book, *The Diplomacy of Isolation*, which remains the gold standard of publications on South Africa’s pre-transition foreign policy.

These publications brought Geldenhuys notoriety in academic circles outside South Africa. One 1985 piece (co-written by current Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies, then attached to Mozambique’s Eduardo Mondlane University) called Geldenhuys “one of the Botha regime’s leading consultants on foreign policy issues” (Davies and O’Meara, 1985:190). Joseph Hanlon in his 1986 book *Beggar Your Neighbors: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa* referred to Geldenhuys as a “major theoretician of destabilization” and claims that the professor was “close to at least some of the National Party strategists and ideologists.” Hanlon further postulated that Geldenhuys could emerge as “a future Henry Kissinger or (US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs) Chester Crocker,” emerging from academia to make policy (Hanlon, 1986:29).

A quarter century later, Geldenhuys can laugh at the allegations that he “more or less single-handedly devised the destabilization of the Africa from the Limpopo to the Mediterranean.” However, it was less of a laughing matter during the 1980s, when—fearing ramifications for his academic career—he went so far as to seek legal advice in Great Britain on how to refute the allegations, backing off only due to the prohibitive price. In reality, according to Geldenhuys, “I was never, not once, asked by someone in DFA or the military or intelligence or any organ of state to come talk to them, much less advise them on any aspect of foreign policy,” with occasional lecturing at the military staff college his sole regular government interaction (D. Geldenhuys interview). As for the senior leaders he was supposedly advising, Geldenhuys notes that he only met Magnus Malan and Pik Botha once each during the 1980s, when he interviewed them (rather fruitlessly) for *Diplomacy* and never met PW Botha. He asserts that he was never told by anyone in government that his writings were in any way influential.

To back up his assertion that he had no inside track, Geldenhuys cites the flak he received from PW Botha and others over his publications. “When *Diplomacy* was published, he took me to task in Parliament for what I had written. In typical PW style, he tried to ridicule me, citing passages of the book dealing with the SSC. His point was, ‘How can you take this author seriously if this is the kind of crap he produces?’ So if I had been this important figure, you’d figure PW would have known of me, and I would have been in and out of the corridors of power, which I’ve never been.” A 1983 *Politikon* article by Geldenhuys and Hennie Kotze about decision making in the State Security Council brought further government enmity. He recalls being called on the carpet by the SSC Secretary: “He gave us a dressing down! He was furious. And after this article, I’d written an op-ed for the *Sunday Times*, and he was waving that at us, having highlighted the offensive passages. Again, if I had been this influential advisor/architect, why would this guy do this?” (D. Geldenhuys interview).

One can postulate that Geldenhuys—and other academics that made similar assertions about their limited access and influence—are lying about their roles in the equation. It would behoove those still working in South Africa to understate their ties to the old government. However, the similarity of findings among academics and decision makers suggests that academics truly did not have any meaningful impact on high-level foreign policy decision making prior to 1990. No

academic copped to anything beyond incidental contact with executive decision makers, or significant “back channel” ties to the working levels. More significantly, none of the decision makers themselves gave much credence to the role of academics as a key influence. Certain articles may have been glanced at in passing or excerpted by a personal assistant, but not to any lasting effect.

Why was this impact so limited? Several interviewees cited the fast pace of government and South Africa’s war footing from the 1970s. As Barnard explains, “in intelligence, you don’t have the luxury of a long, peaceful period. You have to make decisions on the run. I always explained to people that, do you think Napoleon had time for consultations at the Battle of Austerlitz? It doesn’t work that way” (Barnard interview). Decision making in all departments was ad hoc, influenced on a daily basis by events that were in many cases beyond the South African Government’s control. When policy is reactive rather than proactive, considered academic inputs by their nature have only so much scope for impact. This seems to have been the overarching reason for academia’s light footprint before 1990.

### *6.3 Foreign Affairs Experts’ Newfound Influence During the Transition*

South Africa’s transition to majority rule, sparked by FW de Klerk’s 2 February 1990 speech announcing the unbanning of the ANC and release of Nelson Mandela, upset a host of long extant dynamics in the country, and the relationship between government and academia was no exception. Academics between 1990 and 1994 had unprecedented influence on and access to both the ANC and government in shaping the foreign policy of a democratic South Africa. This period introduced into the mix a host of new academic actors, both individuals and institutions, while others departed the scene.

#### *6.3.1 The Roots of ANC-Academic Foreign Policy Interaction*

Interaction between the ANC in exile and South African foreign policy academics was minimal until the 1980s. The nature of the ANC’s international outreach until that time—largely focused on isolating the apartheid government and simply surviving—did not necessitate a deep interaction with academia on such theoretical topics as South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy; there would be time for that later. That said, the ANC had a small but highly competent

group of foreign policy thinkers, like Thabo Mbeki and Pallo Jordan, as well as academics like Davies. In addition, ANC Department of International Affairs (DIA) and Information officials were clearly aware of academic outputs from South Africa, incorporating them into their own analytical products. One 1984 document, ascribed to the Research Unit of the Department of Information and Publicity, called “Apartheid Distabilisation (sic): Pretoria’s Regional Strategy” cited Geldenhuys in its analysis of South African regional policy. Other internal analytical documents on such topics as US and Soviet foreign policies further displayed a sophisticated understanding of international affairs.

Emerging contact between white South Africans and ANC officials during the 1980s created the space for increased interaction between South African foreign policy academics and ANC officials, at conferences in Europe and throughout the region. Vale remembers attending seminars in the mid-1980s in Mozambique and Zimbabwe where he was able to meet with ANC officials like Thabo Mbeki and Mac Maharaj on the future of the sub-region and other foreign affairs issues (Vale interview). These contacts led to more in-depth talks by 1988 in Lusaka, where Vale and ANC DIA officials like Mbeki, Yusuf Saloojee, and Josiah Jele discussed, among other things, the need for an ANC-aligned think tank to help inform its thinking on foreign affairs (Vale interview).

### *6.3.2 Shaping a New Foreign Policy*

The ANC’s February 1990 unbanning and the subsequent return of its Lusaka-based leadership touched off a heady four-year period during which time academics had a significant ability to weigh in on South Africa’s future foreign policy. There was a quick realization by the ANC leadership that while the Freedom Charter and subsequent ANC documents contained some general foreign policy guidelines, such as solidarity with liberation movements, South Africa’s reemergence into the international community meant that the soon-to-be government had to take policy positions on a host of issues, necessitating inputs from outside experts (Van Nieuwkerk interview). Nearly all of this interaction was focused on the ANC; no academic interviewed for this study remembers any significantly heightened interaction with DFA or other parts of government.

The action, so to speak, was in dealing with the ANC, and by early 1991 its DIA commenced a series of meetings between their officials and prominent South African academics on the tenets of a post-transition foreign policy (Vale, 2010:245). The core group of ANC officials and academics was a small one. From the ANC side, Mbeki was intimately involved; remembers Vale, even though “Thabo didn’t come to all of the meetings, his spirit was always there” (Vale interview). Participants recalled other key players as including Aziz Pahad; DIA spokesman Stanley Mabizela; DIA members Saloojee, Frene Ginwala, and Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini; and a handful of other more junior officials who came and went as needed (Daniel and van Nieuwkerk interviews).

Vale, who founded the Center for South African Studies (CSAS) at the University of Western Cape in 1990, was tasked by Mbeki to lead the academic group (Vale interview). He was accompanied by CSAS colleague Rob Davies; Anthoni van Nieuwkerk and Gary van Staden of SAIIA; John Daniel, recently returned from exile and at University of Durban-Westville; Vincent Maphai of UWC; and Maxi Schoeman of Rand Afrikaans University (Daniel and van Nieuwkerk interviews). With the exception of Maphai, remembers John Daniel, the makeup of the academic component was largely white, although then-junior non-white academics like Vasu Gounden, Siphon Maseko, and Hussein Solomon also were involved in various discussions (Daniel interview). Most of these participants were ideologically on the same page, largely espousing an “idealist” rather than a “realist” or “liberal” foreign policy outlook. However, the latter group, of whom Barratt could be considered the most prominent member, was afforded opportunities to weigh in on policy at public seminars and closed meetings (Vale interview).

These discussions had several aims. Prosaic issues were addressed, such as how to get training for ANC diplomats that would help them integrate into a new DFA, as well as the mechanics behind setting up the previously mentioned ANC think tank (Gounden interview). This emerged in 1995 as the Foundation (later Institute) for Global Dialogue. However, the primary aim of the discussions was to devise a document stating the tenets of ANC foreign policy (Daniel interview). Vale took the lead in drafting this document, which after consultations with fellow academics and civil society groups, emerged in October 1993 as “Foreign Policy in a New Democratic South Africa: A Discussion Paper” (Vale interview). This document stated, among

its seven principles, that the ANC would emphasize human rights as a hallmark of South Africa's post-transition foreign policy and that it would prioritize southern Africa and the broader continent in its outreach.

This discussion document provided the framework for the December 1993 article in American journal *Foreign Affairs* entitled "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy," credited to Nelson Mandela. After the ANC signed off on the idea, the article was primarily drafted by Vale, who claims it on his CV. "The intellectual structure of the piece is my own. The opening paragraphs were written by Gary van Staden, the 'I was in jail but the world was changing,' etc. The piece on trade was written by Rob Davies, and the piece on finance by Alan Hirsch" (Vale interview). Vale sent the piece back to the ANC's Shell House headquarters via Kader Asmal; it came back with certain edits and deletions ("one was about support for Aung San Suu Kyi"), but Vale doubts Mandela himself ever read the piece beforehand (Vale interview).

Academic interviewees who were a part of this process remember these years as some of the most exciting and heady of their careers. As Vale recalls, "Few people get the opportunity to straddle two sides and have these interactions" (Vale interview). Roger Southall, a sociologist and foreign policy expert, remembers, "For the first time I felt as a political scientist that people apart from other political scientists wanted to talk to me" (Southall interview). Academics, so long neglected by government (not just in the foreign policy arena) were now at the coalface of policy making, with their inputs given serious consideration and incorporated into policy documents. On the foreign policy front specifically, workshops and discussions during the day would bleed into informal discussions at night at participants' houses (Daniel interview). Such networking opportunities were unprecedented—and gave hope to many of the academic participants that they would be included in the new government foreign policy dispensation.

### *6.3.3 A Time of Unprecedented Academic Impact*

Overall, the period from 1990 to 1994 was one of unprecedented access by academics to the key formulators of foreign and defense policy (taking into account that while not yet in government, the ANC was the "government-in-waiting"). Academics drafted the key policy documents and established the normative frameworks that would supposedly bracket South African policy after

the transition. While the ANC may have provided the “skeleton” for such policies, academics were invaluable for putting meat on the bones. The exercise, notes Aziz Pahad, “was useful, marrying academic inputs with practitioner inputs. I think we produced some bloody interesting discussion documents at that time” (A. Pahad interview). Experts with views in line with those of the ANC’s leadership obviously played a dominant role, but, in line with the democratic ethos of the United Democratic Front, all viewpoints were represented. The question, however, was whether a “government-in-waiting” would have the same openness to debate and engagement after it formally took power in April 1994.

#### 6.4 1994 and After: Back to Earth

Given the experience of the previous four years, many foreign policy academics had high hopes that they would continue to have access and influence under a democratic, ANC-led government that emphasized openness in the policy making arena (Van der Westhuizen, 1998:446). The ANC in its 1994 foreign policy discussion document, as well as DFA in its 1996 Green Paper on foreign affairs, referenced the need to interact with universities and academic institutions. A profusion of new actors and a revitalization of existing ones, fueled by the new-found interest of Western donors, spurred optimism that academic expertise on foreign and defense policy issues would be vastly improved and increasingly valuable to government. Ideas like a foreign policy advisory council were revived, whereby academics and other civil society actors would have the basis for formalized interaction with government (Black, 1995:85). As noted, several academics even harbored ambitions of being included in the new foreign policy apparatus. Ultimately, however, this did not come to fruition.

By mid-1994, it was clear to many of the participants in the discussions on foreign policy that they would not be joining the new government. Several participants in the transitional talks on foreign policy had at least notions that they would be asked to take government positions. As John Daniel remembers, “I thought a job like a DDG position was a strong possibility, even a probability. There had been a lot of speculation in the press; the *Mail and Guardian* had done a piece on whites who were going to make it big, and I was part of that” (Daniel interview). Several interviewees said it was widely perceived that Vale thought he would receive a top post, possibly the Director-Generalship of the department, but Mandela elected to retain holdover

Rusty Evans. Observers have differing viewpoints as to why Vale was not offered this or any other significant job; a combination of his race, predilection to argue, immodesty, and inability to build a trusting relationship with the ANC leadership all were cited. As Pahad points out, “Anybody who says publicly ‘I wrote that Mandela speech’ will run into difficulty...how many people wrote how many speeches?” (A. Pahad interview). Vale himself cites Mbeki’s desire to maintain a firm grip on foreign policy now that he was Deputy President (Vale interview). Whatever the case may have been, there was no movement of leading foreign affairs thinkers into government, neither at first nor through Mbeki’s tenure in office, although one prominent academic did admit to being offered high-level positions.

#### *6.4.1 Institutional Players, New and Old*

The period from about 1992 to 1996 saw the emergence of several new institutional players with competencies in foreign affairs, while old ones were forced, in the words of PW Botha, to “adapt or die.” In this new, crowded landscape, organizations were forced to fight one another for expertise, government contracts, and access to decision makers—not to mention donor funds pouring in from around the world. Universities tended to be the losers, with the balance of power among expert entities shifting from increasingly cash-strapped universities to private, donor-funded think tanks. Many of the strategic studies’ centers established at universities during the 1970s and 1980s had folded by the early 1990s; only ISSUP carried on into the new century, although it remained a small, shoestring organization. Even Vale’s CSAS, which shared the outlook of the new government, folded by the late 1990s, having lost co-director Rob Davies to Parliament (Vale interview).

The two most established players also had a fight to survive. South Africa’s oldest independent foreign affairs research organization, SAIIA, entered the new democratic era on the verge of collapse. “I took over in 1993 at a terrifying time,” remembers former SAIIA National Director Sara Pienaar, who succeeded Barratt. “Our corporate funding had dried up; they were already seeing the future laid elsewhere” (Pienaar interview). With a budget of only a few hundred thousand rand, Pienaar was forced to halve the staff just to keep the organization solvent. Greg Mills, who Pienaar hired as Director of Research and succeeded her as National Director in 1996, remembers his new role as “essentially Director of nothing,” given the staff cuts (Mills

interview). SAIIA also had to redefine its role, having long served more as a facilitator of public dialogue than a conductor of serious research.” As longtime SAIIA fellow Tim Hughes notes, “SAIIA used to call itself South Africa’s window on the world; now the door’s open. So what role do you play?” (Hughes interview). The other established think tank player, the Africa Institute, also had to redefine itself in this new era, particularly given that its quasi-governmental status meant that it had to get into, and stay in, the new government’s good graces, given that its Parliamentary disbursement covered almost all of its budget (Vale, 1990:6). AISA saw the departure of several senior—mostly white—researchers after 1994, while limited government funding—only R3.2 million in 1999, covering just 17 total staff—did not enable it to compete with better-funded competitors (Carlsnaes and Nel, 1999:23-24).

SAIIA and AISA had the additional challenges of competition from a host of new institutional actors. One of the key new players was Pretoria’s Institute for Security Studies (ISS). Founded by former SADF officer Jakkie Cilliers in 1990 as the Institute for Defense Policy, the Institute (renamed ISS in 1996) through the 1990s broadened its focus from domestic security reform to look at a host of domestic and continental security issues (“History of ISS”). Another new player on the security front was the Durban-based African Center for Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), founded in 1992 by Vasu Gounden with an initial focus on conflict mediation and peacemaking among domestic actors in the run-up to the 1994 national election (Gounden interview). After its work on peacemaking and conflict mediation in KwaZulu-Natal before the 1994 election helped defuse tensions there, the South African Government in 1995 asked ACCORD to assist its efforts to bring peace to Burundi. ACCORD established a robust civic education program, boosting the capacity of rebel groups to engage in negotiations, and is regarded as one of South Africa’s most effective non-governmental players in the African peacekeeping and peacemaking arena (Bentley and Southall, 2005:154-156).

Several other new or re-branded entities also had foreign affairs competencies. Johannesburg’s Center for Policy Studies (CPS), although mostly focused on domestic issues, started to focus on Africa in the mid-1990s, particularly after former Rhodes scholar Chris Landsberg joined it in 1997; he became director in 2002 and subsequently emerged as one of the leading foreign policy scholars in the country (Carlsnaes and Nel, 1999:23-24). The Center for Conflict Resolution

(CCR), headed by Laurie Nathan from 1992 to 2003, was another body that was internally focused but moved its focus outward to play a role in continental peacebuilding, particularly in Lesotho and Burundi (Nantulya, 2003:24). The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation emerged in the mid-1990s as a leader on post-conflict military integration and transitional justice topics, active in places like Liberia, Burundi, and Rwanda (Nantulya, 2003:27-28). The Institute for Democracy in Africa (later Idasa, which folded in 2013) also undertook projects beyond its borders, notably in Zimbabwe.

The most influential new player, however, was the previously mentioned Foundation for Global Dialogue, established in 1994 with a 5 million Deutschemark (approximately R3 million at the time) grant from the German Government through the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Carlsnaes and Nel, 1999:23-24). “During a 1992 state visit, Helmut Kohl told Mandela you might want to think about an in-house policy think tank,” recalls van Nieuwkerk, who left SAIIA shortly thereafter to work with the ANC’s international desk on setting up the new organization (Van Nieuwkerk interview). The expectation was that this new think tank would provide a “progressive” alternative to existing structures. Current Executive Director Siphamandla Zondi, reflecting on the attitudes of the time, notes, “SAIIA was seen as having Jan Smuts’ heritage, seen as closer to the DP [Democratic Party] and the British liberal tradition. ISS was conservative, Afrikaner. CPS was Ford Foundation” (Zondi interview).

Upon its 1995 establishment, Yale-educated Garth le Pere was brought on board as Foundation’s Executive Director, a post he would hold until 2009. Renamed the Institute for Global Dialogue in 1999, IGD’s goal was to undertake research that was pertinent to government priorities. Normalizing relations with post-Abacha Nigeria was one early focus, for example. “That was a priority for Mbeki, so we did quite a lot of work around that relationship,” remembers Anthoni van Nieuwkerk. “We took a group there, brought a group here, talked about transitions, and so on” (Van Nieuwkerk interview). While seeking to establish itself as *primus inter pares* among experts, particularly in regard to government access, le Pere and IGD’s board (which had early members as disparate as Barratt and Stanley Mogoba of the Pan-Africanist Congress) adamantly sought to retain the organization’s analytic independence from the ANC (Le Pere interview). Aziz Pahad emphasizes that the party and government wanted IGD to have this independence:

“We said we didn’t want it to be a party hack structure; we wanted critical thinking... We would have regular meetings with them, to discuss programs and see if we can direct their work in directions that they needed, not to influence their analysis. In government, we sometimes don’t have time to think, so we wanted them to be an independent think tank” (A. Pahad interview).

Newfound interest by donors, particularly governments and private entities from Western Europe and (to a lesser extent) the United States, was a key driver behind this explosion of think tanks. Global interest in South Africa after the transition was a huge boon to SAIIA, and whereas Barratt would never accept foreign government money, Pienaar jettisoned this stance, actively seeking donor sponsorship of research projects and conferences (Pienaar interview). SAIIA’s ability to host high profile functions in its dedicated spaces, Jan Smuts House on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand, further boosted its exposure (Pienaar interview). By 2010, under Mills and his successor (in 2005) Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, the Institute was able to build its endowment to R18 million and reduce its dependence on corporate funding to just 4 percent of its budget (Hughes interview). Similarly, ISS, with its Pretoria offices easily accessible to the diplomatic corps, also became a donor darling, with funding by western European governments allowing it to expand its continental presence to Nairobi, Dakar, and Addis Ababa by 2009. ACCORD also receives a large amount of European funding, particularly from Scandinavia (Gounden interview).

Funding from foreign donors—and in the case of SAIIA, big business—raised some questions from the ANC government about the influence of such funding on the entities in question and created problems for entities trying to have an impact on government. Despite SAIIA’s drastically changed budgetary profile, Pahad recalls that, “Greg [Mills] was looked at as someone who represented business interests, because of where SAIIA comes from” (A. Pahad interview). Other organizations elicited similar reactions; as Shelton notes, “If you ask about ISS, they say it belongs to Sweden and Norway. If you ask about CCR, they’re also with Norway, Sweden, and Denmark” (Shelton interview). Mills describes the paradox that goes along with seeking foreign funds. “You had to have a profile, you had to write about issues, and that made the government far more suspicious. You had a terrific tautology. To be effective in your role, you had to have profile. That gained you the money, but undercut your relations with

government” (Mills interview).

Competition for resources also affected inter-organizational relationships among think tanks, particularly hindering collaborative work. As CCR executive director Adekaye Adebajo, a Nigerian, notes, “I’ve seen—being an outsider myself—that it’s quite an antagonistic and backbiting environment, the NGO one, and they’re competing for the same resources, even though it’s not a zero sum game” (Adebajo interview). This competitive atmosphere was noticed in DFA and, according to Pahad, limited DFA’s desire to work with them. “We used to try to bring these think tanks together whenever there was a crisis, but the competition between them was too much” (A. Pahad interview). Only IGD remained “pure” in this sense, surviving mostly off of its endowment and research contracts with government, at least through 2008. According to le Pere, about 40 percent of its research output during the Mandela years and 30 percent during the Mbeki years was private, commissioned research by government (Le Pere interview). This privileged position, in turn, raised questions with other academics about the degree of IGD’s independence from government; as with the allegations about foreign funders, they wonder whether they can be sufficiently critical of government when government so frequently commissions its work.

#### *6.4.2 Early Continuity, 1994-96*

The early post-transition period, through approximately 1996, was one described by academic participants as one largely characterized by continuity from the transition period. If anything engagement between government and academia on foreign policy was more robust than ever, given the need to turn the loose outlines of policy into actual strategies. The period between 1994 and 1999 saw the drafting of White Papers on Intelligence (1995), Defense (1996), and International Peace Missions (1999), as well as the 1996 Green Paper discussion document (never turned into a White Paper) on Foreign Policy—all but the Intelligence document elicited significant comment and scrutiny from the academic community (Nathan, 2007:104-105). Conferences between government and experts were called to debate not only the content of draft documents, but also broader conceptual questions, debating the definitions of such concepts as “national interest” and “security”—if not always successfully (Vale, 2003:81).

Academic influence also expanded into new realms of the broader foreign affairs spectrum. Trade policy, never previously a topic of interaction, opened up to academic inputs, with the under-capacitated Department of Trade and Industry actively seeking out experts during negotiations with the European Union on a Trade, Development, and Cooperation Agreement, signed in 1999 (Van Nieuwkerk interview). Even the Constitution was subject to expert inputs, with UCT professor and military expert Annette Seegers called upon to act as primary drafter of Chapter 11, dealing with defense matters (Seegers interview). The Foundation for Global Dialogue, in its first paper, resuscitated Olivier and Geldenhuys' idea of a foreign policy advisory council that would act as, among other things, a leading think tank (Le Pere interview). (The advisory council idea made no headway during the Mbeki years, although an interim structure was finally set up in 2010.)

The reasons for such continuity during the immediate post-transition years can be ascribed to a combination of the glaring need for expertise within government as well as interpersonal ties established during the transition period between academics and certain new officials. As Nathan refers to it, this period was “a moment of upheaval, where policymakers are not confident their staff can meet the demands” (Nathan interview). The departments of Defense and Foreign Affairs were undergoing a rapid, unsettling integration process that often left behind old staff unwilling to take on drastic rewrites of their *raison d'être* and new staff—from the ANC and homeland governments—largely unable. This lack of capability opened doors for outside inputs; as longtime IGD director Garth le Pere notes, “I think in many ways, we brought a sharp analytical edge that might have been missing in DFA” (Le Pere interview). The personal ties built up during the transition also played a key role, with Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad serving as a particularly valuable interlocutor with the academic community, according to many participants (Le Pere and Vickers, 2004:72).

#### 6.4.3 *Limited Interaction by End of Mandela Period*

Interviewees and observers note that the nature of interaction between academia and government began to change around 1996. Between then and the end of Mandela's administration, the days of large conferences and exhaustive consultation with a broad range of academic actors on policy came to an end (Le Pere and Vickers, 2004:68). Interaction moved from the formal realm to the

informal, from public to private. Several reasons for this shift were cited; the most popular being that this was a natural reaction to increasingly well-defined policy priorities. Shelton, reflecting on the “endless talk shops” of the time, agrees that a move away from widespread consultation was probably necessary. “The objectives were clear, so stop the debate. We don’t need to debate it again and again” (Shelton interview). The process of formal interaction was immensely time-consuming—the White Paper on International Peace Missions took 18 months, for example—and something for which government principals with tight schedules did not have the time (Nantulya, 2003:20). “I think academics complain that we cut the process short and ignored them afterward,” says Aziz Pahad. “Well, I think there’s an element of that, but we never anticipated the pressures of governance” (A. Pahad interview).

There are other, more skeptical, views of the issue. One is that the ANC government did not really care about the public inputs of academics in the first place; in the words of sociologist and Great Lakes scholar Roger Southall, the exercises of the previous five years were “a marketing exercise to get people on board” (Southall interview). Another view is that the new environment was an ANC reaction to growing criticism from outside experts of South Africa’s policies, particularly where they viewed discrepancies between its actions and its stated commitments to human rights. Le Pere remembers the issue of South African arms sales to governments that violated human rights as a particularly contentious issue with government. “Here, we said, you have to decide, because the normative was rubbing up against the pragmatic, and you cannot have your cake and eat it,” he recalls. “We didn’t make ourselves very popular at that point” (Le Pere interview). In all likelihood, a combination of these factors most likely played a role, with the outcome being that government-academic interactions during Mbeki’s tenure would look very different than under Mandela.

#### *6.4.4 Engaging the Mbeki Government*

While Mandela’s term as President was about foreign policy formulation, Mbeki’s time in office was about implementation, turning his foreign policy vision into reality. With academics having developed and ratified this vision throughout the previous decade, their roles receded into the background, at least in terms of public view. However, outside experts continued to engage with government throughout Mbeki’s tenure, particularly at the working levels.

Nelson Mandela personally had little engagement with academics on foreign policy issues. John Daniel remembers one meeting he held with 22 political science professors and heads of department in 1995, although national reconciliation, not foreign affairs, was the topic of discussion (Daniel interview). Mbeki, however, was a very different character. He dealt personally with people like Daniel and Vale from his time in Lusaka, was aware of their writings, and—even if he could not always be there—was an active participant in discussions on foreign policy, from the transition through the early years of his Presidency. Le Pere remembers a conference of academics and government officials he convened on Nigeria in 1999 at Mbeki's behest. "On the second day, talking about the strategic relationship between the two countries, Mbeki came for an entire afternoon. We were about to start the conference in the afternoon, when [political advisor] Titus Mafolo came in and said the President would be coming! And he didn't want to sit at the high table; he said 'I'm just going to participate.' The session was supposed to conclude at 5; he was still going at 7" (Le Pere interview).

However, Mbeki could also be a very challenging, even hostile, interlocutor. Van Nieuwkerk recalls an incident around 1998 at an IGD meeting where he gave an unsatisfactory answer to an Mbeki question. "He could kill you with his stare, Thabo. He didn't smoke it, but he had his pipe. And he looked at me for three minutes, somebody told me after, without saying a word. Now if I do that to you now, you'll probably leave. It's a power thing. He finished me" (Van Nieuwkerk interview). Upon reflection, van Nieuwkerk recalls that his answer, related to the Great Lakes region, probably was inadequate, but "he's got a whole intelligence service that tells him every morning what's going on. Academics are a bit slow on these issues" (Van Nieuwkerk interview). Mbeki soon walked out of the meeting, effectively ending it, and shutting down debate on the issue.

As President, Mbeki had, from all accounts, very little personal interaction with outside experts. Chris Landsberg, who is popularly regarded as an academic who had close ties to the President, said, "I'll go as far as saying that I didn't meet him once alone during his Presidency...For all of the rumors and ideas about how close I was to him, the whiskey drinking stuff, guess what, he's too careful a man to do that" (Landsberg interview). Le Pere and Kenyan academic Shadrack

Gutto, of UNISA, are two others viewed as having close ties to the President, but both downplayed their direct access. Rather, all note that their interaction tended to be with intermediaries of the President, particularly Aziz Pahad and Joel Netshitenzhe; direct contact with the President was rare (Gutto interview).

According to interviewees, both within government and academia, interaction between ministers and academics also was limited. There were some exceptions. Sydney Mufamadi, Mbeki's Local Government Minister who also served as his point man on Congo and, later, Zimbabwe, was also cited as a minister who sought out briefings from outside experts (Boshoff interview). Le Pere notes that IGD was contracted by Treasury at Minister Trevor Manuel's behest to prepare him for chairmanship of the G20; IGD produced more than a dozen private briefing papers for him (Le Pere interview).

Few academics have fond memories of Foreign Affairs Minister (1999-2009) Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Most academics described her as overtly anti-intellectual, frequently taking umbrage at think tank inputs (even those from IGD) as being presumptuous (Author's private archive). Some ascribe this to Mbeki's influence; others chalk it up to her own feelings of inadequacy. In any case, few academics were keen to deal with her. The polar opposite of Dlamini-Zuma in terms of openness and accessibility was her deputy, Aziz Pahad. Academics from all sides of the ideological divide described Pahad as their primary interlocutor in government, someone who actively sought out academic inputs on a host of foreign policy issues. As le Pere recalls, Pahad "took seriously this whole business of good ideas and good debates, policy relevant research" (Le Pere interview). He was the primary interlocutor for IGD throughout le Pere's tenure as IGD head. His interactions, however, were across the board. "Aziz would come to us to ask us to write a paper about Morocco or Zimbabwe," notes Tim Hughes of SAIIA, who also recalls SAIIA being asked by Pahad for a continental threat assessment on 12 September 2001 (Hughes interview).

Academics had differing levels of interaction with working-level (Director-General and below) interlocutors in the departments of Defense, Intelligence, Trade and Industry, and Foreign Affairs, with interaction with the latter clearly the most robust. The Presidency under Mbeki

also would reach out to scholars on foreign policy. Landsberg cites the international affairs sections government's 10- and 15-year reviews as examples of this outreach, while Hughes notes that SAIIA was called upon to participate in a scenarios exercise with the Presidency toward the end of the Mbeki presidency (Landsberg and Hughes interviews).

Several academics mentioned that they were contacted by various arms of the intelligence services—the external South African Secret Service, internal National Intelligence Agency, and coordinating National Intelligence Coordinating Committee—during the 2000s, such as after the 11 September 2001 World Trade Center terrorist attacks (Hough interview). Seegers, for example, notes that SASS called her and others together as part of a 2004 panel on a 10-year review of defense policy (Seegers interview). However, several noted that outreach from intelligence frequently focused on domestic issues, such as xenophobia and potential for terrorist attacks in South Africa (Author's private archive).

During Mbeki's tenure, Trade and Industry under Minister Alec Erwin increasingly called upon outside experts for policy briefs and conference presentations (Soko interview). However, elements of the department have shown themselves hostile to opinions that do not square with government policy, particularly those that adhere to free trade principles. Several interviewees cited Peter Draper of SAIIA—who started the department's first in-house research department before leaving in 2003—as a particularly unpopular figure among the department's senior management for his free trade orientation. Even IGD was frustrated in its attempts to influence trade policy (Le Pere and Vickers, 2004:68).

Foreign Affairs, however, showed itself more open than its counterparts in its dealings with outside experts during the Mbeki presidency, if not always in a consistent fashion (Nantulya, 2003:14). Most academic interviewees opined that DFA's openness to academic inputs from the Director-General level on down increased during the Mbeki administration. Directors-General Jackie Selebi (1998-99), Sipho Pityana (1999-2002), and Ayanda Ntsaluba (2002-2011) all actively sought outside experts on a variety of topics, while senior officials like Kingsley Mamabolo and Welile Nhlapo also earned high marks for accessibility and desire to hear external opinions (Le Pere interview). This openness by principals clearly filtered down to mid-

and lower-level officials. The Department more than any other has utilized academics for a variety of purposes. Training is particularly well developed, with academics from a broad range of institutions lecturing at DFA's Diplomatic Academy, an institution that partners with the University of Pretoria.

Levels of interaction, both formal and informal, have tended to be most robust on specialized issues where the departmental knowledge base is weak. East Asia is a good example. Garth Shelton, one of the preeminent South African Asia scholars, notes that he has been consistently included in discussions on Asia—particularly China-South Africa relations—for the past decade. As he notes, “In 2000, South Africa was preparing for the Forum on China Africa Cooperation. The meeting was going to be held in Beijing, and DFA assembled 5 or 6 academics around a table with the DFA China staff. And we had a whole day session on what is Africa's response to a 20-page document China had provided on China-Africa relations” (Shelton interview). The department clearly took seriously the academics' inputs, as many (if not all) were included in the final document. Since that time, Shelton notes that he—as well as other China scholars, like Martyn Davies, head of the Center for Chinese Studies during the Mbeki presidency—were frequently called upon, both formally and informally, by DFA, seeing them every three or four months (Shelton interview).

Africa is another topic that generates frequent interaction between government and outside players, particularly in dealing with continental conflict zones. ACCORD and ISS are key players on this front. According to the late Henri Boshoff of ISS, “We are at this stage so integrated with the West Africa desk that there's a standing arrangement that we meet” (Boshoff interview). Sudan has been a particularly robust area of engagement. Representatives of nearly all of the large think tanks and several universities have been included in internal departmental discussions on Sudan; several have hosted seminars on the topic (Nyut Goh, 2005:41). DFA partnered with the University of South Africa to provide capacity assistance to south Sudan and even tapped Shadrack Gutto, then of Wits, to lead a delegation to south Sudan in 2004, based on the Kenyan's relationships with Sudanese intellectuals (Gutto interview). On Somalia, UNISA professor Iqbal Jhazbhay—an expert on the region, a member of the ANC's Religious Affairs committee, and since 2012, Ambassador to Eritrea—was often sought out.

Informal relationships between diplomats and academics—originating from old friendships, students reaching back to professors, or even from an official seeing an op-ed written by a scholar—emerged from the increasingly closed environment of the late 1990s as the dominant form of interaction in the early Mbeki presidency. However, DFA’s Policy Research and Analysis Unit (PRAU), since its 2003 founding under diplomat and ANC intelligence official Mo Shaik, has sought to formalize and regularize interactions with academia. “I remember Mo saying at the time, this unit is about thinking out of the box,” recalls SAIIA’s Elizabeth Sidiropoulos. “It’s about thinking about alternative policy solutions; we can’t work in a box” (Sidiropoulos interview). PRAU held, among other things, bi-annual one-day conferences on key topics, ranging from South Africa’s role in Africa to Pretoria’s positions on the UN Security Council (Myakayaka-Manzini interview). Participants spoke highly of these, noting that they encompassed a broad range of academic opinions and have sparked some thought-provoking exchanges, particularly between think tanks with differing views (Ajulu and Gounden interviews). PRAU also has called on academics for specific briefing papers on their areas of expertise, as well as used them to brief outgoing Ambassadors (Smith interview).

However, observers and even members question PRAU’s impact on the policy environment. Shaik left after only a year, and the unit floundered, lacking both staff (which cycled in and out before having enough time to build expertise) and a clear direction. Its work, according to one academic observer, was “not deep. If it was a student paper, it would get 60-70 percent” (Author’s private archive). It suffered a further blow when it was moved from the Ministry to the Diplomatic Training Academy shortly after Shaik’s departure, where it lacked direct contact with the Minister. Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini, who headed PRAU from 2007-10, said that even through her tenure “there was huge debate raging about where PRAU should actually be, and what exactly its role should be... under training, it was very difficult for PRAU to operate and do the work it should do. Also the capacity it was given was not sufficient for it to be an effective tool for policy making within government” (Myakayaka-Manzini interview).

The Presidency and departments were not the only parts of government with which academics dealt. Unlike the pre-1994 period—when MPs had no meaningful interaction with academics—

interaction between Parliament and outside experts has since the transition been regularized, both in formal and informal capacities (B. Geldenhuys interview). The former includes briefings to the PCFA and the broader Parliament on pertinent issues (like Africa Institute briefings on the Pan-African Parliament in 2002) as well as organizing study trips (Nantulya, 2003:24). In 2003, for example, IJR organized a visit by members of the PCFA to southern Sudan, allowing them to meet a broad range of Sudanese actors and better acquaint them with the situation. The PCFA also has, on occasion, sought to convene foreign policy academics from Western Cape universities, although such interaction has been haphazard (Smith interview). Hughes remembers PCFA chair (2004-2008) Job Sithole as particularly open to academic outreach (Hughes interview). In addition, although not strictly part of government, the ANC NEC sub-committee on International Affairs also met with academics; former head Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini notes that the ANC would meet with academics on foreign policy issues at least annually (Myakayaka-Manzini interview).

#### 6.4.5 *Zimbabwe: A Door Opened, Then Shut*

Pretoria's reaction to the political and economic collapse of Zimbabwe from 2000 was easily the most hotly and widely debated South African foreign policy issue of the Mbeki administration. Academia was no exception; no other external issue generated the same number of conferences, editorials, and seminars during the 2000s. Most institutions were highly critical of South Africa's "quiet" diplomacy policy on the grounds that it was ineffective in forcing Mugabe to respect the rule of law. SAIIA was a particularly active on Zimbabwe, criticizing the government but also seeking to bring ZANU-PF and the MDC together; it was able to host then-Finance Minister Simba Makoni and MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai at a public conference in November 2001 (Hughes, 2004:142-143). While far less critical than SAIIA, IGD too pushed for results from South African efforts in Zimbabwe, a stance that grew firmer over time. Only Landsberg emerged as a strong proponent of the South African approach; his book *The Quiet Diplomacy of Liberation* reinforces the viewpoint that, as with South Africa's liberation, only by maintaining dialogue and resisting calls for drastic action can change be effected.

Despite broad criticism from academia, the government during Mbeki's first term actively sought inputs from foreign policy scholars on Zimbabwe. In what appears to have been an

unprecedented exercise, four leading scholars—Landsberg, van Nieuwkerk, le Pere, and Moeletsi Mbeki, who was affiliated with SAIIA—were invited to a 5 February 2002 closed roundtable convened by Intelligence Minister Lindiwe Sisulu to discuss options dealing with Zimbabwe. “There must have been 40 people—all of the relevant parastatals, Eskom which was providing electricity credits, Transnet providing use of our rolling stock, the deputy a governor of the Reserve Bank, the heads of SASS and NIA,” remembers le Pere, who also noted that Aziz Pahad and the military service chiefs also were in attendance (Le Pere interview). Lasting more than three hours, the meeting was “a powerful discussion,” and one that reached agreement on a set of five carrots and five sticks that should be considered in dealing with Harare (Le Pere interview). The academic participants had to hand over their notes when they departed.

Coming just three days before the President’s State of the Nation speech, le Pere said that he expected to see the session’s outcome reflected in the speech. He was wrong; Mbeki made minimal and non-committal reference to Zimbabwe in the speech. “We were told later that he dismissed the document,” remembers le Pere (Le Pere interview). Such lack of consideration of differing viewpoints—academic and otherwise—on Zimbabwe would throughout the rest of Mbeki’s time in office be the norm, even those from seemingly “insider” academics. Ajulu traveled to Zimbabwe in 2002 as part of an Africa Institute delegation, which afterward produced a scenarios report and a critique of “quiet” diplomacy; it is unclear if this reached Mbeki, but clearly had no impact on his policy direction (Ajulu interview).

Nevertheless, government maintained informal ties to foreign policy scholars on Zimbabwe. Several—including le Pere, Ajulu, and Landsberg—remember dealing informally with Pahad throughout Mbeki’s first term. However, le Pere remembers him becoming increasingly defensive about the government’s stance. “What’s the alternative?” he would frequently demand (Le Pere interview). Ajulu remembers that he would counter that while of course diplomacy must by its nature be quiet, it also had to produce results. “But we found that kind of constructive criticism was not really welcomed” (Ajulu interview). As late as early 2004, Pahad met with academics “to clear the air” on Zimbabwe, although this meeting turned out to be a simple recitation of the government’s line, declaring that the government saw no alternative to its current path (Van Nieuwkerk, 2006a:188-189). Engagement on the issue, probably in large part

due to fatigue on the part of scholars seeing little chance of influencing the government line, was minimized thereafter.

Zimbabwe was not the only issue where academic engagement was shunned. The NEPAD initiative was another significant example of government not seeking out academic inputs in advance (Alden and le Pere, 2003:74). Hughes remembers convening the first conference on the NEPAD plan in November 2001, the day after the project was unveiled; there was no outreach from government on the idea in advance nor invitation to academics to make submissions (Hughes interview). Pretoria's 2007 decision to reject a vote on Burma in the UN Security Council was another example. It is worth noting that these issues were the exception rather than the rule, at least quantitatively. Yet at the same time, they show that once Mbeki made up his mind on an issue, it was not likely to be raised again for discussion.

#### *6.4.6 Whose Voice Mattered, and Why?*

As is seen by those included in the Zimbabwe conversations, not all academics and think tanks are created equal. Representatives of SAIIA in particular feel that they were left out of policy debates on Zimbabwe and other sensitive topics. “There was an unspoken rule that SAIIA shouldn't be included on certain fora,” said Tim Hughes. “Latin America? Talk to them! They have someone who speaks Spanish. Zuma goes to Colombia as Deputy President, and you have to talk to us about what it means to have a bilateral with Colombia; what are we going to talk about beside coffee and cocaine and crime?” (Hughes interview). However, on issues like the Middle East, Iran, or Zimbabwe, where SAIIA was clearly at odds with the government position—and unafraid to publicly say so—they would not be consulted. Despite having expertise on the region, Hughes remembers that no one in SAIIA was asked to participate in the 2003 launch of the Middle East road map, for example (Hughes interview). That said, this relationship improved by the end of the Mbeki administration, in large part due to a concerted effort by Sidiropoulos to reshape perceptions of SAIIA and position it as a resource for government rather than a critic (Sidiropoulos interview).

It is clear that certain academics and institutes had “inside tracks” to the top levels of government, usually through close relationships with Pahad. Cunningham Ngcukana, Mbeki's

NEPAD advisor in the Presidency, said that he and others at the Presidency would deal frequently with le Pere and Landsberg; others have raised Ajulu and Gounden as other preferred interlocutors (Ngcukana interview). Landsberg and le Pere do not deny that they had “insider” status in dealing with government, but both were quick to note that their access should not be overstated. As previously noted, their direct contact with Mbeki was limited, and Landsberg adds, “Did I have Aziz’s number? Yes I did. If I used it twice a year, it was a lot” (Landsberg interview). Similarly, le Pere notes that while he concedes IGD was first among equals among think tanks, “we had to earn it” with consistently high quality work (Le Pere interview).

Why these academics and their institutes had preferred status is a matter of much—often heated—debate within the academic community, with “outsiders” and “insiders” having sharply differing views on the matter. Many in the former category ascribe much “insider” access to the fact that these academics preached to the proverbial choir, tailoring their analyses to fit the government line. “Some academics get subcontracted on specific issues,” noted one relative outsider, “but they exercise self-censorship. To get the contracts, they can’t be critical” (Author’s private archive). Such a charge was frequently leveled toward IGD, which benefited from government tenders for conferences and analytic production throughout the Mbeki administration. Even Landsberg notes that the popular paradigm during the Mbeki years was that “the more you engage, the more of a lackey you become.” However, he rubbishes this view. “The more I engaged government the more I learned that if you are there merely to engage on the assumption they want you to give uncritical advice, that’s the quickest way to fall out of favor,” he notes (Landsberg interview). He speaks almost in awe of the level of intellectual capacity within the top levels of government, whether looking at social, economic, or foreign policy. “These guys kept throwing challenges at you.”

The “insider” view, on the other hand, is that the complaints of those not actively consulted have an air of sour grapes about them. As Landsberg opines, think tanks and academics “often wished to engage on the basis where they should simply be allowed to dish out advice and criticism without government taking offense” (Landsberg interview). In his view, it is perfectly normal that the key decision makers in government would not want to seek out academics and organizations that slagged its decision making consistently in the press. He also is of the opinion

that think tanks and academics have been overly thin-skinned when their inputs have not had an impact on policy, particularly given that government is under no obligation to operationalize those inputs. This perceived arrogance, of demanding a seat at the table, was cited by many as a clear irritant to government principals.

In discussing the topic with those from all sides of the analytic spectrum, a few key determinants came to the fore as regarding whether or not one was consulted:

--*Trust*. As Landsberg noted in 2000, “if you want to be close, you are going to have to learn to respect secrecy. Your first inclination should not be to try and divulge this information in public; I think there's a tendency to want to do that” (Le Pere and Vickers, 2004:69). There was a perception, true or not, that several leading “outsider” scholars had a propensity to leak what should be private interactions to the media. Nathan noted that this trust must also extend to a principal’s senior staff, many of which tend not to like outsiders having privileged access (Nathan interview).

--*Humility*. Several interviewees cited one’s ability to keep one’s ego in check as imperative to maintaining a close relationship. Several cited Vale’s openness about citing the Mandela *Foreign Affairs* article as an example of what not to do; Vale consequently has had almost no interaction with government since the mid-1990s. Several interviewees acknowledged drafting speeches and policy statements that were accepted by principals with barely a revision, but they were only able to maintain this access by keeping quiet about it.

--*Location*. A seemingly prosaic issue, but several experts, particularly those in Cape Town, cited geography as a determinant of whether one is actively consulted. As Karen Smith, then of Stellenbosch, notes, “It’s a cost factor. They invite us, often getting the invitations for something in two days. ‘We’d love you to come, but we’re not paying for your flight’” (Smith interview).

--*Personal/Party Relationships*. Personal ties clearly play a role in determining one’s level of informal access. Ajulu, for example, remembers having many open and frank conversations with Pahad on South Africa’s role on the continent, but “it was different for me because I’ve been friends with Aziz for 30 years, so we can talk very freely” (Ajulu interview). Adds Nathan, “A big part is idiosyncratic; it’s connecting with a comrade” (Nathan interview). That said, personal

ties probably should not be overstated as a determinant of access; neither le Pere nor Landsberg professed to close friendships with ANC principals.

--*Race*. Many academics, white and black, cited race as one determining factor that would dictate whether one was included as an insider, particularly in light of Mbeki's call for the rise of a black intelligentsia (Quoted in Khoza, 2005:51). As Adebajo claims, "The fact that so many think tanks are not transformed racially, it's a problem for government to take them seriously. You have to take those issues seriously to understand this. It's not a deracialized space, but rather one that promotes privileged whites" (Adebajo interview). While it is impossible to quantify the role of **race** as a determinant, the fact that all of the most prominent "insider" academics—le Pere, Landsberg, Ajulu, Gounden, Gutto, and others—were not white suggests that race was a factor in determining whether one had influence.

#### 6.5 *Conclusion: Did Academia Matter in the Mbeki Years...or ever?*

The information above provides worthwhile insight into the access that academia had to the Mbeki administration, but measuring real impact is far more difficult. As le Pere and Vickers point out in a 2004 article, "Under the present government, there is ample room for making inputs but whether these are taken into account is another matter" (Le Pere and Vickers, 2004:75). Interviewees from government had a difficult time justifying the latter point; while most were complimentary of academic inputs, none could point to a specific issue where academics had a "game-changing" impact on policy. Of course, in well-capacitated governments, it is rare that any outsider can contribute knowledge and insights so unique as to be paradigm shifting. As Universities of Johannesburg and Pretoria professor Gerrit Olivier notes, an academic adds value "through osmosis," adding to the policy debate slowly through written products, training, and first-hand interactions (Olivier interview). An academic could have significant impact on a decision maker's thinking, but it could come years after the fact, making measuring such impact next to impossible.

That said, the role of academics from 1990 onward, and particularly during Mbeki's administration, should not be understated. Firstly, it was evident through a body of interviews that academic inputs were widely sought and utilized. While there were "red lines" where outside influence, academic or otherwise, would not have impact on government—such as on

Zimbabwe and trade policy—on many others academics played essential roles, drafting speeches and policy documents for mid- and high-level officials. On non-controversial issues in particular (like Latin America, for example), knowledgeable academics were able to put scholarly meat on the skeleton of government policy (Le Pere and Vickers, 2004:75). While this is not an externally comparative study, one can think of few countries in the world where academics have this sort of access to policy makers, particularly at the working level. Temporally, the comparison is stark. Academic institutions and think tanks prior to 1990 had nowhere near the access that they did thereafter. It is access that continues to this very day, if not always in a sustained, regular fashion.

Reflecting on his own career as an outside advisor to government, longtime UNISA strategic studies professor Deon Fourie in a 2009 article suggested that he (in the guise of Machiavelli) “was wrong to believe that an unbiased scientific teacher was wanted. In the game of bureaucratic politics one had to help build careers, not give the right answers.” He advises future Machiavellis to “choose their Princes more carefully,” warning against careerists who would view contrary advice as “a threat to the Prince's own self-image” (Fourie, 2009:6). This raises the ultimate question: was Thabo Mbeki a Prince who would lay his policies bare to outside assessment and critique? The answer is an unsatisfying yes and no. Yes in the sense that his government was generally open to accepting and seeking out academic inputs on foreign policy; no in that certain issues (like Zimbabwe) were off limits for discussion. Mbeki could have done better on this front; likewise, his policy goals might have been more successful. However, when Mbeki is held up against his pre-1994 predecessors, who generally shunned academic inputs on foreign policy, he and his administration come out looking like paragons of openness.

## **Chapter 7: South African Business and Foreign Policy**

### *7.1 Introduction*

Businesses throughout the world, both individually and collectively, seek to influence government policies that have an impact on their bottom lines of profitability and growth. Through a combination of lobbying, campaign contributions, and occasionally even outright bribery, businesses push their host governments to lower taxes, reduce regulations, and generally create an environment conducive to growth. Success in these efforts depends on such factors as the receptivity of the governing party to private sector overtures and the degree of unity and organization of business alliances. While historically the focus of business has been more inward than outward, increasingly globalization during the past two decades has brought foreign policy into the crosshairs of the business community, with firms seeking to lobby host governments to pursue policies that—depending on the business focus—would allow for expansion outward or protect their interests at home from outside incursions.

South African businesses, particularly since 1994, have embraced this spirit of globalization to expand their presence across the world. These firms have had a particular focus on the African continent, and today South African companies account for the largest proportion of capital investment on the continent. That said, while the scope of the South African presence has drastically increased, the presence itself is nothing new; South African firms have been seeking a foothold in Africa since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and even during the apartheid era had some success, notably in the mining sector. Given this interest, this chapter will explore in particular detail the efforts of South African business to influence South Africa's Africa policy.

Given their aims of expanding across the world and the continent, South African firms have for years had a vested interest in South African foreign policy. To expand their presences outside the country, companies headquartered in South Africa have wanted to see Pretoria adopt policies that would have facilitated growth while minimizing exposure to foreign competition at home. These include seeking free trade pacts with favorable terms for South African firms; relaxing foreign exchange controls; facilitating free movement of labor; and facilitating trade missions for its firms to seek opportunities abroad.

The criteria mentioned above are a helpful guide to determining whether the South African government pursued foreign policies conducive to the expansion and prosperity of its companies abroad. However, the mechanics of such policy decisions are equally of interest—a government can pursue policies conducive for business expansion without such growth being the aim or business lobbying efforts being the reason. Hence, it is of great importance to understand the dynamics behind the decision making, particularly the mechanics by which government and business have interacted both before and after 1994. To this end, this chapter will examine whether (and if so how) South African businesses lobbied government on foreign policy and whether some firms had more success in this venture than others. Also to be examined is the degree to which the “business community” spoke with one voice on these issues, to examine whether Afrikaner and English firms before 1994 and white- and black-owned firms since 1994 have had convergent or divergent viewpoints on policy influence.

## *7.2 The Origins of the South African Business Community*

The roots of corporate South Africa can be traced back to the 1871 discovery of diamonds in Kimberley, which for the first time opened up what had been a rural, agrarian society to a massive influx of European and American capital. The consolidation of mining claims by aspiring magnates like Barney Barnato and Cecil Rhodes created the first sizable conglomerates in the country; the two merged their holdings into the De Beers Corporation in 1888. The 1886 discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand—and the subsequent need for more foreign capital to exploit the deposits—hastened the growth of the mining industry. This move also spawned the birth what would become South Africa’s largest conglomerate, Anglo-American, by (among others) Ernest Oppenheimer in 1917 (Massie, 1997:74). While mining was the primary engine for economic growth, it also spawned a host of secondary industries—such as in engineering, financial services, and manufacturing—and new firms developed to meet the needs of an expanding, increasingly wealthy, and urbanizing population. Not all of this growth was purely from the private sector; parastatals like the Iron and Steel Corporation, founded in 1928, and the Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM), founded in 1923, also emerged as key corporate entities, as did the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), which was established in 1940 to drive South Africa’s wartime industrial growth (Vale and Maseko, 1998:275).

With the expansion of the private sector also came the foundation of business groupings designed to represent their interests in dealing with government. Mining led the way, with the Chamber of Mines founded in 1887, followed by the Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 1892, and the Federated Chambers of Industry in 1917 (Handley, 2008:81). Agriculture also had a representative body, the South African Agricultural Union, founded in 1904. These associations represented the interests of their memberships in lobbying government, although they did not always work toward common goals. In the 1920s, for example, mining interests clashed with those of manufacturing and agriculture over protectionism, with the latter broadly opposed to free trade principles. Smuts, then Prime Minister, tended to side with mining interests, given their vast contribution to government revenues (Handley, 2008:35). Hertzog tended to be more sympathetic with rural agricultural interests, but also sought to not alienate mining interests.

Overall, the main focus of South African business before 1948 (and particularly before World War II) was internal in nature, seeking to exploit South African resources while developing the burgeoning domestic market. There was some limited outward expansion into the region beginning in the 1920s, with companies like South African Breweries and Anglo-American setting up operations into southern Africa, particularly in Northern and Southern Rhodesia. However, the main external focus was on the export of minerals and agricultural products to markets in Europe and the United States. Exports to Great Britain were of particular importance, with Commonwealth trade preferences, agricultural and otherwise, making it difficult for the ostensibly republican government to leave the sterling area (Henshaw, 1996:216).

### *7.2.1 The Post-1948 Expansion of South African Capital Abroad*

The end of World War II ushered in a new era for South African firms, one that would no longer be limited to south of the Limpopo. Encouraged by government blandishments from the IDC, South African firms started to look at investment opportunities further afield (Vale and Maseko, 1998:275). Export growth to industrialized economies of the north continued apace, while by the 1960s, South African firms like Anglo-American began to seek out capital investments across the world. There was also significant focus on opportunities in Africa, with groups like the

Federated Chambers of Industry and the South African Foreign Trade Organization actively helping private sector businesses identify opportunities on the continent (Adebajo, 2010:221). The continent's decolonization from the late 1950s proved only a minor hindrance to business expansion, particularly in the region, in part due to Pretoria's support for continued South African business expansion. Although some newly independent states—notably Zambia—sought to isolate South Africa, they largely failed, particularly in the sub-region. South Africa's neighbors Botswana, Swaziland, and Lesotho—the latter of which is completely surrounded by South African soil—were particularly vulnerable to South African domination given that they were almost completely beholden to Pretoria for their transport links.

South Africa also, unsurprisingly, remained active in neighbors still governed by white governments, colonial or otherwise. South African business investment in Rhodesia was extensive and increased after UDI, outstripping British outlays and leading some pundits to claim this capital infusion helped convert Rhodesia “from a British colony to a South African dependency” (Bunting, 1986:432). Colonial Mozambique and Angola attracted South African investment prior to their independence being granted in 1975, particularly through South African construction involvement in large infrastructure projects like the Cabora Bassa hydroelectric scheme (Bunting, 1986:396). Involvement in Angola and Mozambique petered out after 1975, although business later had high hopes—ultimately unrealized—that the 1984 Nkomati Accord, ceasing hostilities between South Africa and Mozambique, would provide opportunities for South African firms to help rebuild Mozambican infrastructure; allow for a more stable supply of labor from Mozambique; and provide a boost for the region adjacent to Mozambique (Geldenhuys, 1984b:210).

South African penetration also took place outside the immediate sub-region. South African firms were rumored to be operating in Kenya from the early 1960s, and in 1968 South African cigarette manufacturer Rothman's was even allowed to start a subsidiary there (Nolutshungu, 1975:288). *Francophonie* proved particularly attractive, and several Francophone countries, notably Zaire, had no qualms about doing business with South African firms (Pfister, 2005:96). Construction giant Murray & Roberts reported in 1976, for example, that they were “doing a fair amount of work in what used to be called French Africa” (Pfister, 2005:28). As international

pressure mounted on South Africa into the 1980s, its business ties with the continent actually continued to expand. Between 1984 and 1988, South African trade with the rest of the continent grew from an estimated \$650 million to more than \$1.5 billion, increasing the continent's share of total trade from 6.5 to 10 percent (Jaster et al., 1992:60). Former Deputy Foreign Minister (1986-1989) Kobus Meiring recalled traveling extensively—and secretly—on the continent to help South African firms make inroads, and by 1990 South African firms “were quietly doing business with almost every country on the continent” (Wolvaardt et al., *Volume 1*, 2010:217).

### 7.2.2 *The Roots of Government's Fraught Relationship with Business*

Relations between government and business before 1994 were characterized by alternating periods of cooperation and contention, undergirded throughout by deep-seated suspicions of the business community by the National Party government. One oft-cited reason for distance is suspicion by the NP of the predominance of “English-speaking” business in South Africa, since most capital—particularly in the mining sector—was in the hands of English speakers. In 1948, Afrikaners owned only 25 percent of the manufacturing sector, 6 percent of industry writ large, and just 1 percent of the mining industry (Handley, 2008:51). This started to change after 1948, with government preferences for Afrikaner firms and the pooling of Afrikaner capital allowing for the establishment of several Afrikaner-owned companies that would emerge as some of the largest in South Africa, including media firm Nasionale Pers, insurance giants Santam and Sanlam, and the KWV wine cooperative (Dommissie, 2001:58). Anton Rupert's tobacco-driven conglomerate Rembrandt, incorporated in 1948, would emerge as another giant of the South African business world, and one with an international footprint. Nevertheless, these firms were relative latecomers with nowhere near the economic footprints of mining companies.

Meanwhile, English big business found great difficulty in lobbying the hostile and suspicious government. Premier Milling CEO Tony Bloom, for example, once famously remarked, “English speaking business has about as much effect on government policy as Ping-Pong ball bouncing off a stone wall,” a perception with which Anglophone businessmen widely agreed (Welsh, 2009:261). From the government side, longtime intelligence chief Niel Barnard admits that there was certain skepticism about the loyalty of English business, particularly mining giant Anglo-American, which had a dual presence in South Africa and Great Britain. “Bear in mind

that Anglo and De Beers [in London] were whispering in the ear of their people here,” notes Barnard in recounting reasons for government, and Afrikaner, mistrust of Anglo. “Remember we have the expression in Afrikaans of a *soutpiel* (“salt penis”, or one who has a foot in Africa and one in England, with one’s penis dangling in the ocean), which the English speaking people detest. One foot on London, one foot in South Africa...Many of them were never true South Africans; they always had a backup” (Barnard interview).

Nevertheless, by the 1970s, divisions between English and Afrikaans business started to break down, with an increasing number of Afrikaner businessmen expressing disenchantment with what they viewed as an excessive involvement of government in the economy, raising the question of whether the linguistic split in terms of influence and access was overblown (Handley, 2008:57). Both sections increasingly came to regard apartheid as, in the words of Anglo-American executive Gavin Relly, “an ethnic, quasi-socialist system pursued by an Afrikaner oligarchy not imbued with free enterprise principles” (Relly, 1986:138). Furthermore, the increasing difficulty in doing business around the world, including in traditional Western markets, had a deleterious effect on both English and Afrikaans business and led businesses of all stripes to push government to make domestic reforms by the 1980s. Government leaders, however, until the late 1980s were of the mind that business had no role in defining government policy and should stay out (Pretorius, 1994:242). Attempts to weigh in on policies—be they foreign or domestic, either by English- or Afrikaans-speaking businessmen—were viewed as not only unwelcome, but unpatriotic (Carter, 1980:90).

### *7.2.3 Limited Foreign Policy Interest or Engagement*

On the foreign policy front, business showed little inclination to lobby the government on its external orientation. Where there was engagement, each side used the other to achieve their goals—business to expand operations and increase profits; government to build international linkages and relieve political pressure. They were in strong agreement about some issues, like opposition to international sanctions, although the business community was not shy about encouraging reforms that would relieve international pressure, particularly during the 1980s.

There were periods characterized by a close working relationship between business and government, the strongest of which occurred during Vorster's *détente* exercise on the continent. Pretoria facilitated business investment in states that limited criticism of South Africa's internal policies, finding many receptive audiences on the continent (Bowman, 1971:8). To encourage this business expansion, the South African Government put up investment guarantees and took other steps to encourage businessmen to look abroad. Pretoria, for example, made a \$6.3 million investment pledge that financed tourism magnate Sol Kerzner's development of tourism facilities on Madagascar's island of Nosy Be (Shearer interview). It also provided loan guarantees to fund the building of a Sun International hotel in Comoros in the late 1980s (Wolvaardt et al., *Volume I*, 2010:178). Despite South African prohibitions on holding multiple passports, the Department of Foreign Affairs allowed businessmen with the rights to European passports to use them in their travels on the continent, where a South African passport could prove a liability. (Munger, 1965:56) DFA officials also frequently met with representatives of South African firms moving onto the continent (Pfister, 2005:28). Longtime diplomat Jeremy Shearer, for example, noted that DFA worked closely with Kerzner on his Nosy Be project, providing, among other things, advice on dealing with Malagasy officialdom and occasionally unruffling feathers of Malagasy officials offended by the South African businessmen (Shearer interview).

The South Africa Foundation, founded in 1959, was the leading business group of the pre-1994 period focused on promoting South African business abroad, and its up-and-down relations with government epitomize the often-fraught ties between the two sides. The Foundation was established by 25 leading businessmen with the stated aims being to “formulate and express a coordinated view on macro-economic and other national issues and to promote the interests and further growth of South Africa's private sector of presenting” as well as to present “a true picture of South Africa to the world” (Gerber, 1973:17). From its establishment, the Foundation proved a useful public relations tool for the South African Government, as well as an unofficial liaison to Western capitals where it established offices (the first being London in 1961) (Gerber, 1973:36). Not bound by red tape or diplomatic protocol, the Foundation was able to open doors not necessarily open to South African diplomats, even in relatively friendly capitals, and take a higher public profile than government representatives (Meiring, 1974:141). Also, the character of its membership—overwhelmingly English-speaking and anti-National Party—was useful in

projecting a positive image of South Africa; as longtime diplomat and, later, head of the Foundation Neil van Heerden notes, “They could explain externally that not everyone in South Africa supported apartheid” (Van Heerden interview).

However, it would be a mistake to view the Foundation as having worked overly closely with the government. Its English character, big business orientation, and largely anti-government politics did it no favor in winning support among National Party politicians, who kept it at arm’s length (Munger, 1965:57). The fact that it was self-financing, and thereby independent of government control, also did it no favors with Pretoria (Bunting, 1986:334). Diplomats remember personal relations with Foundation representatives being excellent, but the institutional ones as quite weak, due to mutual suspicion. Remembers Shearer, “When I was in DC, I had a friendly relationship with the rep of the SA Foundation, John Chettle. But it was limited to being friends; it did not enter the official field at all. The Foundation saw government as being a pariah, and didn’t want to be tarred in the same way... We were helpful as people, but not as an office” (Shearer interview). Van Heerden echoes similar views: “We exchanged thoughts and contacts, though they were completely separate” (Van Heerden interview).

#### *7.2.4 Business and PW Botha: Thwarted Foreign Policy Impact*

PW Botha’s 1978 ascension to the Premiership was greeted with much enthusiasm by big business, with the hope that he would prove more receptive to their interests than any post-1948 Prime Minister. With the exception of outreach on the continent, business relations with his predecessor, John Vorster, were particularly cool. Although Vorster and his Cabinet had no qualms about accepting monetary blandishments from firms or using businessmen like Louis Luyt as fronts for Information Department schemes, Vorster took the line that “the business of business is business” and that the private sector should stay out of government affairs (O’Meara, 1996:142; Geldenhuys, 1984a:160).

Botha, on the other hand, had shown himself open to taking inputs from the business community during his 1966-1978 stint as Defense Minister. In 1972, he established the Defense Advisory Council to draw in outside advice on policy issues, including heads of leading mining firm Gencor and conglomerate Barlows (later Barlow Rand) (Simpson, 1989:226). Botha cultivated

these ties throughout his tenure, and the Defense White Paper of 1977 went so far as to explicitly include the private sector as a key actor in the state's "Total Strategy" (Hanlon, 1986:9). After ascending to the Premiership, Botha's successor, Magnus Malan, expanded the Council to include representatives of nearly all top firms, including Anglo-American, Sanlam, Old Mutual, and South African Breweries (Hanlon, 1986:14). The Council had benefits for both sides. Business leaders were able to get concessions from the SADF on service requirements to ensure a sufficient supply of white manpower, even if they were not able to make an impact on the broader thrust of defense or foreign policy (Griffiths, 1991:84). The government, on the other hand, was able to bring on board an array of skeptical and occasionally outright hostile actors from big business—particularly English big business—and co-opt them into a mutually beneficial partnership (Grundy, 1986:48).

Early on, Botha looked as if he would live up to this promise, and indicated that he was willing for the first time to incorporate the private sector more broadly into government's foreign policy strategy (Pretorius, 1994:231). The high point came at the November 1979 Carlton Conference in Johannesburg, where Botha convened 300 business leaders—including non-white businessmen like Sam Motsuenyane and JN Reddy—to emphasize the need for government and the private sector to work more closely (Dommissie, 2001:245). To this end, Botha requested that business be an active participant in promoting economic development in southern African under the guise of the Prime Minister's CONSAS idea, which would ultimately bind the region—both the homelands and the independent states of the region—together under South African economic leadership (Pottinger, 1988:122). Following on the conference, the government created two public-private sector enterprises, the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the Small Business Development Corporation, aimed at facilitating this partnership in the region (Geldenhuys, 1984a:161). The business community was impressed with Botha's initiative, with large and even medium-sized businesses anxious to take advantage of potential export and investment markets (Hanlon, 1986:10). Even Anglo-American chairman Harry Oppenheimer commented that the CONSAS concept "attracts us all, and businessmen will want to help" (Hanlon, 1986:15). Outside of the region, business also saw value in working closely with government to fight the battle against sanctions and keep export markets open (Schrire, 1991:62).

However, by mid-decade, Botha's refusal to initiate domestic reforms in the face of growing economic isolation and decline led the business community to pull away from government (Hanlon, 1986:33). The relationship bottomed out after the August 1985 "Rubicon" speech, where high expectations for reforms were dashed by the Prime Minister's combative speech, sparking a sharp decline in the rand and an increasingly precarious economic position for the country at large. The English-language financial press, notably the *Financial Mail*, quickly turned on Botha, going so far as to call for his resignation and noting that vis a vis the business community, Botha had "dashed their hopes and eroded their wealth" (O'Meara, 1996:330). Corporate leaders grew increasingly dissatisfied with Botha's failure to grasp free market principles (Schrire, 1991:83). The disenchantment was mutual, with Botha also infuriated by business outreach to the exiled ANC, which he described as "showing signs of weakness to the enemies of South Africa" (Hanlon, 1986:54). Botha, according to former Cabinet colleagues, also harbored an inherent distrust of the *geldmag* (money power) of English big business and paid little heed to its overtures. As former Finance Minister Barend du Plessis remembers, "I would listen to big business, but PW would denigrate me for that" (Du Plessis interview).

#### 7.2.5 *Business Had Limited Pre-1994 Foreign Policy Impact*

Was business ever able to have an impact on foreign policy before 1994? Although Munger claimed in 1965 that business "may from time to time contribute significantly to the shaping of South African foreign policy," there is no indication that it actually did so (Munger, 1965:54). Concerns by businessmen and farmers about the economic consequences of severing Commonwealth ties had no impact on Verwoerd's decision to do so, for example, while business concerns about Botha's regional destabilization strategy—unpopular with business on the grounds that it upset relations with regional trading partners, angered Western capitals, and even in certain instances damaged South African-owned capital assets in neighboring states—similarly had no effect (Eglin, 2007:93). According to former Deputy Foreign Minister Renier Schoeman, business inputs had no effect on regional security considerations, noting, "If collateral damage was done to business [in a raid], don't think there was a general sitting thinking, 'Oh, we just built a nice new supermarket in Swaziland, we can't go bomb everybody.'

Who's going to say that? No one around that table. It's a very wussy sort of thing" (Schoeman interview).

### *7.3 Business and Foreign Policy, 1994-2008: Frustrated Ambitions*

South Africa's return to the community of democracies and broader international acceptance opened the world's doors to its products and investment, giving South African business for the first time real to weigh in on its government's foreign policy orientation. Rather than lobbying Pretoria to make reforms necessary to make South Africa palatable to trading partners, the business community—both broadly and subsets of which—could now focus on real foreign policy concerns. These include pushing government to help South African businesses expand abroad; lobbying for trade pacts that would help South Africa producers; asking for assistance in acquiring visas; and seeking help from diplomatic representatives. Whether they did so, however, is a question worth exploring.

#### *7.3.1 Post-1994 Africa Expansion*

The dominant paradigm of South African business since 1994 in relation to the outside world has been its rapid expansion on the African continent. Unshackled by sanctions and negative perceptions, South African businesses between 1994 and 2008 significantly increased their presences across the globe and on the continent, both in terms of exports and foreign direct investment. Totalling just R75 billion in 1994, South African exports surged to over R643 billion by 2008, proving a massive boon to companies oriented outward ([www.dti.gov.za](http://www.dti.gov.za)). Although exports to Africa accounted for only about 15 percent of South African exports in 2008, trade with the rest of Africa showed the biggest growth in that period, jumping a whopping 328 percent between 1994 and 2003 (Hudson, 2007:131). Importantly for South African firms, while exports to the industrialized world are heavily skewed toward primary commodities, exports to the continent tend toward profitable value-added manufactured products.

Beyond exports, the 1994-2008 period also saw a significant increase in South African corporate expansion and acquisitions around the world, such as the 2002 acquisition of Miller in the United States by South African Breweries. However, as with exports, Africa registered the most significant regional increase, driven by South African firms realizing that the domestic market

was too small and saturated to offer many growth opportunities looking for untapped markets. Although turbulent, huge swathes of the continent's nearly 1 billion people were ignored by Western investors, giving South African firms an opportunity to cash in; as one South African businessman noted, "Africa is a huge market; it may be turbulent sometimes, but it eats and uses toiletries every day" (Vale and Maseko, 1998:279).

To this end, capital investment in African countries by South African firms saw a huge jump after the transition, going from R3.7 billion in 1994 to an estimated R80 billion by 2006 (Adebajo, 2010:114). By 2008, almost all of the top 100 firms on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange had an African presence, up from only a handful in 1994 (Hudson, 2007:129). Michael Spicer—who took over as South Africa Foundation (later Business Leadership South Africa) head in 2005—echoes this point, noting that all 80 of the association's members have an African presence, whereas only about ten would have had one in 1994 (Spicer interview). These firms have come to dominate the African market, with 19 of the continent's 20 largest companies (and 62 of the top 100) being South African as of 2006 (Daniel and Bhengu, 2009:140). This expansion has focused on a host of sectors, including old standbys like mining and brewing as well as new ones like telecommunications, financial services, and retail (Qobo, 2006:145).

Notably, this South African investment was continent-wide rather than just focused on its neighbors in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Nigeria, with its massive population and oil wealth, became a significant recipient of South African capital, while Anglophone countries in east and west Africa also proved promising (although the French hold on its former colonies has proven difficult to pry loose) (Adebajo, 2007a:230). That is not to say, however, that South African firms abandoned southern Africa; its private-sector investment in SADC dwarfs that of any other country and its firms are omnipresent in most regional markets (Alden and Soko, 2005:374). Also of note is that South African investment was not just private sector. By 2008, South Africa's Transnet ran Cameroon's railroad and had rehabilitated those of Nigeria; Eskom managed power plants in Mali, Tanzania, and Zambia; and Airports Company South Africa managed the airports of seven African countries (Naidu, 2004:211). The continent's economy had truly become "South African-ized."

### 7.3.2 *Government Facilitation Efforts a Mixed Bag*

The ANC government was from the very beginning enthusiastic about the potential for South African outreach on the continent, with DFA Director-General Jackie Selebi saying in 1995 that such expansion would create employment opportunities in South Africa in addition to its benefits for the continent (Hudson, 2007:144). Following on de Klerk—the first South African leader to include South African businesspeople on state visits—both Mandela and Mbeki were active in facilitating opportunities for South African firms abroad and including them in travels. These inclusions proved particularly valuable in Africa, with Sudan and Congo-Kinshasa providing two instances where Mbeki’s inclusion of businesspeople on a visit resulted in investment deals (Nathan, 2009:83). Although Pretoria did not underwrite private sector operations on the continent as it did in the 1970s, the post-1994 government took several steps to encourage South African business to invest in Africa (Sidiropoulos, 2008:4). The government vastly expanded its African diplomatic presence from 1994-2008, covering nearly the whole continent by the end of Mbeki’s term, and commercial/economic sections were increased to help South African firms. Foreign exchange regulations also were loosened to facilitate African investment, particularly in SADC (Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan, 2001:68).

However, South African firms did not look favorably upon all of its government’s interventions on the continent. Several African governments and host-country businesses expressed bemusement about the “un-African” ways by which South African firms—still dominated by white owners and managers—conducted themselves, while there was also dissatisfaction in several countries about South African business practices, brought to light in 2003 by allegations by workers in a Shoprite store in Zambia that they were mistreated by South African managers (Grobbelaar, 2005:68). To address these concerns, both government and the ANC from the early 2000s sought to institute a code of conduct for businesses operating on the continent. While DFA discussions of a code did not make it past the planning phase, the ANC at its 2007 Polokwane conference called in a resolution for a legally binding code that would mandate firms hold themselves to high ethical standards when operating in Africa, particularly in regard to labor regulation (Sidiropoulos, 2008:9).

The push for a code of conduct and better business behavior was undergirded by a desire by government that business be a positive force in Pretoria's foreign policy, particularly in fostering positive perceptions of South Africa. "Business plays a very important role," says former ANC International Relations head Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini. "Say for instance, when a South African firm is going to open a business in Nigeria, it must be informed by our foreign policy. That's why we had to discuss their behavior on the continent so it's in line with our foreign policy, which is to create equal relations, promote development, and ensure it's not a dominating relationship" (Myakayaka-Manzini interview). If business got out of line, however, it could theoretically damage South Africa's ambitions for political leadership on the continent (Adebajo, 2007b:41).

The push for a code never reached critical mass during the Mbeki administration, hindered by logistical difficulties—how could the South African Government force a firm to abide by stricter regulations than those of the host country? Even Aziz Pahad acknowledges this, noting that while it was important for business to play a constructive role in African economies: "A legislative charter cannot work. You can't impose BEE on a company operating in another country. They live by local rules" (A. Pahad interview). Still, calls for it rankled some in the business community, who took them as a sign of continued mistrust and a lack of appreciation. "Companies complain that government is way too quick to believe when African governments complain South African firms are behaving badly," notes prominent business consultant Dianna Games. "I talk to Shoprite often, and there's always some random NGO who says Shoprite is ripping off workers in some country, and government here believes the NGO" (Games interview).

Even beyond the code of conduct issue, businesses have found government attempts to assist them lacking, particularly from a capability standpoint. "We're nowhere near a team mentality between business and government, so what that meant was in Africa, business paddled its own canoe," notes Spicer. "It didn't feel there was mileage in getting with political authorities, because they'd ask whether we were coming to exploit the local populations and so on. And a lot of the big firms had better networks than government" (Spicer interview). This was exemplified by the fact that despite the expansion of South Africa's diplomatic presence in Africa, businesses

seldom utilized embassies' commercial and economic sections, generally finding them of little value (Alden and Soko, 2005:382). Academic and businessman Vincent Maphai—who has held senior executive positions at SABMiller and BHP Billiton—notes while he has always sought out South African embassies in Africa, “It was more out of politeness, saying, ‘I’ll be there, here’s what I’m doing.’ For me, it’s nice if my Ambassador is there to launch a project, but I’ve never said, ‘Here’s what we want to do, can you help us?’” (Maphai interview). Other complaints by business included a lack of coordination between DFA and DTI in helping South African firms and a lack of government support for South African firms lobbying for large-scale African infrastructure projects funded by international financial institutions like the World Bank (Schraeder, 2001:237; Qobo, 2010:19).

The difficulties of retailer ShopriteCheckers—which by 2008 had more than 100 stores in 15 African countries and was the biggest private employer in Africa—in dealing with the government on its investments in Angola provide a telling example of Pretoria’s lack of responsiveness to the business community. For example, although ShopriteCheckers, and many other South African firms, view Angola as prime territory for investment, Angolan bureaucratic intransigence has erected significant hurdles to doing business there. “We’re doing business there of about R500 million, and one of the things that hampers our business is that it takes you something like three weeks to get a single entry visa,” fumes CEO Whitey Basson, who also cited customs barriers, onerous disease controls, and excessive paperwork as other problems (W. Basson interview). Basson notes that he has approached the South African Government for help on this, but to little avail. “Have we had any success? I’d emphatically say no,” he says (W. Basson interview).

### *7.3.3 The Mechanics of Government-Business Interaction*

The 1994 political transition did not catch white business unaware or unprepared; leading South African businessmen and corporations—notably Anglo-American—had been laying the groundwork for relations with the ANC since 1985 (Handley, 2008:53). Business continued its full court press after 1990—the ANC’s first meeting on South African soil in 1990 was hosted by Anglo-American at the Vergelegen wine estate, for instance, and corporates showed few qualms about footing the bill for ANC activities during the transition period (Gevisser, 2007:579). This

cultivation of the ANC produced meaningful and early payoffs. From reiterating that nationalization of mines, banks, and industry was ANC policy upon his 1990 release from prison, by 1994 Nelson Mandela had dropped socialist rhetoric and continually emphasized his government's support of free-market principles (Taylor, 2001:24). Nevertheless, the business community—both individual firms and groupings both old and new—had to adapt to a new set of players, both broadly and specifically on foreign policy matters, a process that was not always smooth and, under Mbeki, marred by **an** underlying sense of mistrust.

Business groupings, new and old, played a dominant role in the interactions between government and business after 1994. The South Africa Foundation—rechristened Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA) in 2005—remained the leading organization of big business and foreign investors in South Africa, with its 80 members representing the country's largest firms. Many key institutional actors predating 1994—like the South African Chamber of Business (SACOB), South African Foreign Trade Organization, and South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry—continued to operate, while a significant new player emerged in 2004 with the creation of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA). A merger of the Black Business Council and predominantly white Business South Africa, BUSA emerged as one of the country's first racially mixed business organizations. Several interviewees expressed the opinion that BUSA, with more black businesses represented, was the grouping closest to government during the Mbeki administration, particularly in relation to BLSA. As Maphai claims, “BLSA is seen as the past” (Maphai interview). Mbeki would meet with BUSA representations regularly, and BUSA would, among other things, select businesses to travel along with the President on state visits. (Wilhelm, 2004:3)

The focus of these groups, however, was overwhelmingly on domestic issues, particularly how the business community could address the country's development needs. Similarly, the fora through which government interacted with the private sector, like the National Economic Development and Labor Council (NEDLAC) and Big Business Working Group, paid little attention to foreign policy matters when meeting with government (Hughes, 2004:39-40). There were some exceptions. The NEPAD Business Forum, founded in 2002, which included more than 200 South African firms and associations with an eye on supporting Mbeki's NEPAD

initiative and promoting the continent as an investment destination, although it did not seek to lobby the South African Government on policy (Hamman and de Cleene, 2005:130). Also, SACOB and a handful of other groups paid attention to South African trade policy, although the business community was by no means unanimous on the issue (Hughes, 2004:38). “The business community is very divided,” on trade issues, notes trade policy expert Peter Draper. “I don’t see an organized constituency in that respect” (Draper interview).

Businessmen of all races and backgrounds have largely fond remembrances of President Mandela and his openness to the business community. As South Africa Foundation head Neil van Heerden recalls, “I had very good contacts with Mr. Mandela, and he was very accessible and helpful. He helped me a lot in Africa and arranged for me to do some things. He was very accessible, even on a cell phone” (Van Heerden interview). Mandela met regularly with an agglomeration of about 15 top (primarily white and English) business leaders, known as the Brenthurst Group, and he also had particularly good relations with the Afrikaans-speaking business community, consulting leading figures like Anton Rupert on decisions that would have an impact on the business community, such as before the 1998 appointment of Tito Mboweni as Reserve Bank Governor (although he did not always take such advice; he still appointed Mboweni despite business reservations about a political appointment to the top banking job) (Dommissie, 2001:296). Nonetheless, as befitting Mandela’s generally inward focus, his interaction with business tended to be on domestic concerns.

Mbeki’s interactions with the business community were more regularized and structured than those of Mandela, although participants in them have less favorable perceptions of their robustness and impact. Mbeki had three working groups—on agriculture, big business, and black business—on which he would participate, usually about biennially, and he also sat on three councils with a business focus, related to information technology, international investment, and international marketing (Gumede, 2003:206). Broadly, the participants in these groups could be split into white South African business, black South African business, and non-South African business, each of which had vastly different experiences with the President.

The overwhelming view of white businessmen is that Mbeki did not like or trust them. “Mbeki had a love hate relationship with business,” recalls Michael Spicer, specifically referring to largely white-owned major corporations. “Pragmatically, he understood globalization and that they needed to engage with it. We have to talk to business, but can we trust them? They were the handmaidens of apartheid” (Spicer interview). Van Heerden has a similar perspective: “We understood that Mbeki was so overwhelmingly sensitive that white business would still call the shots that he did not want to be anywhere near us or associate with us” (Van Heerden interview). In describing this mistrust, van Heerden recalled one telling anecdote of a meeting between Mbeki and the Foundation during Mbeki’s tenure as Deputy President:

*The most acute example [of his mistrust] is that shortly after he became Deputy President, he let us know that it would be ok to have a dinner with him and cigars. We jumped at this, and decided before the dinner that we should take something along. The idea came up that in most big South African corporations, there’s spare capacity of senior people who are still young enough to be active. After the dinner, we kicked back, and the head of the Foundation, Conrad Strauss of Standard Bank made this proposal to Mbeki, for corporations to second people at their cost in fields of expertise that you need. We thought this was a nice idea. Well, Mbeki didn’t so much as respond with one breath, and afterward people close to him said he viewed this as the absolute insult, why were we so stupid. That was the end of a productive relationship* (Van Heerden interview).

Mbeki also viewed business critiques of government economic policies—no matter how well intentioned—and suggestions toward improving them with suspicion and contempt. The business community’s first organized attempt came in 1996 with its “Growth for All” document, which lobbied for more decisive economic reforms in the face of declining investor confidence and a weakening rand. As academic Antoinette Handley describes it, Growth for All “broke all the rules” in the nascent interaction between government and business, with the document using blunt language to criticize government economic policy (Handley, 2008:88). Spicer’s view is that government viewed Growth for All through the lens of “Who are these people to tell us what to do?” on economic policy, noting that business could have handled the process more adroitly (Spicer interview). For Mbeki more specifically, Spicer believes that the broadly neoliberal

prescriptions of Growth for All mirrored many aspects of Mbeki's not-yet-unveiled Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) program, ultimately making it more difficult to sell to the unions and other actors on the left of the economic spectrum. However, he notes that business did not know about GEAR, or vice versa, "which indicates that the relationship wasn't that close" (Spicer interview).

Mbeki's mistrust at least in part stemmed from a perception that white businessmen were trying to undermine the economy internationally. One must remember, says Maphai, that "the major firms—Anglo, SAB, Sappi, quite a few—the first thing they did after 1994 was move their listings to London or New York. It left a bad taste with everybody" (Maphai interview). At one 2002 meeting of the black business working group, he went so far as to say that white businessmen were "badmouthing the economy...[and] spreading negative sentiment about the South African economy abroad and elsewhere" (Quoted in Gevisser, 2007:688-689). He also erupted in 2004 after then-Anglo CEO Tony Traher said that while South African political risk was declining, it had not yet disappeared. In an online letter, Mbeki defended his government's record for enacting the most business-friendly policies in South African history and attacked Traher for suggesting that the government of a democratic South Africa presented more risk than its apartheid-era predecessor (Gevisser, 2007:688-689).

The perception of white business is that leading black businessmen like Saki Macozoma, Reuel Khoza, Patrice Motsepe, and others had far better and more intimate access to the President than did they. This appears to have been the case, given close political and personal relationships between them; Khoza notes that Mbeki sought to surround himself with black businessmen "who could think," and in their interactions he enjoyed "debating issues and challenging issues" (Khoza interview). However, those close to Mbeki deny that only black business had an influence. Essop Pahad cites both Khoza and Macozoma as business leaders to whom Mbeki would listen, but also cited Spicer as being influential (E. Pahad interview). A common denominator for both black and white business, however, is that their discussions were focused heavily on the domestic realm, with issues like Black Economic Empowerment taking priority.

#### 7.3.4 *Zimbabwe Inefficacy Displays Business's Limited Influence*

Zimbabwe was the most significant foreign policy issue on which the business community sought to influence government during the Mbeki administration, and the inability of private and public sector entities to make an impact exemplifies their lack of clout with Pretoria. Although difficult to accurately measure given the ring fencing of operations there by South African investors, the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy from 1999-2008 has had a deleterious effect on firms investing there (Sidiropoulos and Hughes, 2004:79). Although some companies have been able to scrape up bargain-basement assets, most firms operating in Zimbabwe have seen profits plunge and a handful—particularly private agricultural holdings by South African investors—have been seized by the Zimbabwean Government or its proxies (Bond, 2006:267). Parastatals dealing in Zimbabwe faced an even more dire situation, with Eskom and Sasol—the Zimbabwean Government's main suppliers of electricity and oil respectively—being owed several hundred million rands by their Zimbabwean counterparts by 2004 (McKinley, 2004:259). Although the Zimbabwean electricity authority was ultimately able to clear its debts, its long-term indebtedness led Reuel Khoza, then chairman of Eskom—previously a defender of Pretoria's Zimbabwe policy—to declare in 2003 that South Africa should show Zimbabwe a “red card” if it continued to default on its payments (Khoza, 2005:141).

Business did try to raise the issue in its interactions with Mbeki and senior DFA officials, but its attempts resulted in no tangible results throughout the Mbeki presidency (Khoza, 2005:143). Neil van Heerden in his role as Executive Director of the South Africa Foundation on one occasion attempted to raise the issue in a meeting with Mbeki, but was given an unsatisfactory 90-minute response with no opportunity for rejoinder (Hughes, 2004:39-40). Van Heerden remembers being shut down in other attempts to raise the issue:

*I had requests from business leaders to meet with government urgently about Zimbabwe to talk about what was happening there, and we made absolute zero progress. The guy I talked to there was Aziz, but it didn't work at all. Imagine taking four or five guys across to Pretoria, and sitting with them eyeball to eyeball and telling them about their concerns. I'd get calls from them weeks later and nothing would happen. Aziz would promise you the sky, but do nothing. Absolutely nothing (Van Heerden interview).*

Criticism of Mugabe by the business community did not only come from white business leaders. Sam Motsuenyane, who led South Africa's 2002 election observation mission to Zimbabwe, notes that he raised his concerns with Pretoria after those flawed elections, but to little avail (Motsuenyane interview). Khoza also remembers raising Zimbabwe in his interactions with Mbeki and other senior officials. "[Mbeki] used to say if someone would misbehave, they would get the yellow card or the red card. So we would debate that, and say on the balance of what you debated, Mugabe is driving the economy into the ground, he's exterminating whole villages like in Matabeleland. That deserves a red card" (Khoza interview). Khoza recalls Saki Macozoma as another leading black businessman who would air his criticisms of Mugabe. However, these critiques had no impact on Pretoria's approach toward its northern neighbor.

#### *7.4 Conclusion: No Greater Post-1994 Impact on Foreign Policy*

The conclusion of this chapter is quite clear—business has not, either before or since 1994, been able to influence government's foreign policy. Looking at the 1994-2008 period, Aziz Pahad bluntly states, "Business overall was not a driver of foreign policy. Too early. It will in later years" (A. Pahad interview). South African business did—and still does—take advantage of Pretoria's diplomatic efforts beyond its borders, particularly in Africa, but it has not actively tried to lobby on policy. However, unlike many other actors examined in this study, the blame for the business community's ineffectiveness cannot be ascribed to a lack of access to government—particularly under the Mbeki administration, various business groupings had regularized access to the President and other senior leaders. Even if the quality of the interactions was lacking, they still had the opportunity to raise external issues. Yet, beyond Zimbabwe, they chose not to do so. A combination of three factors appears behind this inability to have an influence on foreign policy, both before and after 1994.

*--Disinterest:* In general, business has always had its main focus on developing the domestic market, with the political realm—both in relations to internal and external issues—coming a distant second. Speaking specifically about the post-1994 business community, van Heerden opined, "Very few business leaders...really take an interest in directly political questions and fewer still [are] interested or involved in foreign affairs questions" (Hughes, 2004:38). Business

has only sought to interject itself into political conversations when the government was making policies detrimental to its profitability, such as its pre-1994 push for apartheid reforms and post-1994 efforts to influence economic policy. Foreign policy was very much a secondary concern in both instances; as Spicer notes, “Business hasn’t drawn up a foreign policy agenda; the domestic agenda is far more important” (Spicer interview).

--*Disunity*: Another disincentive to make inputs on foreign policy is that there is no “business community” that can make inputs. As noted earlier, firms in export industries (like manufacturing) have different priorities than, say, mining firms seeking lower trade barriers. Even on Zimbabwe, firms benefiting from the inflow of human capital into South Africa would have had a very different perspective on the issue than a firm victimized by expropriation or a collapsed Zimbabwean market. Hence, the business community cannot and does not speak with one voice on foreign affairs.

--*Disinclination*: Lastly, business appears to have avoided the foreign policy realm for the simple reason that avoiding criticism of the government beyond what is absolutely necessary is a generally sound principle for the bottom line. As historian Hermann Giliomee observed, “There are ways government can punish you, so business prefers to keep its head below the parapet. Business can be harmed by changes in the regulatory environment, so silence is safe” (Giliomee interview). If business was to expend its political capital in attacking the government and/or demanding reforms, it was in the domestic realm, where it mattered. Forcing the government’s hand on foreign policy concerns was not worth the risk or the effort.

## **Chapter 8: Parliament's Impact on South African Foreign Policy**

### *8.1 Introduction*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, legislatures in democratic countries have any array of competencies and degrees of influence (formal and informal) when it comes to the foreign policy realm. Many have powers to pass legislation related to foreign policy, ratify treaties, apportion funds necessary for foreign policy initiatives, and in some cases confirm diplomatic appointments, but it is rare in democracies for legislatures to drive a foreign policy agenda independent of (or even contrary to) that of the executive. Only perhaps in the United States—where the well-capacitated Congress operates independently of the executive branch and legislators show an active interest in foreign policy issues compared relative to counterparts in other states—does a legislature play, to borrow Norton's characterization, a “policy making” role (Norton, 2005:52).

Elsewhere, however, legislatures tend to play either a “policy-influencing” or a “policy-irrelevant” role on the foreign policy front. Where a legislature stands in this spectrum is influenced by a variety of reasons, including the extent of powers provided it constitutionally, the degree of interest by legislators, resources, degree of ruling party discipline and dominance, and the extent to which foreign policy is contested political terrain between ruling and opposition parties. This chapter will tease out all of the above questions in regard to South Africa to see if Parliament—both pre- and post-1994—has had the power and inclination to be a foreign policy player. The role of portfolio committees (post-1994) and study groups (both past and present) will be examined in detail as well.

### *8.2 Foreign Affairs Legislative Powers Before 1994*

Neither the South Africa Act of 1909, the act of the British Parliament that established Union, nor the 1926 Balfour Declaration, which afforded the Dominions limited powers to control their foreign relations made specific mention of the power of Parliament in the foreign policy arena. The former document granted the Senate power to “appoint committees to investigate specific matters,” although there is no indication the Senate ever used this power to examine a topic related to external affairs (Cloete, 1985:12). The creation of the Department of Foreign Affairs after the Balfour Declaration allowed for a separate External Affairs budget vote in Parliament,

but this was seldom a contentious exercise. Nevertheless, South African Prime Ministers did call on Parliament to affirm the two major issues of the pre-1948 periods, namely entry into the World Wars. Louis Botha won overwhelming support in 1914 for South African entry, although by 1939, entry into the Second World War was a far more hotly contested issue, with Smuts' motion to enter the war carrying the day by a tight margin of 80 to 67, splitting the party and elevating Smuts to the Premiership. Ultimately, however, neither vote appears to have any legal basis; rather, they were held for political reasons. The question of Parliament's pre-Republican legal status in regard to foreign policy was never adequately resolved.

### *8.2.1 Parliament and Foreign Affairs Under the 1961 and 1983 Constitutions*

Neither South Africa's 1961 Republican Constitution nor its 1983 tricameral Constitution gave Parliament any additional responsibilities in the foreign affairs realm; rather, both cemented the hold of the executive on foreign policy. Both documents affirmed that the State President was vested with the rights to appoint diplomats, enter into international treaties, and declare war or make peace.<sup>5</sup> Parliament was given the final say on budgetary decisions and, theoretically, could have voted down defense and foreign affairs budgets, although this never occurred (Cloete, 1985:45). MPs also had the right to ask questions for the record of Ministers, including on issues of foreign affairs. The 1983 Constitution additionally allowed for the creation of joint standing committees across the three houses that would "consider" bills related to "general affairs" that affected all three racial groupings, one of which was foreign affairs (Cloete, 1985:86). Committees had about 25 members; opposition members were represented in proportion to the various parties' representation, although the chair was always from the NP (B. Geldenhuys interview). The committees had the power to draft legislation as well as amend legislation submitted from the executive before it could be put to a vote, as well as query their respective ministers on any topics they saw fit, particularly before budget votes.

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<sup>5</sup> Although from 1961 to 1984 the office of State President was ceremonial and separate from that of the Prime Minister, the latter office holder was the true decision maker and such powers were, *de facto*, invested in him.

### 8.2.2 *In Practice, an Insignificant Foreign Policy Role*

Although limited, South Africa's Parliament until 1994 had, at least in theory, some power to hold the executive accountable for foreign policy decisions. In reality, it did not do so. Deon Geldenhuys notes that up to 1948, Parliament did not display "the slightest interest" in the activities of the then Department of External Affairs (Geldenhuys, 1984a:9). Debates in Parliament after 1948 were slightly more robust but, largely driven by the increasingly ineffective opposition, made little dent on government policy. Foreign policy through the 1970s was not a front burner issue. As long-time MP Japie Basson remembers, "Debates in Parliament during the 1960s and 1970s were over flags and anthems and race and farming, not so much foreign policy" (J. Basson interview). Colin Eglin echoes this point, noting "in general, there were debates on foreign policy, but not the dominant debates—they were on internal politics and the emergence of the ANC" (Eglin interview). From the mid-1970s, the executive largely kept members of Parliament in the dark on Pretoria's diplomatic initiatives and military incursions, and MPs gave little scrutiny to the foreign affairs and defense budgets, even after the "Muldergate" Information scandal (Geldenhuys, 1984a:10).

After 1983, the committees dealing with foreign policy generally did not challenge the executive—much like their counterpart committees dealing with domestic issues, they simply rubber-stamped government policy (Calland, 1997:6).<sup>6</sup> Committees would query their Ministers, often at length—longtime committee stalwart Boy Geldenhuys remembers the foreign affairs committee would spend up to five days before the Foreign Affairs budget vote questioning the Minister on various aspects of foreign policy—but they never offered more than token amendments to budgets (B. Geldenhuys interview). Secrecy around specifics of the defense budget kept that debate particularly vague (Cilliers, 1992:169). The committees, which met infrequently, also suffered from the fact that foreign affairs and defense—unlike domestically focused groups—were not departments that generated much legislation. As former Foreign

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<sup>6</sup> There was no committee that dealt with Intelligence, which was an area that was considered off-limits to Parliament. "There was no liaison between NIS and Parliament," remembers Niel Barnard, who claimed that Parliament "was not important for us." He adds, "Because intelligence was a national matter, a party political fight would not be made of it. There was an understanding it was not for public debate."

Minister Pik Botha (1977-94) recalls, “In my years, Foreign Affairs only passed one law, and that was on diplomatic immunities and privileges. Foreign Affairs was not a law maker” (P. Botha interview).

Another strike against the committees’ effectiveness was the fact that the executive treated the committee’s potential oversight roles—as well as that of the larger Parliament—with no discernable respect. Obfuscation and even outright lying characterized ministerial interactions with Parliament, and specifically the committees, on both foreign affairs and defense. During Vorster’s détente efforts of the 1970s, Foreign Minister Hilgard Muller (1964-77) was careful to avoid revealing states and leaders with which Pretoria was quietly dealing; when questioned by opposition members, he shut down debate by saying such “delicate matters” ought not be publicly discussed (Geldenhuys, 1984a:50). The Foreign or Defense Ministers similarly shut down questions on defense issues that involved external involvement, such as cross-border operations or arms sales, on the grounds that they endangered national security (Seegers, 1996:228-229). After the Angola invasion, both Defense Minister PW Botha and Foreign Minister Muller flatly denied that South African troops were inside Angola, not even taking the supposedly trustworthy NP caucus into confidence (Van zyl Slabbert, 1986:41). So, while the committees theoretically gave Parliament more power to influence foreign policy, in reality they did not challenge, and were effectively ignored by, the executive.

Most power in Parliament to influence policy debate, such that it was, lay within the National Party study groups pertaining to specific departments. These groups, of which there were about two dozen as of the early 1980s, would meet approximately monthly during the Parliamentary session (about five or six times per year) to discuss the issues up for debate; Ministers and senior civil servants would often be called upon to brief the groups (Geldenhuys, 1984a:60). Foreign affairs and defense both had study groups, with the former being one of the most popular study groups in Parliament, growing to nearly 70 members by the late 1980s (Schoeman interview). The group’s popularity appears to have stemmed the interest in its members in foreign affairs, the opportunities for foreign travel, the issue’s supposedly “high profile” nature, and the possibility of membership opening the doors to a diplomatic posting (as it did for several members) (Geldenhuys, 1984a:61). Its popularity, however, was not a reflection of its influence.

Former members remember that outside of meeting with foreign visitors and occasionally traveling abroad, the group was little more than a talk shop that had no influence on policy making (A. Fourie interview). The Foreign Minister would occasionally brief the group, but neither Muller nor Botha were unresponsive to group members' questions, only briefing on what they were working on at the time and frequently emphasizing the sensitivity of the issues discussed (A. Fourie interview).

Parliament's small role in foreign policy formulation can be chalked up to several factors, including limited powers granted to it under pertinent legislation; an acquiescent ruling party caucus with little inclination to challenge its leadership on foreign affairs; the inconsistency and ineffectiveness of the Parliamentary opposition; and the fact that MPs, in general, showed little interest in foreign policy debates.

The dominance of the National Party between 1948 and 1994 in Parliament is difficult to overstate. After just scraping into power with 52 percent of the seats in the 1948 election, the NP from 1953 to 1989 never held fewer than 60 percent of seats in the lower House of Assembly, winning a high of 81 percent of the seats in the 1977 election. This dominance meant that only a major breach of discipline within the National Party caucus would have fostered serious questioning of government policy—foreign or otherwise—in Parliament. That was not to be the case; the NP caucus would prove exceptionally united and disciplined in its Parliamentary votes until 1994, due to institutional and career-related reasons (Rotberg, 1988:28). Although caucus members represented individual electoral constituencies and had to be mindful of opinion back home, the NP was characterized by a strong element of conformism, at least in public (O'Meara, 1996:28-29). “When I entered Parliament in 1987, we were told by the chief whips, ‘You are new here, you should listen,’ and that was the way of controlling MPs,” notes former MP and NP spokesman Johan Steenkamp. “The whips told us, ‘If you stand up in caucus, you destroy your political career’” (J. Steenkamp interview). Rather, MPs took policy direction from the Prime Minister, Cabinet, and the party's provincial congresses (Kotze, 1997:2).

Caucus discipline on foreign policy also was a result of general agreement on the issues. Within the party, former Minister and NP foreign affairs study group chairman Dawie de Villiers

remembers “foreign affairs was never a contested issue. It didn’t figure high on the radar screen,” in comparison to domestic affairs (De Villiers interview). After 1948, according to Japie Basson, there was a divide in the National Party caucus over continued membership in the Commonwealth, with Malan’s Cape backers in favor and Strijdom’s Transvalers against (J. Basson interview). However, after Verwoerd—who did not consult either Parliament or his Cabinet before withdrawing in 1961—decided the issue, there was no foreign policy issue that engaged the NP caucus (Geldenhuys, 1994:263). Interviewees also cited trust in government principals, notably Foreign Minister Pik Botha, as a reason for a lack of caucus debate on the topic. Steenkamp remembers, “There was a perception that Pik knew what was best, and there wasn’t much need to question him” (J. Steenkamp interview). It was understood among group members, and the broader NP caucus, that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister made foreign policy (De Villiers interview).

Given NP dominance, the political opposition—first the United Party, later the Progressives and Conservatives—could do little to impact foreign policy, even if they did attack the government on foreign policy at times to score political points. The United Party was particularly active in this regard, playing to the party membership’s generally pro-British attitudes by attacking the government on such issues as its refusal to back Great Britain during the 1956 Suez Canal crisis and its moves toward withdrawal from the Commonwealth (Barber and Barratt, 1990:60-61). Nevertheless, party leader (1956-77) de Villiers Graaff was careful to emphasize his loyalty was to South Africa first, justifying his arguments on the latter issue on the grounds that Commonwealth withdrawal would leave South Africa without allies (Cockram, 1970:16). The other notable foreign policy issue on which Graaff attacked the government was what he described as its insufficiently supportive stance toward Rhodesia in the immediate post-UDI period (Good, 1973:22). “The people of South Africa will never forgive the Prime Minister if he sits idly by while civilized government and stability are destroyed in Rhodesia as they have been in so many African states,” stated Graaff in Parliament in early 1966 (Cockram, 1970:178). For the most part, however, Graaff’s tenure was marked by general agreement with government on the thrust of foreign policy, with Graaff himself noting that he could not remember significant differences over foreign affairs outside of Rhodesia (Graaff, 1993:242).

The United Party's 1977 split and the subsequent rise of the Progressive Federal Party—which became the leading opposition party after that year's general elections—as well as PW Botha's 1978 assumption of the Premiership changed the nature of government-opposition relations in Parliament. Opposition MPs, led by PFP leader Colin Eglin, immediately became more vocal on the foreign policy front, attacking the government over the Information scandal, angering the tempestuous Prime Minister (Eglin, 2007:183). In retaliation, Pik Botha in April 1979 accused Eglin in Parliament of having leaked confidential information about the possibility of a settlement in Southwest Africa to the American Ambassador, sparking a controversy that forced him out as party leader (Pottinger, 1988:30). Thereafter, however, the opposition's foreign policy focus cooled, particularly in light of domestic unrest, while its resistance to international sanctions put it on the same page as the ruling party (Suzman, 1993:264).

A final reason for Parliament's lack of power in regard to foreign policy stemmed from MPs' own inexperience and lack of interest on the topic. In his memoirs, former head of the Information Service Piet Meiring recalls that upon visiting Parliament in the early 1960s he was “amazed how disinterested the legislators on either side of the House were in South Africa's rating abroad” and noted how they wanted to avoid foreign affairs discussions altogether (Meiring, 1974:134). This disinterest clearly displayed itself on Parliamentary trips abroad, which were more paid vacations than efforts to learn about conditions abroad. Longtime diplomat Donald Sole noted in his autobiography that MPs—particularly those from the NP—on official trips abroad were remarkably ignorant of the pertinent issues, recounting one incident where an NP parliamentarian visiting Germany thanked his hosts by delivering a speech “which could be described as, and certainly was regarded by his hosts as, neo-Nazi” (Sole, 1991:309).

Renier Schoeman acknowledges that domestic issues took primacy in Parliamentary debate, but he attributes the lack of involvement on foreign affairs more to discomfort with the topic than disinterest. “In foreign affairs, people often didn't have a view. The average sort of guy, what the hell would he know about moving from bilateralism to multilateralism, for example. It's a specialty sort of area of government, and people didn't have experience in that regard” (Schoeman interview). While Parliament had talented professionals from many fields, very few

had background in foreign affairs beyond Pik Botha and Denis Worrall, who had been a professor and Ambassador.

### *8.3 Parliament's Impact on Foreign Policy Since 1994*

South Africa's transition brought with it expectations that Parliament would be a more transparent and representative body that would act as a check on untrammelled executive power. By most accounts, it has not lived up to this hope, and in several ways—particularly in regard to a dominant ruling party caucus driving through executive-approved legislation—strongly resembles its predecessor. Parliament, as before 1994, does not have extensive formal powers to influence foreign policy. Debates on the topic—specifically in committees—are far more transparent and frequently more robust than before 1994, but it appears unlikely that these discussions have any significant impact on the making of the policies themselves.

#### *8.3.1 Parliament's Post-1994 Foreign Policy Responsibilities and Powers*

In regard to foreign relations, South Africa's 1996 Constitution does not differ greatly from its 1961 and 1983 predecessors. As before, the executive is vested with the responsibility to appoint diplomats with no obligation to consult Parliament beforehand (Ahmed, 2009:292). The broader national executive—to include the President and Cabinet Ministers—is further empowered to negotiate and sign international agreements, again with no need to consult Parliament (De Villiers, 1995:171-172). The President also is given the power to deploy the Defense Force internally or externally, although he is bound to “promptly” inform Parliament of any such deployment (Ahmed, 2009:292). One difference is that both the National Assembly and National Council of Provinces must ratify agreements before they can take effect and can reject ratification, although this never occurred between 1994 and 2008.

The new Constitution entrenched the role of portfolio committees in the legislative process, the responsibilities of which are similar to those of the pre-1994 Parliament. Committees, including those dealing with foreign policy, have powers to monitor, investigate, and make recommendations about their respective departments and consider the budgets of their respective departments, as well as introduce and amend legislation (Barkan, 2005:9). They also have the power to summon any person to appear before them to give evidence and provide documentation

as needed. The key difference between pre- and post-1994 committees is in their transparency. Unlike previously, nearly all meetings—bar those dealing with intelligence matters—are open to the public; committees have the right to close meetings if sensitive issues are to be discussed, but this is rarely invoked.

In regard to foreign relations, several committees—notably Defense and Trade and Industry—dealt with various aspects of international affairs between 1994 and 2008, but only the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs (PCFA) focused exclusively on the topic and will be the main focus of study. Like other committees, the PCFA is tasked with oversight of its respective department and the broader conduct of South African foreign affairs, to include consideration of draft legislation and international treaties (Hughes, 2001:98). However, as before 1994, foreign affairs is a topic on which Parliament generally does not have to pass much legislation, and only a handful of bills have been considered during the Mandela and Mbeki administrations.

### *8.3.2 The Activist PCFA Under Mandela*

Members of the PCFA in 1994 were determined to take advantage of the newfound openness in the South African foreign policy debate to weigh in on key issues as the citizenry's representative body. The committee, under the chairmanship (1994-97) of academic and ANC activist Raymond Suttner, opened up the committee to engage with civil society, academia, and the broader public to discuss and debate the key issues of the day (Nel et al., 2004:45-46). The committee also established direct lines of contact to the Department of Foreign Affairs in an effort to make sure that Department—the leadership of which was still dominated by holdovers of the previous government—was following a policy course consistent with that of the new government's priorities. The executive was, at least publicly, acquiescent to this greater oversight, with Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo telling Parliament in 1994 that he hoped to consult closely with Parliament in order to “conduct South Africa's international relations in a transparent manner” (Shubin, 1995:10).

The Mandela-era committee—which included such ANC heavyweights prominent in the party's foreign policy apparatus as Ebrahim Ebrahim, Fatima Hajaig, Charles Nqakula, Danny Jordaan, and Jackie Selebi—early on sought to interject itself into the policy debate and showed itself

unafraid to criticize executive branch government policy. Suttner, its indefatigable chairman, was particularly outspoken in championing the “idealist” foreign policy principles generated by the ANC during the 1990-94 transition, attacking DFA and the executive for such stances as its support for foreign arms sales; a heavy focus on building trade and economic relations; and overemphasis on building relations with the West rather than with other African countries (Suttner interview). Suttner also urged South African recognition of Western Sahara and—while ultimately supportive of recognizing Beijing—advocated careful study of whether South Africa should switch its China recognition or hew to a more nuanced “two Chinas” stance (Daniel, 1995:48-49). Regarding the policy making process, Suttner during this time criticized the committee’s status as a purely ratifying body and called for a reassessment of whether the committee could be brought into decision making in conceptualizing policy (Banjo, 2009:63).

The committee’s forcefulness, however, did not translate into policy impact. Suttner claims that the committee was never briefed in advance on any key policy decisions and in general played no meaningful role “except to be told what was being done” (Suttner interview). DFA—with the support of the Minister and other principals like Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad—paid little heed to the committee’s inputs. For example, despite a 1996 PCFA decision to support a total ban on anti-personnel landmines at a UN Review Conference on the issue, DFA ignored the position in favor of one defending the use of “smart mines” (although it modified this position the following year to support a total ban) (J. van der Westhuizen, 1998:446). The Presidency similarly ignored the committee on key issues. Although Suttner notes that Mandela sought his inputs and advice on the China debate—and later offered him the ambassadorship to Beijing—Mandela’s November 1996 announcement that South Africa would switch recognition caught the committee by surprise (Suttner interview). The PCFA—and broader Parliament—also was kept in the dark about the 1995 Nigeria crisis (Van Nieuwkerk, 2006a:153). Suttner remembers that the PCFA tried to hold a special hearing to discuss Nigeria shortly after the Ken Saro-Wiwa assassination but “we were shot down by [senior DFA official] Abdul Minty” (Suttner interview). Parliament similarly was not consulted prior to the Lesotho invasion (Williams, 2006:192).

The PCFA’s influence was hampered both by structural shortcomings and personality clashes between Suttner and the executive. First and foremost, the executive had no formal obligation to

seek PCFA endorsement of its decisions in advance (Mills, 2000:275-276). Similarly, there was no systematized interaction between the Department and the PCFA; briefings by the Minister and other senior officials were ad hoc (Van Wyk, 1997:194). Another structural issue was the mismatch between the skills base of the committee and the workload with which they had to deal. While the PCFA had many leading thinkers on foreign policy, their obligations to other committees spread thin their talents, and they further suffered from a lack of research staff (Nel et al., 2004:48). This shortcoming was particularly damaging during the first post-transition Parliament, when South Africa's reengagement into the world community meant the ratification of numerous treaties and conventions—23 of them in 1997 alone—without Parliament being able to give them close scrutiny (Van Wyk, 1998b:293).

Such formal shortcomings could have been partly addressed through the development of close and collaborative relationships between principals on both sides, but this was not to be. The PCFA's often-confrontational tactics with DFA resulted in an acrimonious relationship developing between Suttner and DG Rusty Evans (Schraeder, 2001:237). Similarly, while Suttner remembers having cordial ties with President Mandela, he believes Nzo, Aziz Pahad, and Mbeki—who from 1994 played the dominant role in foreign policy formulation—viewed him as an irritant (Suttner interview). “There were personal issues in relation to me,” notes Suttner in regard to these poor relations, which probably stemmed from a combination of personality mismatches and the likelihood that these principals—who had worked together for years in exile—likely did not welcome Suttner's interjection into the policy process (Suttner interview).

For Suttner in particular, his experience during this time was greatly dispiriting. In 1995, he wrote that the “traditional culture of secrecy” around foreign affairs made it nearly impossible to influence the policy process, and the following year he asserted that the “new portfolio committee has been working to monitor what the Department of Foreign Affairs does as well as help with the process of foreign policy making. So far it has not been very successful with either of those two tasks” (Suttner, 1995:2; Suttner, 1994). He further lamented that it was “not clear that the Presidency relates on a regular and coordinated basis with other foreign policy structures when it makes interventions on foreign policy questions” and that “the process of decision making on foreign affairs has not changed substantially since the ANC came to power” (Hughes,

2004:3-4; Mills, 2000:275-276). Looking back more than a decade later, Suttner is blunt in stating that he “never influenced foreign policy” during his time as committee chair (Suttner interview). In 1997, Suttner was redeployed from Parliament to serve as Ambassador to Sweden, replaced by Ebrahim Ebrahim. Little changed in the operation of the committee; as Aziz Pahad noted the following year, “there is still not a system whereby major foreign policy issues are taken to Parliament, even to give information only” (Nel et al., 2004:46).

In discussing this period, Aziz Pahad himself was complimentary of Suttner, noting that he was one of the better minds on foreign affairs although he was “not a practitioner” (A. Pahad interview). Pahad asserts that problems with the PCFA stemmed from the fact that Suttner was more concerned with taking on the structures of the old DFA rather than the content of policies, taking a confrontational line that was generally unproductive. Furthermore, Pahad found problematic Suttner’s insistence that all meetings be open to the press and public: “You can only give them generalized briefings; you can’t take them into confidence with the media there, on things like what our mediators were doing” (A. Pahad interview).

### *8.3.3 Parliament in the Mbeki Era: More Active But Influence Still Limited*

One cannot discuss the PCFA during Thabo Mbeki’s Presidency without understanding the change in the nature of the legislative-executive relationship that took place after he took office. The legislature, particularly from the 1994-97 time frame, was a body remembered by participants and observers as one of open debate and discussion, even within the ANC parliamentary caucus. As former ANC MP Andrew Feinstein argues, “During the Mandela years the caucus room had resonated with sharp debate and discussion, passionate argument and profound polemic, the discourse that characterized the ANC and the internal resistance movement, a broad church all of whose congregants felt able to speak their mind and argue their view” (Feinstein, 2007:123). Looking at that same caucus just over a year after Mbeki’s assumption of power, Feinstein altered his assessment, calling the caucus “a more disciplined, choreographed and constrained party, a party fearful of its leader, conscious of his power to make or break careers, conscious of his demand for loyalty, for conformity of thinking” (Feinstein, 2007:123). ANC stalwart Ben Turok elaborated on this point, noting that under

Mbeki, “there was a certain discouragement of participation and asking difficult questions... it was laying down the line and setting the tone” (Turok interview).

The ANC caucus’s role became one of affirming, not debating, ANC policy; as one of Mbeki’s key allies, Tito Mboweni, said, “Parliament thinks it can make policy on behalf of people. This is not so. [Parliament’s] role is to implement ANC policy” (Quoted in Booysen, 2001:134).

Overarching policy direction was decided at the ANC’s party conferences every five years, while the party’s National Executive Committee and National Working Committee—both chaired by Mbeki—clarified issues as necessary. Decisions here were then passed down to Cabinet and, ultimately, the ANC caucus itself. “[ANC Headquarters] Luthuli House reaches out to Parliament via the chairpersons and whips,” says longtime ANC MP Albertina Luthuli in describing the policy making environment. “The ruling party in Parliament has to take its cue from the party itself. Policy is shaped there, and it has to come down to direct us,” she notes, although Luthuli acknowledged the caucus would debate its policy directives and could sometimes tweak them (Luthuli interview).

The place to tweak these positions and translate this guidance into policy positions was, as before 1994, in individual study groups that hammered out in advance party positions within the formal committee meetings (Barkan, 2005:8). “The study group is actually the structure that really deals with issues as they come from Luthuli House and the direction of the party,” notes Luthuli. “It eventually has to come up with a position, which you then take to the portfolio committee” (Luthuli interview). Study group members included those who sat on the formal committee, but other caucus members could sit in as well, usually meeting after plenary on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. Study groups also could call upon outsiders to brief them, something the ANC foreign affairs study group would do frequently. “If I’m not clear on something, I could request someone from the Embassy or DFA to unlock something for us,” recalls PCFA and study group member Mtikeni Sibande, who said the group frequently would call upon Aziz Pahad to explain elements of policy (Sibande interview).

Once the ANC caucus reached a consensus on a policy direction, there was no ground for an independent position. As Luthuli notes, “I’ve watched what happens in the older democracies,

your country [the United States], the UK, where you get members of the same party disagreeing in the broader chamber. We don't function that way...yet" (Luthuli interview). As with the NP, ANC party discipline under Mbeki was ironclad. South Africa's post-1994 proportional representation system is a significant driver of this discipline; the party list system placed extensive power in the hands of Mbeki and his acolytes, meaning they could drop sitting MPs from the next electoral list or "redeploy" them during their terms to a less influential—and remunerated—position (Nel et al., 2004:42). For MPs with few other career prospects, this was a daunting threat and was effective in keeping them in line (Barkan, 2005:7). In all, this resulted in a situation where, according to Mbeki's biographer, Mark Gevisser, "loyalists were promoted, often without the necessary skills, while free-thinkers were iced out, and began hemorrhaging from the institution" (Gevisser, 2007:715).

The function of the PCFA during Mbeki's administration was in many ways a microcosm of that of Parliament in the same period. On the surface, both entities had an air of functionality; debates took place, Ministers were questioned, questions were raised. The PCFA in many ways made strides under Mbeki, particularly in terms of its effectiveness within the legal and informal constraints placed upon it. An analysis of Parliamentary Monitoring Group records, for example, shows that the PCFA met far more frequently during Mbeki's tenure than under Mandela; the committee met 32 times in 2003 and neared 30 on other occasions, while 15 to 20 was more the norm during Mandela's years. Research capacity, bolstered by more budgetary resources, led to an improvement in the quality of PCFA reports and reduced its reliance on DFA for information and analysis, notes Tim Hughes of SAIIA, a longtime observer of Parliament (Hughes interview).

Ties between the PCFA and DFA also strengthened during the Mbeki administration. The departure of Suttner in 1997 and, more importantly, Evans in 1998 saw a renewed effort by Department principals to develop ties to PCFA members. Although Minister Dlamini-Zuma only briefed the PCFA six times during her tenure, Directors-General Siphosiso Pityana (1999-2002) and Ayanda Ntsaluba (2002-2011) frequently met with the committee. Deputy Ministers Aziz Pahad and, in particular, Sue van der Merwe were frequent interlocutors with MPs (Luthuli interview). PCFA chair Job Sithole (2004-08) praised the openness of the relationship, calling it

“over and above the normal constitutional dispensation” (Sithole interview). The committee also expanded its reach to draw more frequently on academics, civil society representatives, and foreign diplomats (Hughes, 2001:99). Hughes remembers former PCFA chair Ebrahim Ebrahim (1997-2002) as “probably the most open chair and most open MP I ever encountered. He was open to inputs, suggestions, and even joined the SAIIA committee on an *ex-officio* basis and would come to meetings” (Hughes interview). Hughes remembers Sithole as extremely open to outside representations: “He took his role very seriously, took his committee very seriously, his budgetary and programmatic responsibilities seriously. He’d meet with us at the beginning of each year and say what the committee was interested in that year” (Hughes interview).

Lastly, the committee both during the Mbeki and Mandela years was marked by generally good—and better than before 1994—relations between the ANC and opposition representatives, who populated the committee in a rough reflection of the parties’ popular support. Debate between the opposition and ruling party on foreign affairs tended to be limited, with general agreement between the two sides over most issues (Ahmed, 2009:297). Only Zimbabwe during the Mbeki period could be called truly divisive, although certain stances—like the 2007 Burma vote—generated heat from the opposition. PCFA members from both sides of the aisle described inter-party relations as very solid in the immediate post-1994 period. Suttner cited long-time foreign policy mavens Colin Eglin of the DA, Boy Geldenhuys of the New National Party, and Ben Skosana of the IFP as knowledgeable and respected members of the committee (Suttner interview). Geldenhuys and Skosana both noted that because of this consensus on the overall thrust of South African foreign policy, relations with ANC members were smooth; besides Zimbabwe, there was little to fight about (Geldenhuys and Skosana interviews).

Such increased interactions—as well as the committee’s frequent trips abroad—enhanced the quality of the debate within the PCFA, but at the end of the day, cross-party debate was the culmination rather than the beginning of the committee’s influence on Pretoria’s policies. Parliamentarians frequently complained through Mbeki’s tenure that they had almost no influence on the foreign policy debate (Le Pere and van Nieuwkerk, 2004:125). Although Sithole says that his relationships with key Presidency foreign policy figures allowed the committee to “be taken into confidence on certain things and briefed and know when major

pronouncements were coming,” the committee’s opinion was not asked in advance (Sithole interview). If legislators had an impact on foreign policy, it was through their participation in the ANC’s international affairs structures (Hughes, 2004:30). Pallo Jordan, who chaired the PCFA from 2002-04, says that, “In terms of relative weight of the debate, NEC discussion would carry more weight than, say, the PCFA. We were in the fortunate position that I was part of the NEC, NWC, and chairing the PCFA, so there was that direct connection” (Jordan interview).

There are several examples of Parliament’s reactive, not proactive, nature in policy debates. One of the hallmarks of Mbeki’s foreign policy agenda, NEPAD, was launched on 31 October 2001 without any discussion of it occurring in Parliament; as an astonished Hughes notes, “Parliament didn’t have a voice on the singular blueprint for Africa’s recovery” (Hughes interview). Pretoria’s 2007 UN Security Council vote to keep Burma off the agenda is another example. “The decision on Burma was taken at the UN; I don’t remember being privy to that. I don’t remember being briefed on that, unless it was done in my absence,” notes longtime ANC committee member Mewa Ramgobin (Ramgobin interview). Albertina Luthuli also does not remember the committee being queried in advance on this vote (Luthuli interview).

Capacity of MPs on the committee, particularly during the Mbeki years, was another widely cited problem. Many of the foreign affairs thinkers of the Mandela-era PCFA either left Parliament or were promoted, leaving what many observers describe as a relatively weak bench on foreign policy issues. Examining the committee membership, Aziz Pahad opines that “People were not properly chosen; if you go through the membership, you realize that people were learning on their feet... In many ways, they were as uninformed as the general public. That’s why you saw little coming out of Parliament” (A. Pahad interview). He argues that the ANC study group on foreign affairs was similarly weak and “made no real input into policy thinking.”

Probably in large part due to these capacity shortcomings, the PCFA tended to take a “DFA knows best” mentality, much like before 1994. “To a large extent, DFA would answer our questions if we had them,” notes Luthuli. However, she adds that if DFA was not able to win over the committee, the PCFA response was generally to move on: “Sometimes, they will be able to convince you of their positions, but sometimes not. We just move forward, telling the

department we don't see things that way" (Luthuli interview). In that same vein, neither the DFA budget nor treaties put forward for ratification received much scrutiny from the committee (Banjo, 2009:66-67). Hajaig cited the latter issue as one that deserves additional scrutiny in the post-Mbeki period: "Now it gets signed and comes to us to be ratified whether we like it or not. And there were some that we had major problems with; we had to sign it and make a note that there are these issues that we want to discuss. That's not really sensible, but we're working at it, that Parliament must have a say beforehand and not afterward" (Hajaig interview). Throughout the Mbeki era, ANC MPs looked upon their roles as enforcers, rather than influencers, of the government's foreign policy. "There was never a situation where we directly as a committee of Parliament influenced directly the formulation of foreign policy," notes Sithole, "but once those decisions were made, we were tasked with ensuring those pronouncements were carried out by DFA" (Sithole interview).

Interestingly, committee members, in reflecting on the period, express little discomfort with their roles, comfortable in enabling, rather than challenging, government orthodoxy (Ahmed, 2009:305). While acknowledging that Parliament has a role to play in the international arena, even Sithole said Parliament should only get involved "on a limited basis" (Ahmed, 2009:302). Fatima Hajaig, who briefly co-chaired the committee, also acknowledged this acquiescent attitude toward the executive: "We allowed things to happen in a particular way. For instance, foreign policy was made by the President, DFA would implement it, and we would know about it second hand. And we'd sort of accept that" (Hajaig interview). Discussion of pressing issues tended to be cursory. "It would be far-fetched to say the PCFA goes into an intensive discussion over these issues. We do it in passing, to the extent we can," says Ramgobin. "Many times it's a *fait accompli*" (Ramgobin interview).

One issue where the committee and the ANC parliamentary caucus more broadly displayed its failure to question and critique government was on Zimbabwe. The opposition, and particularly Democratic Alliance leader (1999-2008) Tony Leon, made the issue a top priority from the start, sensing that this was a rare example of a foreign policy issue that could win them votes, especially among white voters (Klotz, 2006:78). However, critiques did not come just from the opposition; there were early hopes that ANC MPs would assert their independence on

Zimbabwe, particularly in early 2000 when Pallo Jordan tabled a resolution criticizing Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and asserting elections later that year could not be free and fair (Gumede, 2005:140). Jordan says that he took a critical stance precisely to give Parliament an independent voice, one that could be used to take a multi-pronged approach to dealing with the Zimbabwean Government: “Government as government, DFA, can say one thing, but there has to be a way to articulate the real values of the ANC. That can be given to Parliamentarians, and if there are complaints, you can explain it away that these are MPs, not part of government” (Jordan interview).

The ANC caucus and its members on the PCFA never lived up to these expectations. Despite what Sithole describes as deep disagreement within the ANC caucus on the issue (“There was never an agreement or understanding on this within the ANC. There wasn’t even a 70 percent consensus.”), ANC MPs never publicly criticized government policy toward Zimbabwe (Sithole interview). Parliament sent observers to four Zimbabwean elections during Mbeki’s Presidency (2000, 2002, 2005, and 2008) but always endorsed their conduct. Sithole says he would visit Zimbabwe to liaise with its Parliament’s then-Speaker, Emmerson Mnangagwa, and try to influence him, but such visits had no discernable impacts (Sithole interview). Somewhat amazingly, an analysis of Parliamentary Monitoring Group records shows the PCFA specifically met on Zimbabwe—a pressing foreign policy crisis on South Africa’s borders—just six times between 1999 and 2008, a number dwarfed by its meetings on the Middle East.

#### *8.4 Conclusion: An Impotent Parliament, Past and Present*

The evidence points to a clear conclusion that Parliament, in both its pre- and post-1994 conceptions had all but no impact on the South African Government’s foreign policy. The reasons for this lack of impact were remarkably similar—a constitutional dispensation that consolidates power over foreign policy in the executive; rigid ruling party discipline; a broad consensus on foreign affairs among both ruling party and opposition MPs; and a general disinterest in the topic among parliamentarians, who knew and understood that foreign affairs issues were not vote-getters at election time. This general disinterest post-1994 is noted in research by Jo-Ansie van Wyk showing that of the 2,910 questions tabled in Parliament in 1997, only 58 were related to foreign policy, and these were asked by just 13 MPs (Van Wyk,

1998b:297). A small, core group of MPs—notably ANC MPs Jordan, Ebrahim, Hajaig, and Ramgobin alongside Eglin, Geldenhuys, and Skosana from the opposition—dominated discussion of foreign policy, more out of personal interest than any political necessity. Ultimately, this general willingness, past and present, to accept executive control of the foreign policy process has undermined the body’s ability to influence foreign policy, or even test the limits of its potential power.

## Chapter 9: South Africa's Ruling Parties and Foreign Policy

### 9.1 Introduction

The actors discussed to this point in the study have all been distinct “outsiders” to the policy process; they could to an extent influence policies, but they had no facility for making them. Ruling parties, however, occupy unique ground. They are decidedly not outsiders, as the political decision-makers in government in almost all cases come from their ranks. However, in the South African context, the apartheid-era National Party (NP) and the post-transition African National Congress (ANC) have existed as entities technically separate from the government with independently functioning structures. Party policies were intended to inform those of government, although there was no legal mandate for elected officials to follow party orthodoxy lockstep. Of course, as Thabo Mbeki learned when he was ousted as ANC leader in 2007, upsetting the party by not appearing to abide by its principles could have disastrous political consequences for an elected leader.

This chapter will examine the degree to which the NP and ANC—as distinct entities apart from government—influenced South Africa's foreign policy debate while they were ruling parties. To do so, this chapter will look at how, and to what extent, parties weighed in on foreign policy as separate entities from government, examining whether party structures had the facility and interest to make independent inputs on foreign policy, how they were made, and whether the debate was broad-based within the party. The ANC's pre-1994 governance and foreign policy structures also will be examined here at some length so as to determine how and to what extent they changed after 1994.

### 9.2 The National Party and Foreign Policy

The National Party from 1948 to 1994 had, as a distinct entity, almost no influence on South Africa's foreign policy and no real means of exerting such influence. Debate on foreign policy outside government, such as it existed, came from NP-affiliated entities like the *Broederbond* and Dutch Reformed Church, or by NP Members of Parliament. That said, as previous chapters have shown, foreign policy debate was quite limited even in these organizations.

The NP's biggest limitation as a policy actor on all fronts was its provincial nature. A federal party, the party's four provincial organs were autonomous entities in regard to organizational matters, each with its own constitution, and were in competition with one another (particularly the Cape and Transvaal) over policies and patronage (Basson, 2008:107). Provincial party structures would hold annual congresses, but at a national level, the party only met through rare federal congresses (only two held between 1941 and 1984) or on the federal council, which consisted of representatives of the provincial structures (O'Meara, 1996:48-49). The council was a forum for raising contentious issues, but it had no real power over the provinces. Former Natal administrator and NP national information officer Con Botha recalls that the federal council "could make no binding decisions; it could recommend [policies] but these only became official policy once the four provinces had ratified them" (C. Botha interview).

At a provincial level, the party did assign a member of its information team to handle foreign policy issues and write briefs if necessary (Schoeman interview). However, foreign affairs were not a top priority among provincial party members, and, as in Parliament, they largely deferred to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on these issues; "foreign policy was never under pressure" within the party, notes former Trade and Industry Minister Dawie de Villiers (De Villiers interview). Provincial and federal meetings were more concerned with political horse-trading and domestic policy than international issues. Of course, political jockeying could have an impact on the personalities making or influencing government foreign policy decisions; Niel Barnard, for example, acknowledges that his appointment was in large part due to PW Botha owing the Free State NP for backing his successful run for the party leadership (Barnard interview). Nonetheless, at the end of the day, the NP's influence on foreign policy was so minor as to be all but non-existent, with—as will be shown—most power lying within government structures and the President or Prime Minister in his capacity as a governmental rather than party leader.

### 9.3 *ANC Decision-Making Structures in Exile*

Before examining how the ANC made foreign policy decisions after 1994, one must first understand how the exiled movement operated in regard to its decision-making processes. Upon taking power in 1994, the ANC morphed from a liberation movement seeking to topple the old

political system into a political party now determined to govern that system and, by effectively doing so, retain power. However, as an entity in existence since 1912, it already had long-established decision-making structures and traditions in place upon becoming government, and it is necessary to comprehend how the ANC's leadership made decisions before its 1990 unbanning to understand how they did so after taking power. Specific attention will be focused on the ANC's conduct of international diplomacy and its formulation of foreign policy, particularly the structures involved in making and implementing those decisions; its ability and willingness to make those decisions in a broad-based, "democratic" fashion; and the interpersonal and intra-structural dynamics that shaped those decisions.

### *9.3.1 The Elite Nature of ANC Exile Decision Making*

Oliver Tambo's 1960 flight into exile meant that he had to constitute a movement outside the country essentially from scratch, including re-establishing the movement's decision-making structures in a fashion that ensured the broadest possible participation while being cognizant of security concerns and infiltration. Keeping cadres informed, particularly those outside of the movement's home base, and giving them opportunities to participate in decision making would prove difficult for the next 30 years. Questions regarding policy shifts or the election of new leadership required consultative conferences, which were held periodically during the movement's exile years. The movement's new external mission held its first consultative conference in August 1962 in Dar es Salaam, while the broader movement—including the domestic underground and representatives of the affiliated South African Communist Party (SACP)—met in Lobatse in the then Bechuanaland protectorate that October (Meli, 1989:151). Although the broader movement met twice more in 1965 in Tanzania, many elements of the party—particularly from the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) armed wing—remained dissatisfied with the leadership over what they viewed as a lack of communication, incompetence, and a propensity toward luxurious living while they struggled (Ndebele and Niefertgodien, 2005:587).

This growing dissent led to a week-long consultative conference being held in April 1969 at Morogoro, Tanzania, attended by 70 ANC and allied organization members, in an effort to mollify concerns and determine how to better coordinate the armed struggle (Ellis and Sechaba, 1992:55). Tambo addressed the complaints head on, admitting that the leadership of the external

mission was “not organizationally geared to undertake the urgent task of undertaking people’s war” and announcing the immediate dissolution of the NEC (Lodge, 1983:300). The conference also decided that non-black South Africans could join the ANC (if not yet the NEC); shrunk the NEC from 23 members to a more manageable nine; affirmed Oliver Tambo as the movement’s president (he had previously been acting); and replaced the increasingly ineffective Duma Nokwe with Alfred Nzo as the ANC’s Secretary General (Ellis and Sechaba, 1992:61). It would, however, prove the last consultative conference until a meeting at Kabwe, Zambia in 1985, the last before the ANC’s unbanning.

Given the infrequency of broad-based decision-making conferences, day-to-day decisions were taken by a small leadership cadre at party headquarters—particularly the NEC—with little regular external consultation. “It wasn’t a very democratic system...and it would be a mistake to think that the ANC consulted up and down the way we do now,” notes Ben Turok, then editor of the ANC’s *Sechaba* magazine and based in London (Turok interview). Internal democracy was undermined by a need to keep its communications covert—particularly given the security threats faced by South African Government forces—and a growing Soviet influence in the movement that emphasized secrecy (Mangu, 2009:44). The lack of secure communications meant that movement cadres outside Lusaka generally had little opportunity to influence decisions in advance of them being made. “Most of those day to day, month to month type of decisions would have been made by ANC officials, without a great deal of participation of the members,” recalls ANC stalwart Pallo Jordan, who asserts that Tambo, Secretary-General Alfred Nzo, and Treasurer-General (from 1976) Thomas Nkobi were dominant figures (Jordan interview). Aziz Pahad seconds this point: “Policies came from Lusaka and we had to implement them where we were” (A. Pahad interview).

While the undemocratic nature of ANC decision making rankled many party cadres, Oliver Tambo’s painstaking commitment to consultative leadership and outreach to members around the world helped him hold the movement together. NEC members recall Tambo as staying above the fray when chairing the committee, facilitating free-flowing discussion and ensuring that all members agreed on a decision before implementing it (Callinicos, 2004:450). Jordan, an NEC member since 1985, notes that Tambo usually would allow the member with primary

responsibility for the issue at hand to chair the pertinent NEC meeting:

*He intervened as was necessary; he never wanted to dominate discussion. He would usually allow a lot of debate. What endeared lots of people was that even if it were known that OR disagreed with a viewpoint, he would encourage the person with that viewpoint to air it so it could be discussed. And then, usually at the end, he would intervene, drawing the threads together. At the end of the meeting, unless it was a very exceptionally divisive issue, everyone came out thinking that their viewpoints were weighed and included in the consensus. Everyone felt ownership in the decision (Jordan interview).*

Tambo also made efforts to consult with other cadres whenever possible, either at headquarters or on trips abroad, meetings that helped party leaders keep abreast of international dynamics. “The decision center was Lusaka, but there was room to influence in centers where there was a flow of information,” recalls future Department of Foreign Affairs Director-General Siphon Pityana, then a young exile in London. “Tambo was passing through London every now and then, as was Thabo [Mbeki] and [Johnny] Makatini. Invariably, there would be sessions and discussions around a range of issues” (Pityana interview). Turok also remembers London as a key meeting point for the ANC’s Lusaka-based leadership and its cadres based elsewhere in the world, adding that he would meet privately with Tambo whenever he would visit (Turok interview).

### *9.3.2 ANC Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives*

As noted in Chapter 2, the ANC’s forays into the international arena date to shortly after its foundation, although they would prove inconsistent until the movement was forced into exile in 1960. From 1960 onward, the goals of the ANC’s international outreach included raising awareness of the human rights abuses committed by Pretoria and the unjust nature of the apartheid system; raising funds to allow the movement to operate and to facilitate the armed struggle (a budget that reached \$50 million per year by 1990, not including military operations); increasing Pretoria’s international isolation; and establishing the ANC as the “sole legitimate representative” of South Africa’s liberation struggle (Thomas, 1995:xxi). These goals would prove challenging for the first two decades in exile; in reality, the movement through the mid-

1970s was focused on survival above all else (Macmillan, 2009:317). However, by the late 1970s—particularly after the 1976 Soweto riots—ANC efforts started to pay off, with the movement able to generate growing mass support for the anti-apartheid struggle as well as increased Western public pressure for the release of Nelson Mandela (Callinicos, 2004:519-520). This pressure, in conjunction with the broader international anti-apartheid movement and allies like the United Democratic Front back home, was essential to pushing previously skeptical Western governments to put pressure on Pretoria to make reforms.

While the ANC's foreign policy in exile was undergirded by a commitment to solidarity with other oppressed people, it never lost sight of its overarching goal—the toppling of Pretoria's apartheid government. “What it always boiled down to in the end was what was going to help our movement...Any debate would always end there” notes Jordan on how the movement determined its stances on international issues (Jordan interview). While these decisions generally were not contentious within the ANC, there was debate over various approaches. Says Jordan, “For example at the height of the Vietnam War, what was our stance on participating in the protests worldwide against the war? The decision was that we would have to support the struggle against the war in Vietnam, because the Vietnamese were waging a liberation struggle,” even though such a stance would not endear the ANC to skeptical Western governments supporting the war (Jordan interview). Essop Pahad recalls other debates about how to best align the ANC with black leaders in the United States; although many in the movement supported the more radical views of Malcolm X and the Black Power movement, the dominant view—supported by Mbeki, among others—was that overt support for a more strident movement would undermine the ANC's standing among most Americans, thereby undermining its chances of building broader support (E. Pahad interview). Reaction to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was another issue that sparked debate among ANC and SACP cadres (Scholz, 2008).

Even closer to home—given the ANC's significant presence in Great Britain—was the question of how to treat the increasingly active IRA in the late 1960s. “In Britain 1969, you had the beginnings of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, and in the 1970s the IRA reviving,” says Jordan. “Now, where does that put you? Here, the oldest anti-colonial struggle against the

oldest colonial power; what do you do?” (Jordan interview). The ultimate conclusion was to support principles of equal rights and attack British authorities for violations of civil liberties like detention without trial—“they were doing exactly what Vorster was doing” (Jordan interview). However, the need to maintain good ties with the British government meant that the ANC would not openly support IRA attacks—even though the IRA assisted the ANC with reconnaissance for the 1980 Sasolburg attack, according to Kader Asmal (Asmal and Hadland, 2011:65-67). Fortunately for the ANC, its good relations with official Sinn Fein allowed them to escape pressure; they “understood our position and never pressed us” (Jordan interview).

### *9.3.3 Day-to-Day Foreign Policy Decision Making and Implementation*

While building international support was a tenet of the ANC’s efforts to topple the apartheid government, it was not an issue on which the party leadership devoted extensive time and energy. “On a day to day basis, you didn’t have to make many radical decisions in those days,” notes Pallo Jordan, an NEC member from 1985 (Jordan interview). NEC meetings—irregular through the mid-1980s—generally did not focus on international outreach, although certain events, like the signing of the Nkomati Accord, would raise issues like regional outreach for discussion (Gerhart and Glaser, 2010:536). Conferences similarly did not prioritize external affairs; Morogoro or Kabwe, for example, primarily focused on organizational issues that would make the ANC better able to wage the armed struggle in South Africa. However, they were not ignored altogether. Several conference resolutions at Morogoro referenced other international anti-colonial struggles and thanked the OAU for its support, while outgoing Secretary-General Duma Nokwe presented a paper on international affairs (Ndebele and Niefertgodien, 2005:592). Similarly, several resolutions related to building international solidarity were introduced at Kabwe.

One outcome of Morogoro—the creation of formal departments within the organization—would come to play a significant role in the party’s international efforts. Before Morogoro, writes Pallo Jordan, the movement had less-formal “desks” to which specific people were assigned but without supporting infrastructure (Jordan email). Now tasks would be carried out more formally, and the new Department of International Affairs (DIA) would from 1969 be responsible for the movement’s international efforts (Pfister, 2003:56). DIA, which was attached to the President’s

office, operated as the pseudo “foreign ministry” of the ANC, managing the movement’s missions around the world and coordinating its outreach to the United Nations and other countries (Lodge, 1987:5). It would, however, take time to get up to speed; although established on paper at Morogoro, it suffered from a lack of funding and disorganization under its first head, ousted Secretary-General Duma Nokwe, who served as its head from 1969 to his death in 1978. Only after Josiah Jele was elected to replace him that year would DIA’s operations become more structured (Jordan email). Jele would stay in that job until 1983, replaced by the ANC’s representative at the United Nations in New York, Johnny Makatini. Thabo Mbeki succeeded Makatini after his 1988 death.

By the time of the ANC’s 1990 unbanning, DIA in Lusaka coordinated the operations of and communicated with the ANC’s 43 exile missions around the world (more than the South African government had at the time), but it remained a relatively small and ad hoc organization. “We must not pretend it was exceptionally strong,” notes Aziz Pahad, who would serve as DIA’s deputy head from 1990 (A. Pahad interview). A January 1989 report on the state of the organization following Makatini’s death described the department as having nine members (organized into six geographical desks and a research desk) who would meet bi-weekly to plan and discuss reports (“ANC State of Organization”, 1989). DIA’s working-level officials acted much like desk officers in a foreign affairs department, managing the flow of paper and dealing with administrative matters; one 1988 document, for example, details DIA efforts to mollify Zambian officials upset by drunken ANC cadres shooting Zambian citizens (ANC memorandum, 1988).

DIA was not, it should be noted, the sole ANC entity dealing with external affairs. The MK, by dint of its operations throughout southern Africa, was an important actor whose leadership took a significant interest in the ANC’s external orientation, specifically in regard to how those foreign ties affected its ability to wage the armed struggle (Pfister, 2003:58). Another, even more important, group was the movement’s Department of Information and Publicity (DIP), also founded at Morogoro and tasked in part with building international support for the ANC. Although primarily aimed at propagandizing for the ANC within South Africa and educating citizens about the ANC’s activities, DIP had a strong international component, producing press

statements, fact sheets, memoranda, and newsletters aimed at winning support around the world (Ndlovu, 2005:634). Much of this effort was specifically aimed at winning support in the West, where, notes Jordan, support early on tended to be weak (Jordan email). DIP's role in relation to the international arena grew more significant from 1978, when a young aide to Oliver Tambo, Thabo Mbeki, took charge of it.

#### *9.3.4 Thabo Mbeki and the Pragmatism of the ANC's Foreign Policy Agenda*

Thabo Mbeki was 36 years old when he was named as head of DIP, but he was not without significant international experience. After going into exile in 1962, he had spent eight years studying and working for the ANC in Great Britain; had undergone training in the Soviet Union; and served as an ANC representative in Botswana, Swaziland, and Nigeria (Gevisser, 2007:385). Close to Tambo from his time in London and an NEC member since 1975, Mbeki briefly served as the ANC's political secretary after returning to Lusaka from Nigeria in 1977, but moved shortly thereafter to head DIP, a position he would hold until taking over DIA in 1989. At DIP, Mbeki emerged as the dominant figure in directing the ANC's international outreach, expanding the movement's outreach to the West and rolling back its culture of secrecy, moves that would both increase pressure on the apartheid government and open doors to discussion with Pretoria. Mbeki's first major coup was his successful 1978 advocacy—at the urging of Johnny Makatini and with the support of Tambo—for the ANC to cooperate with an American documentary about the ANC, which gave Western audiences the first in-depth look at the movement and helped dispel notions of its “terrorist” nature (Gumede, 2005:38).

Whereas the ANC's diplomacy through the late 1970s was heavily Africa-centric, specifically in seeking to counter South African outreach on the continent, Mbeki throughout the 1980s focused significant attention on winning support for the ANC and the broader anti-apartheid movement in the West, particularly the United States and Great Britain (A. Pahad interview). “It was clear that we needed to work with the Americans and British, because they were the powers in the world,” remembers Essop Pahad, who was working for the ANC and SACP in London during the 1980s (E. Pahad interview). Mbeki also recognized the need to expand the ANC's base beyond the African-American population, organized labor, American Democratic Party, and British Labor Party. As Pahad remembers, “Mbeki said to me once that he had come to London,

and the CIA Station Chief saw him and said, ‘Listen Thabo, you’re going to America. When you go, don’t only meet your friends,’” urging him to reach out to Republican leaders, particularly moderates. “Interestingly enough, Thabo struck up a good relationship with [conservative Georgia Republican] Newt Gingrich. Very interesting...of all people. I used to say, ‘What? Good grief!’ He’d say, ‘Listen you, how do you think we’re going to make a breakthrough if we don’t develop good personal relations with people like Gingrich?’” (E. Pahad interview). This lobbying would prove key to the 1986 passage of sanctions in Congress and the subsequent congressional override of Republican President Reagan’s veto (Lyman, 2002:53).

Mbeki’s pragmatic courtship of the West was not universally popular within the movement, particularly among cadres associated with the MK and SACP, but Mbeki had a core group of allies that helped him overcome internal opposition. Nzo, Makatini, and Aziz Pahad shared and supported his pragmatic tendencies, although no ally was more important than his friend and mentor Oliver Tambo (Landsberg, 2004:47). The ANC President fully bought into Mbeki’s efforts to expand the ANC’s support base, himself meeting with Western officials (like US Secretary of State George Shultz) and business leaders to state the ANC’s case (Sampson, 2009:224). The two men had a symbiotic relationship. Tambo’s protection allowed Mbeki to ignore his critics in the party, while Mbeki proved a useful lightning rod for absorbing attacks that might otherwise be made against Tambo (Gevisser, 2007:402). Tambo’s trust in and affection for his protégée helped ensure Mbeki’s emergence as the movement’s *de facto* “foreign minister” by the late 1980s and one of the party’s emergent leaders after it was unbanned in 1990.

#### 9.4 *The ANC and Foreign Policy Making Since 1994*

Before delving into the ANC’s foreign policy making process since its 1990 unbanning, one must first explain the executive structures by which the ANC has made its policy decisions and governed itself in that time. These processes are similar, although not identical, to how the movement operated in exile, with small tweaks in its party constitution since 1991:

--The ANC’s *National Conference*—held every five years, last in 2007—is the “supreme ruling and controlling body” of the ANC, according to its constitution (ANC Constitution Rule 10).

Conference adopts resolutions that set the policy program of the party until the next conference. Conference also elects the party's leadership, including the "top six" of President, Deputy President, Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Treasurer, and National Chairperson. The President of the ANC is tasked with acting as the party's spokesman and leads only under the supervision of the National Executive Committee (ANC Constitution Rule 16.1).

--Conference also elects the ANC's *National Executive Committee (NEC)*, whose membership consists of the "top six" and 80 elected members (60 until 2007). The NEC is tasked with leading the party between conferences interpreting the (often vague) conference resolutions as it sees fit (ANC Constitution Rule 12). The full NEC, normally helmed by the National Chairperson, is supposed to meet at least every three months. Nearly all ANC Cabinet ministers were represented on the NEC during the Mandela and Mbeki administrations (Booyesen, 2001:133).

--The NEC subsequently elects a *National Working Committee (NWC)* from its ranks, which deals with the day-to-day operations of the party. It includes about a quarter of the NEC's members; there is no set number. Although the constitution does not specify how often it must meet, members note that it met about bi-weekly during the Mandela and Mbeki presidencies (Myakayaka-Manzini interview).

--Members of the NEC were divided into *NEC subcommittees* that broadly mirror government departments and deal with those issues (Booyesen, 2001:133). These subcommittees—which had no prescribed meeting schedule—generally included appropriate ministers, deputies, parliamentary committee chairs, and other ANC officials with expertise and interest in the appropriate issue. Subcommittees also could second non-NEC members.

--Lastly, the ANC had *departments* within its Luthuli House headquarters in Johannesburg to manage the function of the NEC subcommittees and intervene on substantive issues where appropriate. By the end of the Mbeki administration, full- and part-time ANC officials numbered about 500 (Butler, 2005:729).

#### 9.4.1 *Foreign Policy Of Limited Interest Within Party*

Foreign affairs from the ANC's unbanning to the end of Mbeki's party presidency in 2007 were, in general, a low priority for all levels of the party. At the top, ANC conferences from 1991 to 2007 devoted some time to foreign policy, passing several—mostly vague and innocuous—

resolutions on external matters that largely mirrored government policy, but this discussion paled next to that of domestic concerns (Sidiropoulos, 2008:7-8). In the NEC and NWC, foreign policy issues also were lightly covered except in the case of significant global events, like the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks or the 2003 invasion of Iraq; domestic issues like service delivery took up far more time (Lekota interview). Debate and discussion of foreign affairs was even less robust at the branch and provincial levels of the party. Although conference resolutions since 1991 have emphasized the need to build greater grassroots capacity to discuss and debate foreign policy, this never came to pass. Little sub-national party debate on foreign affairs existed under Mandela and Mbeki, with only two provincial structures—Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal—establishing party international relations committees as prescribed by Conference resolution (Hughes, 2004:30).

With little interest and attention paid by the top and bottom sections of the party, day-to-day responsibility for ANC debate and discussion of foreign policy fell to two linked entities: the ANC's Department of International Relations (successor to DIA) and its NEC Subcommittee for International Relations.

After the ANC was unbanned in 1990, DIA emerged as a key actor in the debate over South Africa's post-transition foreign policy. DIA head Mbeki, Aziz Pahad (by then his deputy), and other leading figures participated in discussions with the Department of Foreign Affairs and academics (see Chapter 6) on both the broader principles of a democratic South Africa's foreign policy, as well as the more mundane matters of staffing and departmental transformation. Several of its members participated in the Transitional Executive Council Sub-Committee on International Affairs, which set the stage for the integration of ANC, PAC, and homeland foreign affairs entities into DFA (Paruk, 2008:30). The 1994 transition, however, left DIA—like other ANC entities—severely short of capacity, turning the Department into what Aziz Pahad describes as a “paper structure” due to the fact that most of its officials (like Pahad himself) were either absorbed into DFA or deployed elsewhere within the party and government (A. Pahad interview). Long-time ANC representative in Canada Yusuf Saloojee succeeded Mbeki as DIA head in 1994, but he was more or less a one-man operation until he left in 1997.

Recognizing this weakness, the 1997 ANC National Conference called for the department to be re-launched as the Department of International Relations (Hughes, 2004:25). The department was tasked with monitoring international developments; making policy recommendations to the NEC and Conference; and managing relations with foreign political parties with which the ANC was aligned, according to Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini, who succeeded Saloojee in 1997 and stayed in that position until 2007 (when she was succeeded by Ebrahim Ebrahim) (Myakayaka-Manzini interview). She also chaired the NEC Subcommittee on International Relations and would represent it at meetings of the National Working Committee when the need arose. However, in regard to its influence on foreign policy, most observers and participants agreed that the Department did not play a meaningful role; at best it acted as a sort of secretariat for the NEC subcommittee, managing the flow of paper to the NEC and arranging meetings. The department also was too small—only four full-time officials at most—to develop its independence and internal infrastructure, although Myakayaka-Manzini notes that it drew upon ANC expertise across government and in academia (Myakayaka-Manzini interview).

While the department dealt with the administrivia of managing the party's foreign affairs and debates on policy, the NEC Subcommittee for International Relations acted as a debating chamber where leading party members would determine which issues merited further discussion in the broader NEC. "We would normally prepare documents for discussion for the broader NEC, and that's where the serious debate would take place," recalls subcommittee member Pallo Jordan (Jordan interview). The subcommittee, according to Myakayaka-Manzini, generally consisted of between 15 to 20 members and would meet at least once a month, and sometimes more (Myakayaka-Manzini interview). Its composition changed but generally included the Foreign Minister (either Nzo or Dlamini-Zuma), Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad, the Minister of Trade and Industry, the chair of Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs, and other ANC members in government foreign policy jobs (Hughes, 2004:29).

Some interviewees questioned whether the subcommittee played a meaningful role in driving government foreign policy; former PCFA chair Raymond Suttner, for example, went so far as to say "it had no influence at all" on the foreign policy debate (Suttner interview). Most participants, however, disagreed with this characterization, describing the subcommittee as a

vibrant center for debate. While most issues were not contentious, some provoked robust debate within the senior party ranks. During the Mandela presidency, participants described the questions of recognizing China and Western Sahara as being frequently discussed; according to longtime PCFA and subcommittee member Fatima Hajaig, subcommittee debate helped convince Mandela to not recognize Western Sahara (Suttner, 1996:4). Former Defense Minister (1999-2008) and National Chairperson (1997-2007) Mosiuoa Lekota cited relations with Angola as another issue that sparked heated debate, particularly balancing the party's desire to end conflicts and seek negotiated solutions with its hopes to maintain good ties with the MPLA, its ally during the struggle (Lekota interview).

Zimbabwe, obviously, was another major topic of debate in the subcommittee during the Mbeki presidency, with party leaders split over how to criticize Mugabe's abuses of human rights while maintaining dialogue with the ZANU-PF government. Pallo Jordan, one of the more critical ANC voices toward Zimbabwe, describes "heated debate, and interesting debate" about Zimbabwe in the subcommittee after the 2002 elections there, noting that a majority of subcommittee members wanted President Mbeki to support Mugabe at the forthcoming Commonwealth Summit; "Go there, Mr. President, and say 'Right on, Bob!'" was the prevailing sentiment, he notes (Jordan interview). Lekota, another critic of Pretoria's Zimbabwe policy, says that Zimbabwe "caused a lot of unease amongst us" within the party and probably was the most debated foreign policy issue of the Mbeki presidency (Lekota interview). He further notes that ANC members who had been in exile, like Mbeki, tended to be "more accommodating" toward Mugabe and ZANU-PF, whereas those who had been inside South Africa during the struggle were much more critical, particularly given Mugabe's massacres of ANC-aligned ZAPU sympathizers during the Matabeleland massacres of the early 1980s (Lekota interview).

Debates within the subcommittee generally were bounded by broadly accepted party principles, particularly in regard to solidarity with other liberation movements and oppressed peoples around the world. "If you look at our relationship with Cuba," notes subcommittee member and PCFA chair Job Sithole, "you can argue whether we should be doing more or less. But you'll never win an argument saying cut the ties with Cuba" (Sithole interview). Discussion was about tactics more than underlying philosophy. On Palestine, for example, Essop Pahad recalls that

“some wanted more militant statements—[Intelligence Minister] Ronnie [Kasrils] felt very strongly about things like sanctions. We’d debate that and ask him, ‘Why are you calling for sanctions when the PLO isn’t?’ There would be those kind of discussions. There was never in my time any kind of fundamental difference of opinion in how one understands something” (E. Pahad interview). Sithole seconds this point: “When the ANC says it will support the Palestinian struggle, we may differ how we do it. We may debate that difference. But the policy position remains” (Sithole interview).

Participants in NEC subcommittee discussions recall that while they were open to all viewpoints, once a decision was reached, members were expected to adhere to it and not question the decision. “Once the majority had taken a decision, it becomes the decision of the ANC. You can’t say it’s anymore contentious,” notes Myakayaka-Manzini, who further recalled that very few foreign policy issues were contentious within the ANC (Myakayaka-Manzini interview). Job Sithole makes a similar point, noting “You have freedom of speech in the ANC to say anything under the sun, but once the position is arrived at, there’s an expectation that your argument, as good as it was, the conference has spoken on the matter. People tend to shelf their own personal views” (Sithole interview). Revealing dissenting opinions outside the organization, particularly in the press, was and is strongly frowned upon; as long-time PCFA member Mewa Ramgobin notes, “disciplined” members “share disagreements in the portals of the ANC itself...not through the media” (Ramgobin interview).

#### *9.4.2 Mbeki: Still Dominant, But a Dictator?*

Thabo Mbeki’s 1997-2007 presidency of the ANC has been widely characterized as a period in which power was consolidated and tightly controlled by his office, with the consensus-based approach of the NEC being disregarded or, at best, given lip service. Gumede, among others, argues that this “presidentialization” of the ANC under Mbeki undermined the NEC and weakened the party as a whole, both as a bureaucratic entity and as a democratic body (Gumede, 2005:135). On the whole, the evidence to this effect is compelling. Mbeki strengthened the president’s office at Luthuli House and took control of the ANC’s appointment structure that placed party cadres in government positions, taking that responsibility from branches and provincial structures (Gumede, 2005:135). This tight control of the party clearly rankled many

cadres and helped spark the uprising that led to his ouster as party leader at the 2007 Polokwane Conference in favor of Jacob Zuma. That said, Mbeki's tighter grip on the party did not happen in a vacuum; his leadership was affirmed at both the 1997 Mafikeng and 2002 Stellenbosch conferences, with no significant objections raised about his greater control.

Mbeki's grip on the party and longstanding interest in foreign affairs would lead one to expect that he ran the ANC's foreign policy discussions in a similarly tight-fisted fashion. According to participants in the party's foreign policy debates, however, this was not the case. Members of the subcommittee (in which Mbeki did not participate) and broader NEC describe Mbeki—who normally did not chair NEC meetings, deferring to Lekota as National Chairman—as generally taking a back seat in foreign policy discussions and not dictating his views to other NEC members. Much like Tambo, he would absorb all views and then speak last. According to Essop Pahad, “There was this view that Mbeki imposed a view, but by and large he just stepped back. On Zimbabwe, just once he spoke out up front about his position on Zimbabwe, when he was coming under attack for it” (E. Pahad interview). Myakayaka-Manzini echoes this view, claiming that because of the collective nature of ANC decision making, no decision could be attributed solely to Mbeki: “If that was the case, our foreign policy would have changed by now. And it hasn't changed” (Myakayaka-Manzini interview).

Pahad and Myakayaka-Manzini's views must be viewed with somewhat jaundiced eyes, given that both were considered close allies of Mbeki. However, Pallo Jordan—one of the party's more independent voices on foreign policy and, in some ways, a long-time rival of Mbeki's—also says Mbeki was open to debate and discussion during his tenure. He recalls one incident in 2002 when a woman was sentenced to death by stoning in northern Nigeria for adultery:

*Mbeki was like, “Well, it's Nigeria, be careful, ethnic problems, etc. And these characters who wanted to stone this woman were justified under sharia law, so we have to be mindful of that.” But we insisted; we said, “BS, man, you can't come here with laws elaborated in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and use it for pretext for doing barbaric things.” We cannot possibly condone an African state stoning a woman, and he had to shift. I'm sure he felt the same way deep down, but he was*

*balancing the political issues. But he said, fine, fine chaps, you're absolutely right* (Jordan interview).

Hence, while Mbeki as party president certainly dominated the ANC and stamped his imprint on the party, his reputation as an “autocrat” on foreign policy issues appears to be overblown.

#### 9.5 Conclusion: ANC a Notable, Independent Foreign Policy Role Player

In examining the relative roles of the ANC and NP as ruling parties in influencing government foreign policy, this is almost no comparison, with the ANC's post-1994 structures having far more input than the moribund NP had before 1994. Renier Schoeman, who has a unique perspective from serving as Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister under FW de Klerk and later as an ANC member, notes “on the foreign affairs structure in the ANC, there's a lot of engagement. I think the policy is closer to the party as an organization. The inputs are far more significant than under the NP” (Schoeman interview). This greater influence of the party can be chalked up to several factors, including the ANC's well-developed foreign policy apparatus developed in exile, its better developed party structures, and its national rather than provincial character, which allowed its top national leadership to meet on a regular basis.

Differentiating the role of the party from that of government in making foreign policy is difficult in the post-transition dispensation. ANC foreign policy structures included nearly all of the relevant government foreign policy makers, providing them a forum for debate that otherwise would not exist. “The NEC members are there, the Minister is there, and we can engage on the issues,” notes Sithole in describing subcommittee meetings (Sithole interview). The proverbial “hats” were rearranged as well. The ANC in this context eliminated rank and title in its proceedings, allowing participants to weigh in on the issues as equals (rather similar, in fact, to the *Broederbond* in this context). Mluleki George, Deputy Defense Minister under Mbeki and a member of the subcommittee, remembers, “The conversations would flow smoothly, because they were conversations of comrades. Your position in government does not matter in organizational matters—you're all the same” (George interview). This cross-fertilization made it difficult at times to tell whether policy positions originated with “government” or “party.”

Nevertheless, while party structures did weigh in on foreign policy debates, the question also arises as to what degree they were “democratic” in being representative of the broader ANC. While participants took pains to emphasize that Mbeki did not run an autocracy on foreign policy debate, the subcommittee in particular can still be described as an oligarchy where, in the words of Jeffrey Herbst, “decisions are debated and decided within an extremely limited circle” (Herbst, 2005:96). That said, even if an oligarchy, it appears to have been an oligarchy by consent; there were no impediments to broader participation beyond members’ disinterest. Foreign policy was a minor component of Conferences since 1991 while generating little interest at the branch and provincial levels. Furthermore, the most (but not all) members of the NEC subcommittee for International Relations were elected at ANC elective conferences as the leading representatives of the party, another boost to the subcommittee’s democratic credentials. While the party’s Department of International Relations was strapped for funds and lacked capacity, there is no indication that this was because of a concerted effort by ANC leaders to limit its influence; all party departments suffered from the same shortages. In the end, the ANC’s inputs on foreign policy may not have encapsulated the views of all of the party’s members, but the outputs did come from a democratic process and were very influential in shaping South Africa’s foreign policy.

## **Chapter 10: How South African Government Departments Influence Foreign Policy**

### *10.1 Introduction*

With this chapter, the focus on South Africa's foreign policy making now moves to the realm of the government actors with responsibility for implementing, and sometimes making, South African foreign policy. While the national leader has retained final say on foreign policy decisions throughout South African history (to be examined in the next chapter), South African Prime Ministers and Presidents have at times seen fit to delegate this role to the principals (primarily but not always ministers) in government departments. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Department of Defense have historically been the two leading actors in this regard, and their influences will be examined at length here. However, other departments—like Trade and Industry, Treasury, Information, and civilian intelligence agencies—also have played a role and will be examined where appropriate.

The goal of this chapter is to determine to what extent the principals of these government departments have acted as “policy influencers” or “policy makers” rather “policy implementers” in foreign policy. It will examine what departments and leading figures have been influential in the foreign policy debate and why departmental influences have ebbed and flowed. It also will examine the impact of interdepartmental relationships—both positive and negative—on foreign policy making.

### *10.2 The Influence of Government Departments Before 1994*

Bureaucratic influence on foreign policy before 1994 was limited to a small number of departmental actors whose influence ebbed and flowed in connection to their principals' relations with the executive. Until the 1960s, only two departments—Foreign Affairs and Defense—had a meaningful hand in foreign policy issues, and it was clear that the former was the dominant actor. DFA (known as the Department of External Affairs until 1961) was founded in 1927 as a result of the previous year's Balfour Declaration granting dominions greater self-government and providing for independent diplomatic services (Pienaar, 1987:8). The other department with a hand, albeit generally more limited, in foreign policy during South Africa's first 50 years was Defense, which was made an independent department, separated from Interior, by the Defense

Act of 1912 (Frankel, 1986:103). However, with the exception of buildups during South Africa's participation in the two World Wars, the military was in general poorly funded and undermanned, unsurprising given that South Africa faced no potentially hostile forces on its borders (Grundy, 1986:8).

### *10.2.1 Post-1948: Early Foreign Affairs Dominance*

The post-1948 National Party government had love for neither the military nor the diplomatic corps, viewing both as inherently “English” institutions that would have to be (and were) “Afrikanerized” in the 1950s and 1960s. However, DFA was able to maintain its primacy in the foreign policy arena in large part due to the Cabinet machinations of Foreign Minister (1955-63) Eric Louw, the first official to hold the portfolio independent from the Prime Minister and easily South Africa's most experienced diplomat (AJ van Wyk, 2005:27). Louw was named Economic Affairs Minister when the NP took power in 1948 and, despite Malan retaining the External Affairs portfolio, emerged as the party's leading foreign affairs spokesman, frequently representing the country abroad (Nothling, 2005:522). Louw also exercised significant sway over the policy making process: he was instrumental in distancing South Africa from the orbit of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, successfully lobbying for South African neutrality during the Suez Crisis of 1956, while also advocating closer technical cooperation with (and assistance to) Africa's emerging independent states (Sole, 1994:108).

A skilled political infighter in Cabinet, Louw—both before and after becoming Foreign Minister—ensured that his primacy on foreign policy matters would remain unchallenged, particularly by Defense. Serving as Economic Affairs Minister (1948-56), Louw starved Defense of funds; its spending in 1949 (£11.5 million) was actually higher than in 1960 (£11 million), with Louw taking the line that Western allies should supply equipment for foreign excursions (Sole, 1994:109). Louw also asserted himself on external defense policy to ensure the Defense Department was not a significant foreign policy shaper (Du Plessis, 1997:20). The Defense Department's foreign policymaking clout was limited to the point of leading Ned Munger to conclude in 1965 “the influence of the South African military upon the formation of South African foreign policy is quite minimal” (Munger, 1965:46).

### *10.2.2 Foreign Policy Contested Terrain by 1960s*

DFA's dominance in the foreign policy realm began to weaken in the early 1960s. Growing international isolation after the Sharpeville massacre and withdrawal from the Commonwealth minimized the importance of increasingly besieged diplomats, who could do little through traditional diplomatic means to improve South Africa's standing abroad. The move toward armed struggle by the ANC and PAC in the early 1960s, combined with the march toward independence of African states, mooted diplomatic "partnership" efforts in Africa while making security a far greater concern. Issues of personality also played a role. While Prime Ministers DF Malan (1948-53) and JG Strijdom (1953-58) were happy to let Louw dominate in the foreign policy realm, Verwoerd had a far keener interest in international affairs and less interest in Louw's counsel after he took office after Strijdom's death (Geldenhuys, 1984a:23). By 1961, Verwoerd had begun to freeze out the "undiplomatic diplomat," generally ignoring Louw until poor health finally forced his retirement in 1963 (Sole, 1991:230).

Louw's successor was former Pretoria Mayor and Ambassador to London Hilgard Muller, a Rhodes scholar and Latin professor at the University of Pretoria who was the polar opposite of Louw personality-wise and would remain on the job until 1977 (Wolvaardt et al., *Volume 2*, 2010:26). These qualities that made him a respected diplomat, however, worked against him in the top job; as Don Sole noted, "his natural diffidence and disinclination to push himself forward were qualities which constitute a distinct handicap for any Foreign Minister" (Sole, 1991:261). Muller had little interest in policy making, preferring, in Sole's words, to implement policy "in a fashion least calculated to give offense" (Sole, 1994:108). Verwoerd generally bypassed Muller in seeking advice, as did his successor (1966-1978), John Vorster, opening the door for several aggressive and ambitious Cabinet colleagues to fill the void (O'Meara, 1996:213).

The first serious challenge to DFA's primacy came from the Department of Information in the early 1970s. South Africa's Information Bureau was set up during World War II, and in 1948 was transformed into a sub-department of External Affairs, with the mandate to disseminate information about South Africa abroad, massage its image, and combat criticisms of apartheid policies (Horwitz, 2001:73). Verwoerd made Information an independent department in the mid-1960s, and its energetic (and often confrontational stance) in improving South Africa's image

abroad quickly clashed with the staid efforts of DFA (De Villiers, 1980:17). Relations deteriorated after Connie Mulder—the Transvaal NP leader with his eye on the premiership—took over as Minister of Information in 1968. From 1973 to 1978, Mulder and his equally ambitious Information Secretary, Eschel Rhoodie, embarked on a series of well-funded secret projects abroad to propagandize for South Africa (Barber and Barratt 1990:114). Money for the project—about \$100 million in total—came from the Defense budget at Vorster’s behest; Defense Minister PW Botha privately protested the use of his department’s funds but could not stop it. DFA, meanwhile, was told little about the projects.

DFA’s primacy also faced a challenge from South Africa’s new civilian intelligence organ. In 1963 then-Justice Minister Vorster created the country’s first domestic civilian intelligence agency, Republican Intelligence (RI), headed by his close confidante, Security Branch head Hendrik van den Bergh (Winter, 1981:42). Vorster in 1968 transformed RI into a “central intelligence organization” with the capability of operating externally (IDAF, 1975:10). This new entity, the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), also was headed by van den Bergh and was intended to be the country’s preeminent intelligence outfit, both at home and abroad (O’Brien, 2010:25). From 1968 to 1978, van den Bergh—who carried the title of Special Advisor on State Security in the Prime Minister’s Office—was the most influential foreign policy actor in South Africa beside Vorster (Rotberg, 1988:14). Van den Bergh was Vorster’s main emissary to Africa, for example, quietly travelling the continent to build support for Vorster’s *détente* efforts, notably organizing the 1975 Victoria Falls conference between Vorster and Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda (D’Olivera, 1977:241-242). Van den Bergh also would prove of great assistance to Vorster on Rhodesia, acting as an emissary to Salisbury who could deliver tough messages to the Smith government and also working domestically—particularly within the *Broederbond*—to sell Vorster’s realist stance to conservative Afrikaner audiences (Sanders, 2006:42).

Meanwhile, the foreign policy influence of Defense rapidly increased from the early 1960s. With African states becoming independent and South Africa becoming more isolated, Defense budgets started to climb rapidly, topping £100 million by 1964 (Boulter, 1997:89). However, the real rise in the influence and funding of defense did not come until the 1966 appointment of Cape NP leader PW Botha as Defense Minister. Although a professional politician with no

military background, Botha took quickly to defense issues, familiarizing himself with military theory and imposing his ideas of professional management on the department (O'Meara, 1996:227-228). By the mid-1970s, Botha had transformed Defense into a major force, successfully winning massive increases to the defense budget. When he assumed the premiership in 1978, the budget was nearly five times greater than in 1973, accounting for nearly 20 percent of government spending and about 5 percent of GDP (Price, 1991:43).

South Africa's 1975 invasion of Angola in an effort to install a friendly government there in advance of its independence from Portugal that November marked a new phase of DFA's exclusion from the making of critical foreign policy decisions. Fearing potential Soviet intervention and blowback from African states South Africa was trying to woo, DFA favored a "hands off" approach toward the soon-to-be independent states of Angola and Mozambique (Geldenhuys, 1984a:80). Foreign Affairs, however, was sidelined early on, with Defense and BOSS fighting it out for primacy: Botha, seeing an opportunity to install a friendly government on Namibia's border, pushed for invasion while van den Bergh preferred clandestine support for UNITA to outright invasion, believing that CIA assistance would be forthcoming (Roherty, 1992:73). Botha ultimately won the fight, and from August 1975 SADF troops secretly moved into Angola to support UNITA efforts.

Meanwhile, DFA was kept out of the loop on proceedings almost entirely, not even learning of the venture until later that August, after it received a formal protest note from Portugal (then still the colonial power) about the invasion (O'Meara, 1996:219). Then Permanent Representative to the UN Pik Botha remembers warning Vorster that the United States would not support the invasion, but he was ignored, with Vorster heeding van den Bergh's ultimately erroneous guidance that the Americans would intervene (P. Botha interview, 1997). DFA did successfully press for withdrawal of SADF forces in 1976, but Foreign Affairs' cautions against cross border operations would be ignored for the rest of the Vorster administration. Pik Botha, by then Foreign Minister, recalls being overruled by PW Botha when he pushed back on the next major Angolan intervention, the Cassinga attacks of 1978:

*I was sitting in Cabinet, and said I opposed it. PW Botha and about a half of the ministers supported it, but about half sided with me. I said that the UN Security Council would not understand that we accepted [Resolution] 435 but were now doing an attack like this. It was a heated discussion. Normally, Cabinet meetings did not last beyond the midday lunch break. This one did; we met again in the afternoon. PW then said to Vorster, if it will help you, if the attack is successful you can claim the credit, but if it fails, I will accept responsibility. Vorster got very annoyed, saying to PW, “I am the Prime Minister, not you. Whether it fails or succeeds, I accept the responsibility.” And Vorster gave permission for the attack to continue. Fortunately, while it did meet condemnation, it was not too acrimonious. But it indicates to you we did not always agree (P. Botha interview).*

### *10.2.3 The Ascendancy of PW Botha: New Players, Similar Results*

The 1977 discovery and publication by the *Rand Daily Mail* of Information’s secret projects (which included domestic components like the establishment of the *Citizen* newspaper) ultimately led to Vorster’s resignation the following year. While Mulder was long the favorite to succeed Vorster, his involvement in the scandal—widely dubbed “Muldergate”—scuttled his chances, allowing Cape leader PW Botha (helped by support from Free State party structures and from Pik Botha, who threw his support to PW after his run for the premiership stalled) to succeed Vorster as party leader and, in October 1978, Prime Minister. Botha’s ascendancy meant a housecleaning in the top ranks of the foreign affairs apparatus that firmly entrenched Defense as the leading bureaucratic actor in the making and implementing of Pretoria’s foreign policy. Information disappeared altogether as an independent department, folded into DFA (briefly known thereafter as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information). Van den Bergh, discredited by his involvement in “Muldergate” and long a bitter enemy of Botha, resigned the day Botha took office and his service was soon renamed and revamped.

PW Botha’s ascendancy into the top job only accelerated the military’s influence in the policy making realm, given his preference for the “total onslaught” policy that would come to characterize his tenure in office. The SADF, for example, was granted the power to undertake cross-border raids and conduct operations up to 150 kilometers within Angola without seeking ministerial or Cabinet approval if they deemed the threat serious to South African security, with

government “accepting responsibility for international consequences” (Malan, 2006:173). Defense Minister (1980-91) Magnus Malan served as Botha’s “right-hand man” within the Cabinet. Previously appointed Army Chief of Staff, Army Chief, and Chief of the Defense Force during the 1970s by Botha, Malan was a strident anti-communist and a skilled bureaucratic manager whose strategic and administrative outlooks were very similar to that of the Prime Minister (Grundy, 1986:36). Spending remained high, if slightly down from the late 1970s, accounting for about 4 percent of GDP and 13 percent of the overall budget (Batchelor et al., 2002:342).

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs and its flamboyant *verligte* minister, Pik Botha, played a secondary role throughout PW Botha’s administration. The former MP and diplomat was only 46 in 1977, when he was appointed to succeed Muller. Botha’s fast rise can be ascribed to the support of Vorster, who took an almost paternalistic interest in Botha’s career, possibly viewing him as a potential successor given his support among young Afrikaners and English speakers more broadly (Rees and Day, 1980:67). Despite his support for PW Botha’s candidacy, Pik was by no means a confidante of the Prime Minister, nor much liked by him. “Pik and he had a roller coaster relationship,” notes longtime DFA official and Ambassador to Washington (1985-87) Herbert Beukes. “After a visit to PW, Pik would come over with a big smile and give us the thumbs up and say ‘PW’s on our side.’ Then three days later, it would change just like that” (Beukes interview). The Prime Minister throughout his 11-year tenure continually deferred to his military and intelligence leadership over his Foreign Minister in foreign policy matters, often not bothering to consult Pik beforehand.

That said, Pik survived for 17 years, a fact that can be chalked up to his usefulness abroad, exceptional political skills, and resonance with white voters. “Pik had networks; he could speak to [Henry] Kissinger or [James] Baker or [Hans-Dietrich] Genscher. He was effective in that sense,” notes academic and diplomat Gerrit Olivier (Olivier interview). He also played a leading role in regard to several of South Africa’s key foreign policy challenges of the 1980s: the independence of Zimbabwe, negotiation of the 1984 Nkomati Accord with Mozambique, and the 1990 independence of Namibia (a country on which Botha was an expert) (Wolvaardt et al., *Volume 3*, 2010:358). However, PW Botha’s clear favoritism of Defense over DFA ensured that

Foreign Affairs played a secondary role in most key foreign policy decisions, particularly those related to regional destabilization. Although the issue of what Pik knew remains in question, it is clear that he was not told everything about SADF support for RENAMO even after the Nkomati Accords were signed in 1984 (Davies, 1989:110). DFA also generally was either not apprised of cross-border raids in advance (like the 1982 attack on Maseru), or told as they were underway (Rotberg, 1988:27). “As a department, DFA’s influence was limited, if not zero...especially on major issues, it was zilch,” is Olivier’s blunt assessment (Olivier interview).

The coordinated May 1986 SADF attacks on Harare, Lusaka, and Gaborone during the visit of the Commonwealth’s Eminent Persons Group—a grouping of senior former Commonwealth leaders charged with seeking an end to conflict within the country—epitomized this lack of communication and clearly demonstrated the military’s ability to dictate Pretoria’s foreign policy (Griffiths, 1991:86). Pik Botha recalls being informed of those raids after the fact:

*Take that thing in Gaborone. I think I may have been acting Minister of Defense at that. I was in the north when the SSC was meeting here. And a General Staedler was sent by PW to the north, to a game farm where I was, to inform me—not ask me—that this thing was planned. I warned him that this thing might have very serious consequences, but he said to me, “Mr. Minister, it is too late. All of the operations are already going. That’s why I was sent here, because the President wants to inform you so that your Department can inform the world outside.” I played no role in getting that decision off the ground (P. Botha interview).*

Pik’s treatment by the military epitomized the generally condescending relationship between Defense and DFA. While some senior and working-level DFA officials were able to develop solid ties to their Defense colleagues, most felt that they were not respected by the military. “The Defense Force regarded DFA as ineffective and as wimps, not able to stand up to them,” notes veteran diplomat Dave Steward. “My personal relationship with the military and Military Intelligence was reasonably sound, just as it remained for many years with Malan. But that’s not to say they weren’t pulling the wool over my eyes” (Steward interview). Pik Botha notes that this disregard for DFA started at the top with PW Botha; recounting efforts to stop Defense from distributing a piece of propaganda, Pik recalls PW telling him, “Your boys are weaklings” (P.

Botha interview). Both Military and National Intelligence suspected DFA (and Pik in particular) of leaking information, which they used as a justification for not discussing operations with DFA in advance (Papenfus, 2010:789). Defense leadership also had no compunction about lying to Pik Botha outright, as Steward recalls:

*On 24 May 1985, I woke up and we were confronted with the crisis of this special forces guy Wynand du Plessis, who was caught by the Angolans near an oil platform in Cabinda. Rae Killen, then Director-General, came to me, and I said we must do a few things. One is to stop the Defense Force from communicating to the press until we know what's going on. We went to see [SADF Chief] Constandt Viljoen, and Viljoen said they had a recce group dropped from a submarine to surveil a SWAPO base near the complex. I asked him, "General is that the truth." And at least he had the good grace to smile when he said "80 percent." Later that day, Malan had a briefing for Cabinet, and he went on about the SWAPO base and the submarine, and I grabbed Pik and said "They're lying to you." He didn't believe me... "Never". I think he liked to be one of the manne, taken into confidence, but they were playing him like a trout. That was the relationship. Not only was Malan lying to him, but he was enjoying lying to him (Steward interview).*

It was clear from PW Botha's first Cabinet briefing on national security, which was provided by a SADF General, that South Africa's civilian intelligence structure would have a difficult time asserting itself under the new Prime Minister (Leonard, 1983:15). Although many in the military wanted BOSS dismantled altogether, Botha did not take this route, instead renaming it the Department of National Security (DONS) in August 1978 and transferring most of its operational and covert action responsibilities to Military Intelligence (McCarthy, 1996:65). Its budget was slashed from R35 million in 1978 to under R30 million the following year, with the remainder probably absorbed by the Defense budget (Weir and Bloch, 1981:32). A 1980 conference in Simon's Town between DONS, Military Intelligence, the Security Police, and DFA also formalized a division of labor between the departments, with DONS assigned as the leading player in analyzing global and regional political developments, as well as developments related to banned entities like the ANC (Groenewald interview).

PW Botha's 1979 appointment of University of Free State professor Lucas Daniel "Niel" Barnard, just 30 years old and with no intelligence or political backgrounds, also was widely viewed at the time as a sign that he intended DONS to be a second-tier bureaucratic player. Barnard, who had recently returned from studying nuclear strategy at Georgetown University in Washington DC, was an unknown figure in South Africa. Even Barnard was caught by surprise: "When I returned from Georgetown in October 1979, I was informed to see Prime Minister PW Botha at the Union Buildings. No one told me before the time what it was all about, and it was to put it mildly something I didn't expect. PW told me that he'd like to appoint me as [intelligence] chief, and I'd have 48 hours to decide. I'd never met him previously" (Barnard interview). Barnard accepted and became head of the renamed National Intelligence Service (NIS) the next year.

Barnard acknowledges that his appointment was a result of political trade-offs and compromises (Barnard interview). Given Botha's long-standing rivalry with van den Bergh but likely opposition if he tried to scrap the entire civilian intelligence outfit, "he clearly decided to try to downgrade the old BOSS from a fully functional intelligence service to a service only responsible for analyzing intelligence...Against that background, the move was made to get some academic they can trust, who has no operational experience, and let us try by that way, by stealth, to gradually deny the old bureau operational capacity and develop an analytical capacity" (McCarthy, 1996:66). Barnard fit that bill, and was additionally helped by the political horse-trading that got Botha elected party leader: "I think it was payback time for [provincial leader Alwyn] Schlebusch for delivering the Free State" (Barnard interview). Deputy Defense and Intelligence Minister Kobie Coetsee, another Free Stater, also was widely viewed as a patron—although it is unclear to what degree this patronage was motivated by both men viewing Barnard as a potential political rival (Pfister, 2005:19).

Barnard emerged early on as a pragmatist in regard to South Africa's external relations. Just after the conclusion of the Lancaster House Agreement that led to Zimbabwe's independence, Barnard implored Botha that South Africa "not move like Ian Smith;" the government should use its strength to reach a settlement on its own terms (Gevisser, 2007:491). Barnard claims that NIS from 1984 officially took the line in its (still classified) annual reports that a negotiated

settlement was the only solution for South Africa's problems, while NIS from the early 1980s began reaching out to the ANC through proxies like Willie Esterhuyse of Stellenbosch University (Potgeiter, 2007:136). This culminated with Barnard's series of more than 60 meetings with Nelson Mandela in prison between 1988-90 (Carlin, 2006). His outlook led him to clash with counterparts at Military Intelligence throughout the 1980s, both because of longstanding organizational rivalries but also increasingly divergent worldviews:

*In the 1980s, two schools of thought developed in our intelligence community. On the one hand, driven by MI—strongly supported by PW, having been their minister—there was the view that the communists are fighting against us in Mozambique and Zimbabwe and Zambia, and the only way to try to counter that was to fight the enemy further abroad, in an extended defensive capacity. You have to understand the mindset; they were threatening our existence, arming proxy forces, and it was true the communists were arming them with AKs and tanks. So let's create the capacity with RENAMO and UNITA and so on. One can argue about that. From the NIS perspective, we didn't deny the existence of enemy forces on our borders, but our argument was that the main problem we were facing was internal, not external, and until you address the internal problems, you won't make progress (Barnard interview).*

Given PW Botha's clear affinity for the military, Barnard's influence on the Prime Minister is still much debated, but on the whole appears to have been significant. "I think PW trusted Barnard, but I don't think he was as close...as the military guys," notes Cabinet Secretary and Presidency Director-General (1984-92) Jannie Roux (Roux interview). Barnard may have met with Botha weekly, but so did the head of Military Intelligence (MI), notes Tienie Groenewald, who headed MI in the mid-1980s (Groenewald interview). MI also was able to conduct operations without having to consult with the State Security Council in advance (Potgeiter, 2007:95). However, Barnard's excellent access to Botha and decade-long tenure under him indicates that the picture is much more nuanced. As Barnard notes, "If you see the President every second day, and you give him some bullshit, after the tenth day, he'll say, 'You're wasting my time.' But if you convince him after some time that you know what's going on and give him good advice, that's what happened in our situation" (Barnard interview). He adds, "We had a

wonderful personal understanding. He would invariably discuss even cabinet reshuffles with me, and I would always give him my opinion.”

From 1978 to the end of the Botha administration in 1989, the South African Government’s most prominent body for foreign policy decision making was the State Security Council (SSC). Established as a statutory body in 1972 by an act of Parliament, the SSC was composed of around a dozen top government officials (the number varied) to advise the Prime Minister on security matters (Seegers, 1996:132). Under Vorster, however, the SSC lacked a functioning Secretariat and met only sporadically; the Prime Minister preferred to discuss security issues either with the whole Cabinet or with just close advisors like van den Bergh (Pottinger, 1988:42-43). PW Botha—convinced of the need for a more structured body after the 1975 Angola incursion—upon becoming Prime Minister in 1978 immediately moved to strengthen the SSC (Geldenhuys and Kotze, 1983:39). The committee, for example, would meet on the Monday before bi-weekly Wednesday Cabinet meetings, where it would set much of the Cabinet agenda (Davies and O’Meara, 1985:193). Botha also provided for the SSC to have a robust full-time secretariat staffed by members of the SADF, civilian intelligence services (who generally accounted for most of the staff), and DFA, chaired by a senior military officer, which fluctuated between 50 and 80 through the 1980s (Selfe, 1989:152).

The power of the SSC is a matter of debate even to this day. Pik Botha was adamant in stating, “Remember one thing about our SSC: it had no executive power. None. The SSC, like other committees, could only make recommendations, not decisions... An impression has been created that the SSC ruled the country. That is not correct” (P. Botha interview). However, Pik represents a distinct minority view. “Any crucial decision in the 1980s here was taken by the SSC, and PW rammed it through the Cabinet,” claims Niel Barnard, a key SSC participant (Barnard interview). Presidency Director-General Jannie Roux, who was the main note taker for SSC meetings, seconds this point, noting that while, “the role of the SSC is overstated in a sense in that it didn’t control everything, but if you’re talking security issues, which were its responsibility according to the law, it did” (Roux interview).

Ultimately, however, it was PW Botha who dominated the SSC. Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok noted in 2006 that Botha strongly emphasized the “need to know” principle, asking pertinent ministers to stay behind after SSC or Cabinet meetings to discuss ongoing operations (Welsh, 2009:476). “If they wanted to discuss something that was really sensitive, it wasn’t done in the SSC. I never heard anything in the SSC that was terribly exceptional,” notes Dave Steward (Steward interview). De Klerk, a sometime member of the SSC during the 1980s, noted in his memoirs that South Africa’s nuclear program was never discussed in the SSC, while others note that operational issues—like the 1986 raids—were never discussed beforehand (De Klerk, 1998:273). “The reality was that the real stuff didn’t happen in the SSC; it really happened in the coterie around PW,” noted Steward, who cited Malan, Barnard, and lower-level officials like private secretary Ters Ehlers as part of that inner circle (Steward interview). DFA official Piet Viljoen, who served as SSC secretary for a period, describes the Prime Minister’s dominance of the body:

*PW Botha met with his securocrats and made all important policy decisions before the SSC meetings, which just rubber-stamped whatever he had decided. PW Botha allowed the meetings to ramble on and discuss the issues, but when he had enough, he would simply state his decision. I had a seat at a separate desk to the left of the president, and on occasion he would lean over and say “I think they have now talked enough” and then state the decision (Wolvaardt et al., Volume 3, 2010:291).*

#### *10.2.4 FW de Klerk: Flipping the Script*

FW de Klerk upon taking office as State President in August 1989 had a very different view of the role of the security establishment in the policy making realm, both foreign and domestic. De Klerk in his memoirs described being misled by his top military commanders on various operations they continued to run after he became State President, noting that he was forced to bring his top commanders in line (De Klerk, 1998:122). He showed no compunction about doing so, firing Malan as Defense Minister in 1991 and dismissing 16 senior officers in one day in December 1992 for continued involvement in covert activities. De Klerk also slashed defense spending every year he was in office, bringing it from over 4 percent of GDP to just 2.4 percent (and 6.5 percent of the budget) by 1994 (Batchelor et al., 2002:343). De Klerk as President

immediately reasserted the power of Cabinet over the SSC, which he had viewed with suspicion for several years (De Klerk, 1998:119). Although he could not disband the SSC immediately, due to its statutory nature, the State Security Council was made into an “advisory” council under a broader new Cabinet Committee on Security Management, met far less frequently, and he empowered Cabinet to challenge its recommendations (Landsberg, 2010a:10). The President also slashed the sizes of the SSC Secretariat and of the Office of the State President, bringing the latter from more than 500 to about 90 by 1994 (Seegers, 1996:266-267).

De Klerk’s relations with National Intelligence, which he moved into his office shortly after taking power, were mixed. De Klerk speaks fondly of Barnard in his memoirs, noting that he moved him from NIS to be Director-General of Constitutional Development to take advantage of his negotiating skills (De Klerk, 1998:117-118). However, the former intelligence chief is less glowing in his assessment of de Klerk, characterizing him as distrustful of NIS and contending that de Klerk was far more cautious than Botha in using his intelligence service operationally (Barnard interview). On the other hand, DFA’s standing improved measurably under de Klerk. Although the two men were not close personally, Pik Botha emerged as de Klerk’s key foreign policy advisor from 1989, pushing the new State President to make bold domestic political steps to ameliorate Western pressure and convincing de Klerk to travel extensively through Europe, North America, and Africa during his tenure to demonstrate Pretoria’s good will and build support for his own domestic negotiation efforts (Landsberg, 2004:61-62).

### *10.3 The Post-1994 Bureaucratic Realignment*

Nelson Mandela’s 1994-99 administration was a time of great upheaval within Pretoria’s foreign policy establishment, mirroring what was going on in government more broadly. The key government foreign policy actors—DFA, Defense, Intelligence, and a newly-important Department of Trade and Industry—were forced to reassess their *raison d’être* in the immediate post-transition period, unveiling discussion documents and undertaking review processes to determine their future priorities. These departments also struggled with the need to integrate racially, both at the working and leadership levels, a situation that resulted in intra-departmental tensions and a loss of skills as older civil servants retired. A tight fiscal environment for all foreign policy-related departments added to the difficulties of the period.

### *10.3.1 DFA Back On Top Under Mandela, but Plagued by Problems*

South Africa's post-1994 demilitarization and acceptance back into the international community brought with it widespread expectations that the Department of Foreign Affairs would emerge as the leading foreign policy actor in South Africa. However, during the Mandela years in particular DFA daunting challenges, including resource constraints, transformation, poor leadership, and bureaucratic challenges. Like other departments, DFA had to address issues of transformation, and in its case the Department had to bring more than 500 former homeland and ANC diplomats into its nearly 2,000-strong (largely white) bureaucracy (Mills, 1999:78). This process, not considered "complete" until 2004, would take up much of DFA leadership's time and energy during the Mandela years. Furthermore, the Department had to deal with stagnant funding in the face of an expanded global footprint. DFA's budget was almost flat between 1994 and 1999, but at the same time the department had to significantly expand its global presence, with South Africa having established relations with over 160 countries by 1997 (Nzo, 1999:225).

Weak leadership, particularly from country's first post-transition Foreign Minister (1994-99), longtime ANC Secretary-General Alfred Nzo, was another hindrance to Foreign Affairs. As the public face of South African diplomacy, Nzo—a surprise appointment, after ANC Secretary General Cyril Ramaphosa turned down the Foreign Minister job—was criticized by Cabinet colleague Kader Asmal as having "no experience of international diplomacy and no taste for the rigors of travel, the nuances of international relations or the importance of guiding the new South Africa through a complex, globalized, modern world" (Asmal and Hadland, 2011:206). This inexperience, and Nzo's generally low-key personality, had negative ramifications for the department, allowing for other ministers to move in on DFA's traditional turf, such as Trade and Industry Minister Alec Erwin taking over responsibility for the first free trade negotiations with the European Union (Fabricius, 1999:220). Nzo also had trouble asserting his leadership within the Department, particularly in bringing to heel Director-General (1992-98) Rusty Evans, who hewed to a more "realist" perspective than that of the ANC, advocating that South Africa should conceptualize its national interest around issues of security and financial benefit rather than issues of human rights or sympathy for the ANC's struggle-era allies (Landsberg, 2005:6).

Nelson Mandela's highly personalized conduct of foreign policy did not help matters. Mandela was known to not inform Nzo and other Cabinet ministers of the outcomes of calls with foreign leaders, for example, and often made pronouncements—like announcing the “one China” policy in 1996 and defending Zimbabwean military involvement in Congo-Kinshasa in 1999—without consulting the Department beforehand (Muller, 1999:605). He appointed old friends as Ambassadors and on many occasions worked through them directly, rather than with the Department in Pretoria (Sampson, 2000:547-548). The Department was even cut out of state visits. Veteran diplomat Tom Wheeler remembers, “I was chief director for human rights at one **stage**, and Rafsanjani got into see Mandela without DFA being asked for a briefing. They had a one on one with no one present, and after that Mandela said, ‘Why do we vote against the Iranians? Now we must abstain’” (Wheeler interview).

Despite Nzo's torpor, DFA began to assert itself after the 1998 appointment of Jackie Selebi, previously South Africa's Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, as Director-General. The tenacious Selebi embarked on a strategic planning process that elucidated the Department's key goals and objectives while tying them to a framework for achieving them (Muller, 2000:4). Selebi, ideologically aligned with then-Deputy President Mbeki, emphasized South Africa's commitment to an “African Renaissance” as well as to tying its foreign policy to domestic priorities (Van Nieuwkerk, 2006b:40). Selebi also was an able bureaucratic infighter who pushed back against attempts to impede on DFA's turf; for example, he successfully fought South African Secret Service attempts to increase their overseas presence on the grounds that the money could be better spent otherwise (Mills, 2000:286-287).

### *10.3.2 Moves Toward Greater Coordination (and Control) Under Mbeki*

Thabo Mbeki's 1999 ascension to the national presidency brought a greater impetus for coordination among departments within the policy sphere, with Mbeki and his expanded Presidency acting as the final decision maker. Although relations between government foreign policy during the Mandela years generally were not competitive, they lacked coordination. South Africa's 1998 intervention in Lesotho—whereby DFA was kept out of the loop by the Presidency and Defense—epitomized this, as did lack of communication over the China recognition issue. This poor communication can in large part be pinned to a lack of a

coordinating mechanism. Mandela's newly expanded Cabinet did not prioritize foreign policy issues, and given the disestablishment of the State Security Council by de Klerk, there were no mechanisms by which the departments dealing with those topics could meet. In addition, the small size of the President's office—only 27 people at its peak—further limited its ability to play a coordinating role among departments.

Mbeki took several steps to remedy the situation. First and foremost, he expanded the role and the size of the Presidency, growing it to 337 by 2004, a level not seen since PW's Botha's administration (Hughes, 2004:15-16). It would serve as the ultimate judge of inter-departmental conflicts, allowing Mbeki to weigh in where he saw fit (Butler, 2005:722). Mbeki in October 1999 also implemented a Cabinet cluster system that created five (later seven) Cabinet committees of Ministers dealing with similar issues to ensure better inter-departmental coordination (Booyesen, 2001:133). Foreign affairs was most broadly covered by the committee on International Relations, Peace, and Security (IRPS), which included the President, 15 ministers (notably Foreign Affairs, Defense, Intelligence, and DTI, although also less important ministries like Sport, Environmental Affairs, and Energy), as well as their deputies (Chikane, 2000). However, the Economics and Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security (JCPS) committees also played a role on appropriate foreign affairs issues.

According to its participants, the clusters were where most of the serious debate took place on policy formulation, foreign and domestic. "In [the full] Cabinet, there were discussions, but more in committee than Cabinet process; committee clusters would bring decisions to the full Cabinet," notes former Minister Pallo Jordan (Jordan interview). The IRPS cluster was particularly important, given the government's prioritization of domestic delivery issues. Aziz Pahad, a cluster participant as Deputy Foreign Minister from 1994-2008, notes, "You must appreciate that international relations was not high on the agenda of Cabinet. It normally went through the cluster system" (A. Pahad interview). Participants say the IRPS structure was particularly useful in bringing on board inputs from departments often ignored in the foreign policy process, as Sydney Mufamadi—Safety and Security Minister under Mandela and Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) Minister under Mbeki—describes:

*There could be something in Mozambique where another ministry gets involved; say there's an issue related to water, then the Ministry of Water Affairs would be kept posted. I was Minister of Safety and Security for five years. Sometimes through Intelligence or Foreign Affairs, we'd hear about the proliferation of weapons in Mozambique, some of which end up here...At DPLG, we had disaster management as a responsibility, and of course the defense force went to Mozambique and played a role. But we actually led the SA response to the disaster in Mozambique. We had to. DFA had in that sense to pilot us into that situation. So a matter can arise from anywhere. The Minister of Health could come to Cabinet and talk about malaria in SADC, and it's particularly acute in Swaziland and Mozambique, so my colleagues and I recommend A, B, C, and D. So things can be initiated by the Presidency or other ministries (Mufamadi interview).*

Mbeki also pushed for better coordination at a sub-ministerial level through the 2000 creation of the Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) unit within the Presidency. PCAS replaced the Presidency's existing Coordination and Implementation Unit, which had been established in 1997 but lacked the staff and resources to manage the coordination process (De Jager, 2006:105). Described by academic Tim Hughes as the "engine room" of policy integration, PCAS served as the bridge between the Presidency and departments, monitoring departmental performance while keeping Presidency principals apprised of developments (Hughes, 2004:17). PCAS was subdivided into five chief directorates that mirrored those of the Cabinet committees and brought together working level staff—from Director-General on down—to discuss policy formulation, with all ministries required to submit draft bills and proposals to it for scrutiny (Nel and van Wyk, 2003:62). The IRPS and (to a lesser extent) economic chief directorates covered a host of issues related to foreign affairs, including trade, international investment, marketing, and peace and security issues.

Overall, these moves proved to stamp Mbeki's imprint on the formulation of South Africa's foreign policy. As Aziz Pahad bluntly states, "All major issues were driven from the Presidency. DFA of course put in inputs, but the process was driven from the Presidency" (A. Pahad interview). Valuing accurate intelligence and good analysis, Mbeki in 2001 also created a Presidential Support Unit (PSU) within the Presidency to advise on foreign affairs, specifically

performing an intelligence gathering and analysis function. It was a small unit, only five members, but was made up of trusted senior officials (like veteran diplomat Welile Nhlapo), many of whom had intelligence backgrounds (Calland, 2004:38-40). The PSU was a trusted source of information for the President; according to former PCFA chair Raymond Suttner, it was particularly valuable in advising on African issues (Van Nieuwkerk, 2006a:150). Mbeki also set up a National Security Council to consider issues, foreign and domestic, with potential security threats to South Africa, although it met only sporadically.

### *10.3.3 DFA's Role Under Mbeki*

The DFA inherited by Mbeki was in far better shape bureaucratically than five years prior, but the Department's influence on the President would prove mixed during his presidency. Mbeki's choice as Foreign Minister—Mandela's brusque Health Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma—came as a surprise, given her lack of diplomatic experience. “She didn't originally want the job,” notes former diplomat Yolanda Spies. “She was asked by Mbeki to do it, but she had not lobbied for it or prepared herself. She has said this in so many words; she was completely taken aback. She had no background in diplomacy” (Spies interview). According to a veteran journalist, she left the meeting with Mbeki where he named her Foreign Minister in tears, upset that she had been thrown into a portfolio where she had no competency (Author's private archive). Many, and perhaps Dlamini-Zuma herself, viewed her appointment as an effort by Mbeki to, in essence, retain the Foreign Ministry for himself. She was widely thought—by interviewees and other analysts—to have played a secondary role in policy formulation, instead acting as the Department's formal representative in Cabinet and (given her extensive travel) South Africa's primary representative to the world (Mills, 2000:355).

That said, DFA was not bereft of senior officials with policy impact. Veteran diplomat Welile Nhlapo was widely regarded as the government's point man and leading expert on central Africa, for example, while Abdul Minty was the go-to official on proliferation matters. “[Minty] would brief the Minister or President directly” on nuclear issues, says Pahad (A. Pahad interview). The leading policy figure in DFA, however, was Mbeki's longtime friend and confidante, Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad. “Nkosazana was the minister and implementer, and Mbeki's defender, but Aziz ran policy,” states academic Chris Landsberg, a view echoed by many observers

(Landsberg interview). Described as the “strategic brain” of DFA, Pahad was particularly influential on issues related to the Middle East, and Mbeki frequently deployed him to crisis spots like Palestine, Iraq, and Zimbabwe (Stover and Ludman, 2005:114). The friendly and affable Pahad also played a valuable internal role in the Department, smoothing feathers ruffled by the tempestuous and unpopular Minister.

Outside of the Presidency, DFA was the recognized leader on foreign policy. Although Aziz Pahad admits to some squabbles over turf at first, “We had to come to grips quickly with the notion that foreign policy is not the sole mandate of DFA. Our role is to coordinate; we don’t have experts on everything” (A. Pahad interview). The only significant area in which DFA clashed with another department was with DTI over trade. While DTI generally played the lead role on trade policy and in negotiations, trade specialist Mills Soko notes, “There was a debate at some point about whether DTI should focus more on industrial and competition policy, hiving off trade policy to DFA. DFA under Dlamini-Zuma had a strong interest in trade and commercial diplomacy” (Soko interview). The two departments clashed over the overarching goal of trade talks, with DTI favoring “hard lines” that sought to maximize benefit to South Africa while DFA focused on the broader, geo-strategic interests, including the maintenance of good relations with developing world partners (Bertelsmann-Scott, 2004:126). DTI generally won these battles.

#### *10.3.4 Meanwhile, Defense a Minor Player*

While DFA and DTI saw their profiles rise as foreign policy actors after 1994, no department saw more of a decline in external influence than previously dominant Defense, hampered by resource constraints, an uncertain mandate, and poor leadership throughout the Mandela and Mbeki presidencies. Lingering suspicions of the military—which retained a significant cadre of white leaders that had vociferously fought the ANC and were cool toward the transition—also probably were a factor in the immediate post-1994 period. The new South African National Defense Force—an amalgamation of the SADF, homeland, and liberation movement armed forces—came into existence on 27 April 1994, and from the start was starved of resources (Gutteridge, 1996:9). De Klerk-era cuts to military spending continued after 1994, dropping its expenditure to 1.6 percent of GDP by 1997, where they would hover through the Mbeki

presidency (Barber, 2004:99). Although the SANDF—at the behest of politically powerful Defense Minister Joe Modise—in 1999 acquired modern fighter aircraft, corvettes, and submarines in a controversial multi-billion rand deal, spending on “big ticket” acquisitions was not matched by necessary expenditures on pay, maintenance, and spares, badly damaging the force’s operability.

Mandate was another problem. The 1996 Constitution stated that the military have strong civilian control (including oversight by Parliament) as well as a “primarily defensive orientation and posture,” but said little else about the role of the armed forces, particularly as an external actor (Le Roux, 2003:155). White papers on Defense (1996) and Peace Missions (1998), as well as the 1998 Defense Review, sought to flesh out the SANDF’s future role, and they identified humanitarian, peacekeeping, and “flag flying” operations as “secondary” functions of the SANDF related to the foreign affairs sphere (Williams, 2003:217). However, these documents—particularly the Review—were not informed by a clear vision of South Africa’s national interest and future foreign policy priorities; as defense analyst Len le Roux notes, “The military expected that politicians would provide this guidance, but this did not happen” (Le Roux, 2003:165). The Treasury also was not sufficiently consulted to determine what sorts of expenditure would be realistic for a future force.

Mbeki upon taking office did little to address these problems, but at the same time came to rely on the increasingly overstretched SANDF as a major tool in implementing his foreign policy priorities. With only a handful of troops deployed as peacekeepers before 1999, Mbeki drastically increased the SANDF’s external footprint, and by 2006 it had more than 3,000 troops deployed to continental hotspots like Congo-Kinshasa, Burundi, and Sudan to participate in peace support missions. These deployments would prove a significant strain on both the defense budget and the military itself, particularly given that high rates of HIV and poor fitness forced the SANDF to scramble to find enough fit troops to send on these missions. Although Pretoria did wave off some requests for assistance—like Liberia in 2003—due to lack of resources, Mbeki largely ignored the readiness considerations of his Defense establishment in committing South African troops (Neethling, 2004:145). Although a National Office for the Coordination of Peace Missions was established in DFA in the late 1990s to consider and manage these

deployments, Mbeki largely bypassed it, according to late ISS military analyst and former SANDF officer Henri Boshoff. “It was never used...[Mbeki] didn’t listen to Lekota or anyone else. He would make a decision and make the military do it” (Boshoff interview). Military claims of overstretch were generally dismissed.

Participants and observers put forward several reasons for the inability of Defense to push back against the President’s requests, with the ineffectiveness of Defense Minister (1999-2008) Mosiuoa “Terror” Lekota at the top of the list. As one Cabinet colleague notes, “Terror also did not understand the role of the military as an instrument of foreign policy” and was unable to think strategically about South Africa’s role on the African continent and push for the necessary capacity (Author’s private archive). Lekota entered Cabinet without having any background in military issues, but as the Cabinet colleague notes, Mbeki “in appointing his first Cabinet, there are so many markers that are called in at that point. Terror was chair of the ANC, so you had to give him a prominent role” (Author’s private archive). The ANC Chairmanship on its own was more or less a full-time job, and many observers described Lekota as an “absentee minister” during his tenure, putting party business ahead of his Cabinet job. “Lekota never understood the military and never tried,” says one prominent military analyst. “Some guys I know said Lekota never read documents; he’d be given drafts of things like Vision 2020 and just sign them” (Author’s private archive).

On the other hand, Lekota and his deputy (2004-08) Mluleki George throw much of the blame for Defense’s lack of resources back on the Cabinet, particularly Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, a long-time opponent of increased military spending (Green, 2008:473). “I must be honest—he was never helpful,” notes George. “He has a bad understanding of defense. In those days, people would say there’s no war, so we don’t need to spend money on defense. To me that’s a stupid argument...That chap is stupid with the military” (George interview). Lekota pins the blame more broadly on Cabinet, noting that while Mbeki was sympathetic to the need for greater military spending, “Given that there was no external threat, defense budgeting was not a priority, particularly in comparison to internal concerns...[Mbeki] could not ride roughshod over Cabinet priorities” (Lekota interview). That said, not everyone agrees with Lekota. As Asmal claims in his memoirs, “The national budget was largely a set of Mbeki’s decisions, which is a

painful thing to say in view of my friendship with Trevor Manuel” (Asmal and Hadland, 2011:206).<sup>7</sup>

#### *10.3.5 No Sub-National Influence on Foreign Policy*

Before concluding, it is worth pointing out that government influence on foreign policy both before and after 1994 came at a national level, with almost no input from provinces or municipalities. Unlike its predecessor documents, South Africa’s 1996 Constitution gives provincial and local governments the power pursue agreements related to trade, investment, and other linkages, and it also provides that the National Council of Provinces ratify international agreements, giving these sub-national entities some theoretical power (De Villiers, 1995:154). Some provinces (particularly Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and Western Cape) and cities have been active in pursuing external linkages, particularly in seeking out investment opportunities (Van Wyk, 1998a:37). However, these outreach efforts are nascent, and these sub-national entities have shown little inclination or ability to try to influence broader foreign policy. Also, despite its theoretical power, the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) lacked distinct provincial identity and simply acted as a “rubber stamp” for the ruling ANC, both in domestic and foreign policy, during the Mbeki administration, much like the National Assembly (White, 1996:26).

#### *10.4 Conclusion: The Ebb and Flow of Departmental Influence*

The influence of South Africa’s various government departments involved in foreign policy formulation, as this chapter has shown, has been in constant flux since the earliest days of Union. There are a couple of obvious reasons for this. One is the relatively obvious conclusion that the needs of the country, determined by the executive, at that point in time were clearly linked to departmental influence. Information and intelligence dominated in a period where Pretoria sought to quietly improve its not-yet irreparably damaged reputation abroad. Defense grew in stature when the focus shifted from solicitude to outright defiance. DFA reasserted itself in the

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<sup>7</sup> The influence of neither the Ministry of Intelligence (established in 1999) nor its Ministers—Joe Nhlanhla (1999-2002), Lindiwe Sisulu (2002-04) and Ronnie Kasrils (2004-08)—on Mbeki is not entirely clear, with interviewees lacking insight on the issue. Although few interviewees viewed those ministers as part of Mbeki’s foreign policy “inner circle,” even Cabinet members acknowledged that they were not privy to most of those interactions. “I’m sure Ronnie had more conversations with Thabo than any of us realize,” said one Minister.

transition and immediate post-transition period, when reengagement with the world was the priority. And under Botha and Mbeki, both of whom inserted themselves personally into the foreign policy process and sought to retain a close hold on it, the Presidency (and SSC under Botha) played strong coordinating roles. These dominant departments also have been characterized by significant funding advantages over their rivals; clearly the adage “he who has the gold, makes the rules” applies. Notably, Cabinet as a whole has never had much sway in foreign policy; it has always been a small subset of Cabinet actors with the real influence.

Another clear conclusion is that departments as entities are less important than the people who lead them. From Louw to van den Bergh to Magnus Malan to Aziz Pahad, the relationships between the executive and leading departmental principals (not always the Minister, as Pahad’s case shows) has been perhaps the clearest marker of departmental influence. All of these close relationships translated into their departments having clear primacy in the foreign policy process. Leaders like Malan, de Klerk, and Mandela lacked particular departmental advisors, and tellingly, their tenures were times of inter-departmental competition. An ability to protect one’s bureaucratic turf against potential rivals is another determinant of departmental influence, particularly in periods of competition. Louw’s turf protection under Malan and Strijdom; Mulder and Rhodie’s sidelining of DFA under Vorster; and Dlamini-Zuma’s assertion of DFA’s turf under Mbeki all fit this bill. This did not just happen at the ministerial level. The ability of working-level Defense officials to run roughshod over DFA in the State Security Council, and Jackie Selebi’s aggressive defense of DFA turf under Mandela also fit this bill.

## **Chapter 11: The Head of State and Foreign Policy Making**

### *11.1 Introduction*

This chapter will switch the focus to the decision maker himself, the Prime Minister (pre-1984) and President (hereafter referred to as the executive for sake of simplicity). That the South African executive has since the very beginning been the preeminent decision-maker is clear, given that South African Constitutions since 1961 have firmly entrenched foreign policy making powers within it. The 1961 republican Constitution vested the State President with the power to declare war and make peace; enter into international treaties; accredit diplomats; and command the military, although in reality these powers were given to the Prime Minister due to the ceremonial nature of the State President (1961 Constitution, Section 7). The 1983 Constitution, which eliminated the Prime Minister position and gave the State Presidency real teeth, included almost identical language about the powers of the President, although it diminished Cabinet oversight of the decision-making process (1983 Constitution, Section 6). The 1996 Constitution provides for greater oversight from Parliament, at least on paper, but gives the executive similar powers in the foreign policy arena, including the “negotiating and signing of all international agreements” (1996 Constitution, Sections 84 and 231).

Less clear, however, is how each of these leaders used that power. For example, to what extent did these leaders dominate the decision-making process versus delegating on issues of foreign policy? Did they have an interest in foreign policy, or were they more focused domestically? Did they rely on any particular advisors on foreign affairs? And, most importantly, are there any trends and patterns that can be discerned? To answer these questions, this chapter will examine each post-1948 national leader with an eye toward better understanding their involvements in the foreign policy process. Specific issues to be examined (where information is available) include the degree of interest they showed in foreign affairs; their respective worldviews; their experience in the international arena, either through travel or policy making; and their individual decision-making styles: closed versus consultative, micro-managing versus delegating, discouraging or encouraging of debate. A study of each leader will help determine the degree to which personal characteristics of South African leaders—particularly on the issues of interest

and openness to consultation—have had an impact on whether foreign policy has been open to outside inputs, as well as whether this has ebbed and flowed over time.

### *11.2 DF Malan (1948-1953)*

National Party leader DF Malan assumed the Premiership from Jan Smuts in 1948 determined not to make the same mistake as Smuts—a renowned internationalist—in being seen as prioritizing international issues ahead of domestic ones (Geldenhuys, 1994:255). Despite retaining the position of Foreign Minister—possibly to frustrate Eric Louw, South Africa’s leading diplomat but a man with whom Malan had a contentious relationship—Malan did not show any great public interest in foreign affairs. Although committed to the idea of a South African republic, he took no steps during his premiership that would have isolated South Africa and hoped that it could remain part of the Commonwealth (Nel, 1990:2). He travelled abroad (notably as the first foreign leader to visit independent Israel), but with nowhere near the frequency of Smuts (Adams, 1984:5). He was open to inputs from Cabinet ministers like Finance Minister Nicolaas Havenga, and—to the surprise of many diplomats in that very “English” department—from External Affairs. At first, recalls longtime diplomat Donald Sole, “He was very suspicious, but what changed him was Mrs. Malan, who told him, ‘These people have grown up in the British mandarin tradition. They serve the country, not the government, and you can trust them’” (Sole interview). Malan became particularly close to Foreign Secretary DD Forsyth, who was key to convincing Malan to enter the Korean conflict alongside UN forces in 1950 (Sole, 1991:143).

Nevertheless, Malan did on occasion make unilateral foreign policy pronouncements, if not always well-informed ones. Malan had a particular interest in Africa, and was the driving force (without input of External Affairs officials or Cabinet members) behind the concept of an “African Charter” that aimed to keep the continent Christian, anti-Communist, and non-militarized, an idea that got little traction (Sole, 1994:106-107). He also strongly (but unsuccessfully) advocated for the absorption of the High Commission territories on South Africa’s borders, against the advice of External Affairs (Geldenhuys, 1994:255). Despite this interest in Africa, he displayed little knowledge of its politics or geography; in a 1955

conversation with Malan, academic Ned Munger found that the former Prime Minister “made it only too clear that he believed Ghana was east of Nigeria” (Munger, 1979:5).

### 11.3 *JG Strijdom (1953-1958)*

JG Strijdom’s brief tenure as Prime Minister was the period in which the South African executive had the least personal influence on the foreign policy making process. A small town lawyer from the rural northern Transvaal, Strijdom was the least worldly South African leader, having practically no foreign exposure before becoming Prime Minister, either through his Cabinet responsibilities (he had been Minister of Lands) or travel (Geldenhuys, 1984a:21). As Sole recalls, “Strijdom had little interest in foreign affairs and saw his task in South Africa as maintaining the identity of the white man” (Sole, 1994:108). He further adds, “I was overseas for most of Strijdom’s tenure. When Foreign Minister Eric Louw decided to reduce representation at the UN and I came back, he took me in to have a chat with Strijdom. He wasn’t the least bit interested” (Sole interview). The only issue with a foreign policy connection in which Strijdom showed any interest was in regard to South Africa becoming a republic, although he did not press the issue during his premiership, leaving it to his trusted successor, Hendrik Verwoerd. Strijdom was the first Prime Minister to delegate the Foreign Affairs portfolio, and he was content to let Louw, a close ally, dominate that policy sphere. Strijdom, a leading proponent of *baaskap* (white domination) with little respect for blacks, did not even bat an eye at Louw’s attempts to build nascent relations with independent black states, a clear display of his disconnectedness (Barber and Barratt, 1990:29).

### 11.4 *Hendrik Verwoerd (1958-1966)*

Although a mild surprise to succeed Strijdom, Verwoerd during his Premiership dominated his Cabinet, party, and the broader South African state like no other national leader, before or since. He was an unapologetically authoritarian figure who “overruled ministers on departmental matters and in general created the impression that he alone was making all the decisions” (Adam and Giliomee, 1979:202). He often understood his ministers’ portfolios better than they did and treated them like “schoolboys” (O’Meara, 1996:112). In the same vein, he often introduced legislation without seeking the inputs of appropriate ministers or those of the broader NP caucus (Stultz, 1969:15). A workaholic who would put in 16 to 18 hour days, Verwoerd had an almost

superhuman certainty in his decision making, with even his wife acknowledging that he would not make concessions once he had made a decision (Graaff, 1992:186). Once he had made a decision—which he tended to do quickly—Verwoerd would tolerate opposition from neither supporter nor critic (Barnard, 1967:18). If his logic did not prevail over his opponents, he would simply talk them into the ground, sometimes speaking for hours to the point where his confused audiences would go along with his reasoning, no matter how abstruse (Hepple, 1967:110).

Although Verwoerd is best remembered for his conceptualization of separate development and work to codify apartheid, he retained an interest in foreign affairs, particularly after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre began focusing global attention on South Africa. He took a keen interest in matters around Namibia, endorsing DFA's ultimately successful fight between 1961 and 1966 to fend off an International Court of Justice challenge to the legality of South Africa's occupation (Sole, 1994:109). Future Foreign Minister Pik Botha, then a lawyer on the case, recalls, "because of the importance of this case, we had direct access to Verwoerd. He wanted weekly roundups of what was going on to keep track of the case" (P. Botha interview). Botha's recollection hints at Verwoerd's predilection for micromanagement, poring over diplomatic reports and seeing fit to involve himself in matters dealt with by junior diplomats. Longtime diplomat Tom Wheeler notes, "I as a junior officer in 1961 would put up a memo on something like the Red Cross, and it would come back a while later with marginal notes by Verwoerd on it. That's the extent to which he was involved" (Wheeler interview).

Verwoerd's conduct of foreign policy was a microcosm of his overarching decision-making style, famously taking the decision to withdraw South Africa from the Commonwealth without consulting either Cabinet or Parliament (Geldenhuys, 1994:263). This authoritarianism led Munger to famously state in 1965, "If one were to list the most important people making foreign policy, the names might well run: 1. Dr. Verwoerd 2. Dr. Verwoerd 3. Dr. Verwoerd 4. Foreign Minister Muller 5. The Cabinet and 6. Secretary GP Jooste, Brand Fourie, Donald Sole, and one or two other professionals" (Munger, 1965:85). Verwoerd lacked senior foreign policy advisors, freezing out Eric Louw as Foreign Minister and largely ignoring his successor, Muller. While Jooste, Sole, and his Africa envoy Albie Burger generally had good access to Verwoerd, even

they were ignored if they did not agree with the Prime Minister. “Verwoerd just didn’t listen if he didn’t agree,” recalls Sole (Sole interview).

Verwoerd’s stance toward external affairs throughout most of his tenure was exemplified by his “block of granite” position, refusing to be cowed by Western criticism or to be flexible in South Africa’s application of apartheid, once even banning his MPs from attending diplomatic mixed-race functions. However, by the end of his tenure (and life) Verwoerd began to show a greater appreciation for the nuances of foreign relations. He took a cool stance, for example, toward Rhodesia’s November 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence, placing pragmatism above any racial solidarity with Rhodesia’s whites (Sole, 1994:109). Verwoerd also held talks in 1966 with Lesotho’s new Prime Minister, Leabua Jonathan, and appeared to be moving toward normalizing relations with that newly independent neighbor. In fact, on the morning of 6 September 1966, Verwoerd told his caucus that he would be making an important foreign policy announcement in his speech in Parliament that afternoon (Botha, 1967:49). However, parliamentary messenger Dimitris Tsafendas stabbed Verwoerd to death before he could make that speech; not one to use notes, one will never know what he would have announced that day (Wolvaardt et al., *Volume 1*, 2010:102).

### *11.5 John Vorster (1966-1978)*

John Vorster, Verwoerd’s Justice Minister and successor as Prime Minister, was in terms of personality and vision drastically different than his predecessor: plain-spoken, deliberate, intelligent but by no means intellectual (Giliomee, 1983:3). Whereas Verwoerd had an overarching (if not always clear) vision for the country, Vorster was reactive, a counter-puncher not wedded to any particular ideology. Perhaps as a result of his legal background, Vorster seldom took snap decisions, considering all permutations before making decisions (D’Olivera, 1977:265-266). Whereas Verwoerd was an imperious micro-manager, Vorster saw his role as more of a “chairman of the board,” making decisions when necessary but generally allowing his ministers to run their own portfolios, seeking consensus wherever possible (Rotberg, 1988:12). However, while Vorster’s style of governance may have been politically wise and allowed capable ministers to thrive, it lacked any effective coordinating mechanism, and Vorster—who lacked Verwoerd’s long-term vision—did not provide structure or any overarching strategy.

Hence, ministers operated their departments like independent fiefdoms rather than interconnected entities, and Vorster's administration was characterized by the most significant inter-departmental competition ever seen in South Africa (O'Meara, 1996:206).

Although Vorster had no foreign policy experience before becoming Prime Minister, he developed an interest in and strategic understanding of the pertinent issues, evidenced by his attempts at *détente* with the continent and his taking hard line toward Rhodesia, which he thought would help ameliorate Western pressure on South Africa (Munger, 1979:5). In making his foreign policy choices, Vorster relied on the advice of a small group of influential advisors, both inside and outside government, toward whom he showed unshaking loyalty (Giliomee, 1983:3). BOSS chief Hendrik van den Bergh was clearly first among equals in providing advice, although DFA Director-General Brand Fourie and Information Secretary Eschel Rhoodie also were among his trusted advisors (Barber and Barratt, 1990:113). Late in his administration, Foreign Minister Pik Botha moved into this inner circle. "He treated me like a younger little brother. I could discuss anything with him...He gave me complete freedom to undertake negotiations on Rhodesia," recalls Botha (P. Botha interview).

However, Vorster's management shortcomings prevented the country from developing a coordinated, overarching foreign policy and would come to have deleterious consequences for his administration. As noted in the previous chapter, DFA was caught flat-footed by Vorster's choice—after much deliberation—to intervene in Angola in 1975, a decision largely driven by Defense Minister PW Botha that ultimately derailed Vorster's *détente* efforts (Grundy, 1986:88). Similarly, Vorster kept Foreign Affairs and other departments largely in the dark about Information's secret projects, which was largely responsible for bringing his premiership to an end in 1978 (De Villiers, 1980:74). It also effectively ended the career of Information Minister Connie Mulder, long the favorite to succeed Vorster, who lost out to the Minister from whose departmental funds Information's monies originated, Defense's PW Botha.

### *11.6 PW Botha (1978-1989)*

PW Botha showed from the start of his administration in 1978 that it would be a far more disciplined one than that of his predecessor, with decision making codified and all ministers singing off the same hymn sheet, a style described by academic Kenneth Grundy as more “forceful managing director” than “chairman of the board” (Grundy, 1986:34-35). Cabinet was given a proper secretariat (which for the first time would take detailed notes and provide proper agendas for meetings), the State Security Council was bolstered, and the 1983 Constitution’s establishment of a State Presidency further consolidated executive power (De Klerk, 1998:66-67). By the time he left office in 1989, the Office of the State President would have over 500 employees that served a coordinating and implementing role. These structures combined to ensure that all departments worked together toward a common goal, with Botha able to monitor progress along the way.

The creation of structures was not, however, the only means by which Botha maintained control over his government and Cabinet—he also used intimidation. Botha’s aloofness from his Cabinet and the NP caucus resembled that of Verwoerd, but whereas Verwoerd’s intellect awed his ministers into silence, Botha’s ministers simply feared him. “If he went to Cabinet determined to get approval for something, he would get it,” recalls Trade and Industry Minister Dawie de Villiers (De Villiers interview). Interviewees had countless stories of Botha’s thuggish and belittling behavior toward his Cabinet ministers, even those considered among his confidantes. FW de Klerk in his memoirs said Botha in Cabinet meetings “sat at the head of the elongated oval cabinet table and presided over proceedings sometimes like a benevolent father and sometimes like a great bird of prey...His style did not encourage free and open debate. Ministers who were imprudent enough to embark on courses that did not please him were very quickly, and often quite brutally, cut down to size” (De Klerk, 1998:67). Given the paucity of free and open debate, Cabinet and SSC meetings tended to be peremptory, with decisions either made by Botha directly or offline with the counsel of a handful of key advisors. Describing the proceedings, longtime Cabinet Secretary Jannie Roux recalls that, “PW would listen to two or three ministers and say, ok, enough discussion, here’s the decision” (Roux interview).

That said, while many of his ministers lived in fear, they also had a great respect for Botha's loyalty and consistency. "He could be nasty...boy, there were times when he was nasty," recalls Magnus Malan, Botha's Defense Minister and close confidante in his memoirs. However, "if he gave you the green light you could depend on him—not like other politicians. He's a man's man, he's a hell of a good friend to have, but he's a nasty enemy" (Malan, 2006:91). Many noted that one had to learn how to approach Botha, particularly he became even more erratically temperamental after a stroke around 1982 (Giliomee, 2008). As Military Intelligence chief Tienie Groenewald notes, "You had to learn to know him. If he was in a bad mood, you did what you had to do and got out. If he was in a good mood, you could sometimes spend a lot of profitable time with him. He took a lot of advice; people don't realize that...He'd listen when you spoke sense" (Groenewald interview).

While Botha may have appeared to make hasty decisions in formal structures, they were undergirded by extensive research, consultation, and contemplation. Once remarking, "Remember what King Solomon said: 'The more advisors you have the more wise decisions you will make,'" Botha appointed commissions of inquiry on a host of issues, seeking out the best minds in the country to sit on them (Pottinger, 1988:354). While impatient, Botha was not unapproachable; as Donald Sole describes in his memoirs, he was always "ready to listen as long as he was satisfied that I was not wasting his time" (Sole, 1991:483). While it happened rarely, Cabinet ministers and government officials could stand up to him and change his mind, although Pik Botha notes that in making arguments, "Everything needed to be supported" (P. Botha interview).

Botha relied on a small inner circle of trusted advisors in decision making, although he was not as close to any of them as Vorster was with van den Bergh. Press secretary Jack Viviers, private secretary Ters Ehlers, and Cabinet secretary Roux all were cited as being part of this inner circle, with Malan, Barnard, and Constitutional Development Minister Chris Heunis considered the most influential Cabinet-level figures (Seegers, 1994:60). However, Roux—who was frequently described as Botha's "gatekeeper" in contemporary accounts—contends that their influence should not be overstated (O'Meara, 1996:278). "I always said, the guy who is going to be the power behind PW's throne has yet to be born; PW was the power behind his own throne...he

was his own man” (Roux interview). Roux paints a picture of Botha as an isolated figure, both personally and professionally. “PW didn’t leave friends; he didn’t care about it. I predicted he would die a lonely man, and he died a lonely man. He had some friends, but they weren’t strong-minded people who could change his mind on important things” (Roux interview).

The characteristics of Botha’s decision making—process orientation, trust in the security apparatus, the utilization of a small group of advisors, and even his short temper—all were reflected in his conduct of South Africa’s foreign policy. Botha’s 12 years as Defense Minister certainly gave him experience in the world of foreign policy, but he was not widely traveled (not leaving the region during his premiership, save for a 1984 trip to Europe) and according to most observers, he lacked a sophisticated worldview. In the view of US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa (1981-89), Chester Crocker, Botha was deeply suspicious of American “constructive engagement” efforts in southern Africa given his “very African penchant for believing that distant foreigners were the source of his problems and could become his *deus ex machina*” (Crocker, 1992:316). Botha’s perceptions of the outside world also were very much shaped by his proclivity for not being seen as succumbing to pressure, from within or outside the country. Botha’s handling of the 1985 “Rubicon” speech—in which he scotched Western expectations of a reformist speech, severely damaging the country’s economy in the process—reflected this defiance (Giliomee, 2008).

A second stroke in 1989 finally led Botha’s long-cowed Cabinet to take him on, forcing him out as party leader and, soon thereafter, as State President. The world was changing—Namibia was moving toward independence, the Soviet Union was collapsing, and Botha was even holding talks with Mandela. However, most of his Cabinet colleagues doubt that he would have had the courage to take the final steps of unbanning the ANC and freeing Mandela. He was of a different, bygone era. Says Barnard, “Remember one thing when talking about PW...it was like taking Truman or Eisenhower to the late 1980s. PW started his career in 1948 in Parliament. In 1948, Truman was still President. Always take that into account” (Barnard interview). Instead, that responsibility would fall to his successor, former Education Minister FW de Klerk.

### 11.7 *FW De Klerk (1989-1994)*

The tendency of the NP caucus to elect Prime Ministers with drastically different personalities, biases, and preferences from the predecessors continued with the elevation of FW de Klerk. Despite having a “conservative” reputation, de Klerk—a lawyer by training—was more of a consensus seeker than Botha and respected by his Cabinet colleagues for his intellect (Barber, 2004:41). His brother, respected journalist Willem de Klerk, described the new President in a biography as “a team man who consults others, takes them into his confidence, honestly shares information with his colleagues, and has a knack for making people feel important and at ease” (De Klerk, 1991:74). Even-tempered and phlegmatic, de Klerk had no propensity for Botha-esque temper tantrums, which was much welcomed by Cabinet colleagues who had walked on eggshells for years (Geldenhuis and Kotze, 1991:36). Contrasting de Klerk’s style with that of his predecessor, Dawie de Villiers says, “FW on the other hand was a good lawyer, good listener...he could be very argumentative, and if he had a point he wouldn’t let it go. But as a lawyer, he’d say, can we work it this way. He has strong views, but was an open and considerate man” (De Villiers interview).

De Klerk quickly changed the style of decision making at the top. The full Cabinet became the forum for debate and discussion; as de Klerk notes in his autobiography, “there was no place for inner circles and no by-passing the Cabinet. All important decisions were taken by the Cabinet, which was given full access to all the facts that could influence its decisions” (De Klerk, 1998:153-154). In practice, “FW didn’t really have a kitchen cabinet,” says diplomat Dave Steward, de Klerk’s close advisor and Cabinet Secretary from 1992 (Steward interview). Cabinet participants note that the change was quite drastic. “FW would let the debates continue. In PW’s time, we never had Cabinet meetings longer than 9AM to 1PM. With FW we sat until 7 or 8 at night,” recalls Roux, who remained Cabinet Secretary until 1992 (Roux interview). Compared to Botha, says Finance Minister Barend du Plessis—who unsuccessfully challenged de Klerk for the party leadership—“FW was much more democratic, encouraging of open discussion and free exchange of ideas. He was a very good chairman, highly intelligent, and he could really summarize a thing well...If you had something to say to PW, he regarded it as an interruption, whereas FW welcomed it” (Du Plessis interview). Pik Botha, citing de Klerk’s

legal training as an influence, noted that he was “very objective, listening, giving everyone a chance, then giving a resume of what was a fair reflection of the mood” (P. Botha interview).

De Klerk took a personal interest in foreign policy; “FW took foreign affairs, particularly repairing SA’s image abroad, very seriously,” says Steward” (Steward interview). However, the demanding nature of his job, given the negotiations process, and his emphasis on letting ministers control their portfolios meant that he left a relatively small personal footprint on foreign policy making. As Steward notes, “Cabinet took decisions, and ministers were responsible for their portfolios. Pik took decisions on foreign affairs, so to a large extent, FW would rely on Pik’s advice. He would do so critically and not accept everything, but there was no doubt Pik was Foreign Minister...Pik was thrilled about this; after all these years he could do his job!” (Steward interview).

### *11.8 Nelson Mandela (1994-1999)*

Few leaders around the world assume their country’s top job while already a statesman of international renown; Nelson Mandela was a notable exception. In the four years between his 1990 release and his 1994 election, Mandela had scoured the globe to build support for the negotiation process and raise money for the ANC, establishing himself as a global celebrity. Adding to the mix his travels around Africa in the early 1960s, he was easily the most traveled leader in South Africa’s history. However, despite his international renown and although he maintained a robust travel schedule throughout his Presidency, Mandela could not be described as a “foreign policy” President, focusing most of his time and attention on issues of national reconciliation, state stability, and service delivery. “There were only two foreign policy issues on which Mandela took a hands on approach—on others he had a watching brief—they were Lockerbie and East Timor,” claims his Deputy Foreign Minister, Aziz Pahad (A. Pahad interview).

Although Mandela lacked a consistent interest in the foreign policy realm, he could be a forceful, unpredictable, and decidedly unilateral actor when his interest was piqued. Neither Mandela’s public expressions of outrage over Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha’s killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995 nor his 1996 announcement that South Africa would recognize China over Taiwan were

coordinated with DFA or Cabinet in advance (Alden, 2001:133). Pahad said both decisions surprised him. “I don’t think he consulted us in Foreign Affairs,” notes Pahad about Mandela’s Nigeria stance, which he knew would not be popular on the continent. “He took that decision. We then had to pick up the pieces, because we knew there would be no oil sanctions in place, that many African countries would see that position as either mad or not in their interests, or that of the continent” (A. Pahad interview). These and other examples—like announcing South Africa would continue to sell arms to Rwanda on the day DFA was to announce its cessation, or his premature announcement of Zaire peace talks in 1997—led to criticisms in South Africa that Mandela’s personal statements made foreign policy (Schraeder, 2001:236).

In conducting his foreign relations, Mandela relied on a small coterie of trusted officials and ministers to act as his personal envoys. His use of Director-General in the Presidency, Jakes Gerwel, as his lead interlocutor with Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi to convince him in 1999 to extradite the Libyan suspects in the 1986 Lockerbie bombing was perhaps the best-known example, although there are many others (Jhazbay, 2007:77). Mandela dispatched Sydney Mufamadi, then Safety and Security Minister, to Mozambique in 1994 and Lesotho in 1998 to defuse tensions in those countries (Mufamadi interview). Mangosuthu Buthelezi, in Cabinet as Home Affairs Minister, recalls Mandela using him as a go-between with Zimbabwean President—and Buthelezi’s former schoolmate—Robert Mugabe on Lesotho and other issues, given that the interpersonal relations between the Presidents were, in Buthelezi’s words, “a bit sour” (Buthelezi interview).

In managing his Cabinet and government writ large, Mandela’s personal authority loomed large. However, Mandela was generally too focused on “big picture” issues, like national reconciliation, to weigh in on fine policy points, while his office was too small to effectively play a policy-crafting role (Fabricius, 1999:221). While deeply respected by his Cabinet, he rarely presided over its bi-weekly meetings and seldom inserted himself into detailed policy discussions when he did (Sampson, 2000:502). Hence, in terms of the mechanics and detail of policy making, both foreign and domestic, Mandela delegated most of this responsibility to his Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, who acted as a “virtual Prime Minister” from the very beginning of his Presidency (Landsberg, 2010a:16). Mandela even went so far as to say on television before

leaving office that “Thabo Mbeki is already de facto President of the country” (Sampson, 2000:533). Mbeki’s domination of policy was particularly noticeable in the foreign affairs realm, where he (and Aziz Pahad, his most trusted advisor) took the reins in crafting the tenets of South African foreign policy. Mandela could still make waves with his statements and actions, but these were only distractions to Mbeki’s construction of the underpinnings of a comprehensive policy.

### *11.9 Thabo Mbeki (1999-2008)*

South Africa’s second post-transition President has been the subject of countless press profiles and at least a half dozen biographies, but yet Thabo Mbeki remains a divisive and mysterious figure. His critics have savaged him as a bully and an autocrat who surrounded himself with yes-people and refused to listen to divergent viewpoints. They attack him for intellectual arrogance, for refusing to acknowledge that his preconceptions may have been wrong—a predilection they claim cost hundreds of thousands of lives in his refusal to accept the link between HIV and AIDS. However, his closest advisors (and even some of his political rivals), paint a different, more nuanced picture emerges, of an exceptional listener who encouraged debate—albeit within set parameters; of a world-class intellect who was able to skillfully bring about subordinates to his worldview; of a workaholic whose intensive research convinced (and sometimes intimidated) ministers and party principals to support his stances. All of these qualities, they note, were magnified in the foreign policy arena, where his experience and expertise was unsurpassed. Of course, neither damnation nor hagiography accurately portray Mbeki (or any leader); this section will attempt to tease out the true nature of Mbeki’s decision-making personality, particularly in determining 1) the degree to which Mbeki drove the foreign policy process, 2) the role of his “inner circle” of advisors in making foreign policy, and 3) how he processed information and what this meant for the decision-making process.

#### *11.9.1 Mbeki the Key Foreign Policy Driver*

One topic that needs no debate is Mbeki’s clear and unflinching interest in international relations, one that—as noted previously—dates back to his days as an ANC representative and principal in its Department of International Affairs. During the transition period, he dominated ANC proceedings described in Chapter 6 that discussed the direction of South Africa’s foreign

policy—even when he was not physically present, party participants recognized his authority (Vale, 2010:246). As Deputy President, he retained his primacy in the foreign affairs arena, with Mandela only intermittently interested in external issues and DFA Minister Nzo having little policy making impact. Tom Wheeler recalls Mbeki’s office making a decision on a disarmament issue in the mid-1990s: “We asked if perhaps the President should weigh in on this, and she said, ‘No, that’s irrelevant.’ That indicates the relationship; Mandela was the iconic figurehead, not the decision maker” (Wheeler interview). So, from at least the early 1980s to his departure from office in 2008, Mbeki was clearly the leading foreign policy figure in the ANC and, from 1994, in government.

Mbeki was the first South African leader to bring a distinct and overarching ideology to South African foreign policy, one that emphasized solidarity with the continent and broader “global South” in an effort to bring about prosperity and equality with the developed world. As academic and businessman Vincent Maphai asserted, Mbeki “takes Africa seriously and he is emotionally and intellectually committed to prove Afro-pessimism wrong” (Quoted in Vale and Maseko, 1998:285). Taking advantage of the global attention focused on South Africa, Mbeki used his platform to advocate for the developing world (and Africa in particular) having a greater say in global economic governance (Olivier, 2003:815). His formulation of the New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) exemplified this commitment, as well as his preference for establishing structures that would address and correct the continent’s underdevelopment (Landsberg, 2004:159-160). That said, Mbeki’s unquestioning alignment of South Africa with the rest of the continent and “global South,” as well as his refusal to criticize human rights abuses and misgovernment in those countries, led to criticisms that such commitment was detrimental to South Africa’s interests, particularly given that its economic relations straddled north and south (Olivier, 2003:822).

In the eyes of most observers, Mbeki set the frameworks for foreign policy discussions, with subsequent debate taking place within those clearly defined boundaries. As academic Maxi Schoeman described the process, “Mbeki takes the lead, sets the guidelines and indicates what he wants and where he wants to take the country (and the continent)” (Schoeman, 2001:83). Debate tended to be about modalities, not the decision itself (Olivier, 2006:180-181). As another

academic describes him, “Mbeki is a difficult chap to engage academically. First and foremost, you must agree with him, and if you don’t, there’s no discussion” (Author’s private archive). Mbeki also saw little need to bring others along while formulating his grander ideas; with NEPAD, for example, even his closest advisors were not informed of it before the project’s 2001 launch (Gumede, 2005:134).

Mbeki’s personal stamp on policy formulation, foreign and domestic, was greater than that of any South African leader before him. He would stay up until the late hours of the evening researching and drafting speeches and other documents, like his weekly ANC letters. “Long before us, President Mbeki perfected these computers,” says Aziz Pahad. “You can see the speeches he wrote himself, and those his speechwriters wrote. I told people, you can give him a draft, and the next morning it will be a totally different document” (A. Pahad interview). This personal touch also applied to his research, as—according to biographer Mark Gevisser—Mbeki did not trust others to filter his information, preferring to seek it out from the source and come to his own (sometimes erroneous) conclusions (Gevisser, 2007:734). “Mbeki, if he wants to know something he gets on the Internet. He just reads it,” notes Pallo Jordan. “You give him a report and walk away; he’ll call you back to discuss if he wants to” (Jordan interview).

### *11.9.2 Dictator or Debater?*

Mbeki’s personal stamp on policy and the fact that he personally drove many policy initiatives (particularly in the foreign policy arena) led to widespread allegations that he behaved as a “dictator” or a “Stalinist,” shutting down necessary debate that might undermine positions. “There was a tighter system under Mbeki... a shutting down, a closing off of discussion, an insider/outsider perspective,” claims veteran ANC MP Ben Turok (Turok interview). Other accounts indicate that many in the ANC parliamentary caucus were cowed into silence during debate because they feared backlash from the President (Johnson, 2009:99). His cold, often “closed-off” personality did not help matters; he lacked the warmth and bonhomie of Mandela in his interpersonal dealings. Whereas many interviewees describe Mbeki as jovial and warm during his time in exile, they note that he became increasingly distant—and at times hostile—after returning to South Africa, particularly after becoming Deputy President. “Mbeki is a very strange guy. Rather self contained, self-sufficient. He didn’t need other people all that much,”

says Turok (Turok interview).

Although he lacked the temper of a PW Botha, Mbeki could be similarly brusque and impatient with colleagues or subordinates who were not living up to his expectations, something that did not help bolster his popularity with them (Hadland and Rantao, 2000:92). As an intelligence official told Gevisser, “He wants to engage with you as an equal, and if you're useless, he'll tell you. He's not going to protect you or soften things for you,” a sentiment echoed by several interviewees (Gevisser, 2007:700). “He doesn't suffer fools gladly,” notes Pallo Jordan. “If you come to him and what you are saying is self evident, he'd brush you off. And the person who wouldn't be listened to would think, ‘He's not even going to weigh what I have to say, how dictatorial.’ But I don't think he was dictatorial” (Jordan interview). Jordan continues, “Where he differs from Tambo is that he's not as patient with people who are fools. He may not say it, but he would make it clear. Tambo was much more accommodating” (Jordan interview).

Mbeki's supporters claim many anti-Mbeki criticisms originated from subordinates bitter about their inability to persuade the better-prepared (and sometimes rude) Mbeki to adopt a policy position. As former Minister Sydney Mufamadi notes, “If you say, ‘Mr. President, my department wants to do this,’ and the President says, ‘Motivate me,’ and the Minister can't do that, [Mbeki] disagrees. So you go back to your department, and you say the suggestion was shot down by the President!” (Mufamadi interview). Woe betides a minister or advisor who was not as prepared on their topics as the President. As Aziz Pahad notes, “You had to be very prepared if you go into a debate with him. In *lekgotla* (extraordinary Cabinet meetings), we'd be very happy not to go first, because for the first three presentations, he would pick them apart... If you wanted to influence, you had to make sure you came in with new information, not things he already knew” (A. Pahad interview). Defense Minister (1999-2008) Mosiuoa Lekota echoes Pahad's points: “It was always extremely difficult to find better researched views on positions on issues. I think [the reason] a lot of people who became hostile to him, especially his peers, is that he always found much more evidence, and they didn't do as much research work as him. And they lost. In due course, they said he was a dictator. He was not a dictator. He did better research than them and did more thorough work” (Lekota interview).

Mbeki also, according to participants, was open to discussion in Cabinet and small groups, synthesizing and critiquing the conversation rather than dominating it. “Mbeki followed the OR [Tambo] tradition,” says Aziz Pahad. “He never intervened until the end” of Cabinet meetings (A. Pahad interview). His goal, according to Gevisser, was to let debate occur rather than dictating a position, amalgamating the submissions of each participant in the summation to ensure that each felt included in the ultimate decision. “Before he takes a decision, Mbeki synthesizes thoroughly,” says former ANC spokesman and party presidency head Smuts Ngonyama. “He puts it back to you. He’ll say, ‘People are saying ABCD, others are saying this,’ and he’ll ask the question, ‘Chief, did you consider ABCD? I agree with you on A and C, but did you consider these other things.’ It makes you think. You can’t come to Mbeki with an issue that has not been thought out thoroughly” (Ngonyama interview). That said, he would on occasion ask what Calland describes as an “arrow-like question that invariably goes to the heart of the matter,” both with ministers and civil servants (Calland, 2004:43).

### *11.9.3 The Role of Mbeki’s “Kitchen Cabinet” on Foreign Policy*

From his time as Deputy President, Mbeki relied on a small group of advisors on international issues who were given varying responsibilities in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. A handful of senior DFA officials—most notably Aziz Pahad, but also Jackie Selebi and UN Ambassador Dumisani Khumalo—were part of this inner circle, assisting in the formulation process but also acting as links to DFA, ensuring that policies were carried out. Other advisors in the Presidency included his legal advisor Mojanku Gumbi, who was a key envoy to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue; PCAS and GCIS head Joel Netshitenzhe; economic advisor and later head of the NEPAD Secretariat Wiseman Nkuhlu; Presidency Director-General Frank Chikane; and Provincial and Local Government Minister Sydney Mufamadi (Lecoutre, 2009:159). Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad—perhaps Mbeki’s closest personal friend—also was a key advisor, serving as a “gate keeper” and “fixer” throughout his administration, although he was not much involved in making foreign policy (Gevisser, 2007:247).

The question, however, is what role these advisors played—were they praise singers or did they provide critical advice? Were they formulators or implementers? Many in the ANC alleged that Mbeki had surrounded himself with “yes men” as advisors since the late 1970s, while others

questioned the quality of the brainpower around Mbeki. As one leading ANC official notes, “you can’t see them being equals to him...If you’re looking for a number two, I don’t think there was one” (Author’s private archive). One anonymous member claimed that people like the Pahad brothers and Mufamadi were incapable of standing up to Mbeki and that Mbeki “needs a devil’s advocate, not a praise singer” (Hadland and Rantao, 2000:102). Former ANC MP Andrew Feinstein—no fan of Mbeki’s—asserts in his book that, “On the whole, Mbeki’s advisors are intellectually inferior to him and do not challenge his views vigorously. Like all national leaders, he lives in an artificial world, insulated from daily reality” (Feinstein, 2007:115-116). One academic familiar with Mbeki compares his openness to counsel with that of Mandela, questioning whether Mbeki ever had the depth of friendship to receive tough advice:

*Thabo is very complex. He’s only had two friends, Essop and Aziz...Thabo’s character was that he overwhelmed the relationships around him. And because of that, he didn’t have the kind of advisors who would tell him things honestly, which was very different from Mandela. You could go in and talk to him. He gave you space, and I saw that personally. He would never make a final decision without coming to Walter [Sisulu]. You’d come home and see them on the stoop, and you knew it was an important decision. It was interesting to see them interact. Walter would tell Mandela if he shouldn’t do something. I don’t think Thabo had that relationship with anyone (Author’s private archive).*

Those around Mbeki, however, discount the criticism that they were weak and could not disagree with the President. “Mbeki loves debating issues. Not publicly. He likes testing ideas,” says Aziz Pahad (A. Pahad interview). While most acknowledge that they could not change Mbeki’s mind on the broad thrust of policy, one could influence him on how to implement them. “You saw tactical shifts in China and Zimbabwe, on the day to day approach,” notes Aziz Pahad. “On Zimbabwe, when they came for that loan of \$2 billion, he set up a committee and listened to advice on how you could not give that loan without conditions or guarantees” (A. Pahad interview).

#### *11.9.4 Mbeki's Persuasive Style in Evidence on Zimbabwe*

Mbeki's questioning stance was particularly noticeable in debates on Zimbabwe, where rather than stifling debate, he used it to win support for his stance toward Mugabe. "He clearly wanted a solution in Zimbabwe; he was unhappy with how Mugabe was doing things," says DFA Director-General (1999-2002) Siphosiso Pityana. "On the other hand, he felt somewhat constrained" by potentially negative African opinion (as with Nigeria in 1995) and a need to keep SADC united, particularly in light of Zimbabwean, Angolan, and Namibian intervention into Congo (Pityana interview). Pityana adds "when we came to power, we were haunted by the Rwandan genocide. There was a very strong fear of a repeat of that. That's why South Africa had to operate within SADC" (Pityana interview). Hence, while many in Cabinet and government viewed Zimbabwe as a singular issue, Mbeki viewed it as a piece of a vaster puzzle in which peace and security in the Great Lakes was paramount.

Mbeki's intense study of Zimbabwe made it difficult for his Cabinet and other foreign policy actors to trump his arguments. "It's very difficult to argue against Zimbabwe because he is very, very sharp," notes Essop Pahad. "He says, 'Ok, this is the land issue, this is what happened under British colonial rule, this is how the land was redistributed, these are the whites who bought the land, this is what happened under Smith, here's the land that was taken—you can't argue you don't need land reform'" (E. Pahad interview). Mbeki also was highly cognizant of the inter-play within the Zimbabwean government and the ruling ZANU-PF, arguing that forcing out Mugabe could play into the hands of hardliners. Smuts Ngonyama recalls that Mbeki would manage debate within the ANC NEC to win support for his stance toward Zimbabwe:

*On Zimbabwe, one or two people would actually say we're a bit slow on this and so on. We're slow in intervening, or we're soft. And he would ask the question, "What is it comrades are suggesting we do in Zimbabwe?" Then we'd start scratching our heads. Nobody would stand up. One or two people would stand up and say "quiet" diplomacy is ok, but we must make sure the Zimbabwean government doesn't abuse our position and we don't strengthen Mugabe. Mbeki would genuinely ask the question of what we need to do now to prevent that from happening. So we'd resolve that the position of the ANC was that we should respect the*

*sovereignty of Zimbabwe and help Zimbabweans solve their own problems. That wasn't coming from Mbeki; that was from the NEC (Ngonyama interview).*

### *11.10 Conclusion*

As this chapter has shown, South African leaders have been of wildly different stripes in regard to how they make foreign policy, making generalities difficult. That said, a few overarching conclusions about head of state/government influence on foreign policy are clear:

*--Interested leaders have greater say over foreign policy.* Unsurprisingly, a study of South African leaders shows that those leaders who have a significant personal interest in foreign policy (Verwoerd and Mbeki in particular) have played a far more dominant role in the making of foreign policy than those who have not. On the other hand, the head of government with the least personal interest, Strijdom, was by a long shot the leader who most directly delegated foreign policy.

*--Robust bureaucratic structures equal strong executive control of foreign policy.* On a more formalized level, the creation and building of bureaucratic structures (like the SSC under Botha and PCAS under Mbeki) correlate with strong control of the national leader over foreign policy. Such structures have less to do with the formulation of policy than its implementation; they ensure that all government departments are on the same page and are working toward the same goals.

*--Advisors' influence strongly correlated to leaders' interest.* Also unsurprisingly, the importance of "kitchen cabinet" advisors and decision-making delegates (like Foreign Ministers) is amplified in situations where leaders have little interest in foreign affairs or (like Mandela, with Mbeki) competing priorities for their time.

What does this say about Thabo Mbeki's role in South Africa's foreign policy debate and what this meant for its democratic nature? Judging by the three criteria above, Mbeki clearly dominated South African foreign policy, in a way that only perhaps Verwoerd and before him Smuts have in South African history. As noted in previous chapters, Mbeki was not particularly receptive to inputs from foreign policy actors outside of government, particularly when these visions clashed with his own view of the world.

That said, the accounts of those closest to him do not paint the picture of a dictator in the foreign policy arena, particularly in regard to his inner circle of advisors. Mbeki could be a domineering figure when he did not find his interlocutors' research up to his standards, but he was not a bully in the same vein as Verwoerd or Botha. Furthermore, the changes in South Africa's post-1994 dispensation meant that Mbeki could not dominate the foreign policy debate to the same degree as some of his predecessors. As noted in previous chapters, Mbeki had to contend with more active and involved outside actors like the press and academia; Parliamentary oversight (if spotty) from the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs; and a far larger government foreign policy apparatus than any of his predecessors. Unlike, say, Verwoerd, Mbeki's foreign policy could not escape press notice, academic analysis, or business consternation, and Mbeki certainly did not have the time to peruse the memos of junior officials, given the expansion of South Africa's government foreign policy apparatus. Overall, Mbeki may not have come across as the most "democratic" leader in regard to foreign policy, particularly given his predilection to dismiss inputs he found insufficiently supported—or markedly contrary to his worldview—but he, and the system he inherited, nonetheless allowed them to be heard.

## Chapter 12: Conclusion

### *12.1 Analysis of Actors' Influences*

The preceding chapters have broken down how all of the various South African actors with an interest in that country's foreign policy have been able, from the time of Malan through the administration of Mbeki, been able to influence—or have failed to influence—the executive's decisions. Below is a recap of the findings of all of the actors that have been studied, as well as an outlook for the future based on past trends and post-Mbeki changes to the foreign policy landscape.

--Public opinion (Chapter 4) has rarely mattered in foreign policy formulation, with citizens seldom having taken external issues into account at election time. As various polls have shown, South Africans of all races have too many domestic concerns to give foreign policy much consideration, with even the collapse of neighboring Zimbabwe not proving enough to get anything but an elite segment of society interested.

--Civil society groups (Chapter 4) have shown themselves able to mobilize on foreign policy issues intermittently throughout South African history, from labor's refusal to offload Italian ships in the 1930s to the well organized, multi-stakeholder effort in 2008 that stopped arms from being shipped to Zimbabwe. However, poor communications between organizations, limited resources, and general lack of focus on external issues have made such interventions to be the exception rather than the rule.

--Although certain prominent media figures—like Alf Ries, for example—have been moderately influential in the foreign policy field, the influence of the press (Chapter 5) as a whole has generally been negligible on foreign affairs, and if anything will likely decrease in influence. The “loyal” Afrikaans press from the 1940s through the early 1980s derived some policy influence from its standing as an official organ of the National Party, although foreign affairs generally were not its gambit. Since that time, press-government relations have become increasingly strained, and the lack of a “party organ” news source since 1994 has driven greater ANC suspicion of and antipathy toward the media, as evidenced by periodic attempts to muzzle it. Additional factors limiting the media's influence are the limited readership of the print press,

its lack of influence on voters, and—for foreign relations in particular—its declining coverage of external issues.

--Academia (Chapter 6) focused on foreign affairs has seen perhaps the greatest leap in influence of any external actor since 1994. Despite pre-transition analyses portraying some foreign policy academics as key government advisors, research in Chapter 6 indicates that academics were rarely consulted, either in the personal capacity of decision makers or in a systematic way. Beginning in the transition period, however, academics were brought into discussions with the government and ANC on the development of a future South African foreign policy. Since 1994, and particularly under Mbeki, individual academics, universities, and think tanks—all of which have broadened and deepened their coverage of international relations—have been called in for consultations by government departments. While their inputs have not always been welcomed or acceded to, academic inputs have proven valuable in particular to working-level officials working on technical issues or little-studied countries.

--Compared to other outside actors, business (Chapter 7) has overwhelming advantages in its ability to sway decision makers, particularly since South African campaign laws (past and present) make it easy for them to contribute to political campaigns. In reality, however, its impact has been quite limited, particularly in the foreign policy sphere. While acknowledging that the “business community” is by no means a unitary entity with universally common interests, it is nonetheless surprising that businesses with common goals—like seeking access to regional markets or improving South Africa’s international reputation—did not at least try to put pressure on the apartheid government to modify its more heinous policies. Even more surprising is that since 1994, businesses—particularly those focused on expansion on the continent—have not been able to work together in a united fashion toward common goals. Organizations like BUSA and BLSA, which should be discussions forums for these debates, have done little to conceptualize a “business foreign policy” or better lobby the executive on issues like reducing visa restrictions.

--South Africa’s Parliament (Chapter 8) has never, neither before nor after 1994, interjected itself into the foreign policy debate. Opposition MPs like Colin Eglin, Boy Geldenhuys, and Ben Skosana have made valuable contributions through asking tough questions of government, but the majority party caucuses have largely left foreign affairs to the executive. A large part of this has been because of willing acquiescence—neither the NP nor ANC leadership was or is fond of

promoting backbenchers that ask difficult questions. This assent is not always willing; Raymond Suttner's removal as PCFA chair appears linked to his independent minded-ness and willingness to question the executive on its foreign policy priorities.

--No ruling party (Chapter 9) in South African history has shown itself, as an entity, to be a player in foreign policy formulation. The ANC in exile had an active foreign policy arm through its Department of International Affairs, but its expertise was subsumed by DFA after 1994.

Today, the Department of International Relations is nothing but a shell, and as an entity does not play a role in foreign policy formulation for many of the same reasons that ANC MPs in Parliament do not.

--It is necessary to deconstruct the question of government departments' influence (Chapter 10) on foreign policy. As bureaucratic entities, departments like DFA (renamed Department of International Relations and Cooperation in 2009), Defense, DTI, and Intelligence have generally served as implementers rather than formulators of policy at the broader level, although inter-departmental competition serves to hash out the finer points of policy direction. However, the principals of these departments—Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Directors-General, special advisors, and other top officials—have since the pre-1948 period served as leading advisors to the head of government/head of state. That said, there is no consistency to the identities of these advisors; their influences have ebbed and flowed over time largely based on their personal relationships with the national leader and the leader's departmental affinities.

--Lastly, it was determined that the personality, interest, and decision-making style of the national leader (Chapter 11) himself are the key factors that determine whether outside voices are heard in the foreign policy arena. South African law has since 1910 given the executive extensive sway in making foreign policy, and some leaders—notably Verwoerd, and Mbeki—have taken advantage of this to put their personal imprint on their external policies. That said, even under the more consultative and delegating heads of government (like Strijdom and Vorster, for example), foreign policy making has been the preserve of a select few individuals, trusted ministers and advisors around the leader.

Now, one must return to the original question of this study—is South African foreign policy “democratic,” and did it become more so after 1994? To answer this, one must address a few additional questions. Is it subject to the approval of South Africa's populace? Do interested

actors have the opportunity to weigh in on its direction and focus? Does this translate into impact? Or does the foreign policy making process remain, in the words of an author writing during Vorster's era, "a secretive, almost cabalistic business?" (De St. Jorre, 1977:55). These questions shall be broken down individually:

*--Does the broader South African populace have the opportunity to weigh in on foreign policy?*

By and large, the answer here is yes. Since 1994, all South Africans have been able to freely vote for their representatives at national elections using whatever criteria they saw fit, while before 1994 white voters could—if they so chose—vote for whatever candidate they preferred in regard to foreign policy. There have been a host of external issues over the past 70 years on which voters could have influenced voters at the ballot box, such as the choice to fight alongside the Allies in World War II, Commonwealth departure, Rhodesia policy, regional destabilization, post-transition external orientation, and Zimbabwe. However, while the opportunity has been there, voters have never made foreign policy a priority in their voting habits or in their interactions with elected officials. Given that lack of public interest, it is perhaps unsurprising that the government of the day believes it has a mandate to pursue whatever foreign policies it chooses.

*--Do interested actors have the opportunity to weigh in on foreign policy's direction and focus?*

*Has this changed over time?* This question must be examined from pre- and post-1994 perspectives, since the answers are rather different. Under the old dispensation, outside actors (including Parliament) had almost no ability to make formal representations to government on foreign policy. Whatever interaction there was came through informal connections between the head of government and his ministers with leading businessmen, journalists, academics, or church leaders. Those inside the political *laager* (inner circle), like MPs and Afrikaans newspapermen, had more of an inside track, but they could only push so far before being shut down.

If there has been one drastic change in the foreign policy environment post-1994, it is the significant improvement in the amount of formal dialogue between the government and outside actors in the making of policy. The Green Paper/White Paper process demands that draft bills be circulated for comment from the general public and interested organizations. Business has

formalized, regular interaction with government through BUSA, BLSA, and other groups. Labor is represented within the tri-partite alliance. Church leaders had regular access to Mandela and Mbeki. Academics, particularly in the foreign policy arena, have had far more access to decision makers than they did before 1994. Only perhaps the press has seen a diminution of its access, at least on a formalized basis since the ANC does not have a designated party organ. But journalists still do have their networks into government, sometimes at a very high level. Lastly, Parliament through the establishment of the portfolio committee system has been given a greater formal voice in the policy process. All of this access translates into an ability to make representations on foreign policy issues and seek greater clarity from government on its plans.

--*Does this access translate into impact?* Has the quantity of access post-1994 translated into greater quality of access; namely, have outside inputs clearly influenced policy outcomes in the external arena? The answer here appears for the most part to be no. Countless interviewees complained that their interactions with government on foreign policy—particularly with President Mbeki and his closest advisors—tended to be formalistic “box-checking” exercises that resulted in no shifts in policy, particularly toward Zimbabwe. Even COSATU, a member of the tri-partite alliance, showed no ability to move Pretoria on Zimbabwe policy, or on issues like Swaziland or China where they had a vested interest.

Government decision makers have countered that these outside representations approached the issues too simplistically, ignoring complicating factors that governments have to deal with. That may well be true, but the fact remains that with one notable exception, the same “cabalistic” decision-making process described earlier characterized the 1994-2008 period. Both Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki made most of their foreign policy decisions—both in shaping the broader direction of policy and dealing with day-to-day situations—in a highly personalized fashion, utilizing a handful of trusted advisors to discuss policy implications and implement the decisions. The outside voices provided food for thought—particularly academics, who could bring a wealth of expertise, particularly on more obscure issues—but an analysis of the policy making process during this time would suggest that their inputs had only a marginal impact on the policy process. Ultimately, as the Constitution dictates, the President was the leading foreign policy actor, and President Mbeki in particular took this to heart.

## *12.2 Post-1994 Dispensation Cracks the Door to More Democracy in Foreign Policy Making, But South Africans Yet to Walk Through It*

The answer to whether the foreign policy environment since 1994 is one of theory and practice. On one hand, the nature of South Africa's post-apartheid dispensation allows for public contributions on foreign policy (through Parliament and in voting); inputs from outside actors; and more openness within government in regard to the number of departments and principals with a role to play on the issues. Even local and provincial governments were given limited scope to engage in foreign affairs. Citizens and organizations can weigh in on whatever issues they see fit without fear of recrimination or censorship. The White Paper process also allows for outside actors to weigh in on the issues of concern to them in a structured manner, something utilized frequently in the mid-1990s in particular. The 1996 Constitution still ensures that the final say on most foreign policy issues lies with the President, but such an arrangement is in line with international norms.

However, while the policy environment was more open than before 1994, the practice of influencing foreign policy—either through the ballot box or through concerted pressure between elections—changed very little. Public engagement on foreign policy, already weak, did not improve after 1994. Parliament, despite having a dedicated committee on the issue, showed itself largely disinterested, as did the broader ANC. The press, business, and a vast swath of influence groups similarly showed little desire to weigh in on policy. Only academia and some civil society groups showed much life in the Mandela and Mbeki administrations. In addition, Thabo Mbeki hardly went out of his way to open the foreign policy debate any more than he had to. He gave short shrift to the inputs of pressure groups; had no time for the press or business; and dominated the ANC and its parliamentary caucus. Mbeki had a clear and well-defined worldview, and he had little time for people or organizations with decidedly different views. That said, those close to Mbeki, and even outsiders—notably from the academic community—paint a far more nuanced picture of the man, as someone who would listen and engage with others on foreign policy, at least if he believed they had done their homework on the issues in question (even if they seldom changed his mind).

Ultimately, the relatively clear answer to whether South African foreign policy making has democratized appears to be yes, but more in theory than practice. The question now turns to why there was not more widespread engagement in the foreign policy-making process. Mbeki's critics are quick to blame him, calling the President an autocrat in the foreign policy arena. This, however, would appear to be rather harsh; Mbeki certainly had his outlook on the world and did not unnecessarily open doors to critics, but he did not make policy in a vacuum, meeting with interested actors to discuss external affairs. Even if participants questioned the quality of these meetings, he held them even though not being bound to do so constitutionally.

All told, there was space for outside actors to engage the Mandela and Mbeki administrations on foreign policy and, in one instance at least, influence the government. That example was the 2008 government decision—under intense pressure from civil society—to stop an arms shipment from China to Zimbabwe coming through the port of Durban. As discussed in Chapter 4, an organized coalition of civil society groups (including COSATU), given significant coverage by the press, was able to raise public consciousness of this shipment to the extent that the NCACC was forced to back down and send the supply ship elsewhere. This was a striking reversal in the government's non-interference policy toward its northern neighbor, and a clear signal that a well-organized challenge to Pretoria's foreign policy could force it to change course on an issue.

This begs the question: why did this not happen more, particularly in relation to Zimbabwe, the dominant foreign policy issue of the 2000s? This study uncovered several reasons for limited external impact on the foreign policy process. The broad public disinterest in foreign affairs is one clear and significant reason. Another is the abysmal level of communication among interested actors. One of the more surprising findings in researching this study was to understand how little foreign policy actors in South Africa communicate with one another, both “outside their boxes” and “within their boxes.” For the former, even though business and COSATU generally have had the same interests in Zimbabwe and have wanted to see the same reforms, they generally have not talked to one another. Part of this is understandable—social networks tend to be insular, so CEOs and union bosses would not necessarily run in the same circles. However, even more striking was how little communication there is within these “boxes.” The head of one prominent think tank, for example, noted that she rarely saw her

counterparts from others, and there is generally little cross-institutional collaboration on projects. Different business groups do not often communicate with one another. Even religious groups have limited interactions across sectarian lines.

The issues of lack of coordination and public disinterest are intrinsically linked. Interested actors cannot force public attention on an issue, but in an environment where an incident captures public attention on a hot-button issue—as did the Zimbabwe arms sale—a united effort can raise public awareness and force the government to alter its policies. However, for the most part, this did not happen during the years Mbeki ruled the foreign policy roost, and suggests that the view of Mbeki as a foreign policy “dictator” is perhaps less relevant than that of a “vacuum filler.”

### *12.3 Areas Deserving Additional Study*

The study of the foreign policy decision-making process in South Africa is one that will never stop demanding critical examination, particularly as the actors change. At the time of writing, South Africa has seen the brief interregnum of Kgalema Motlanthe (2008-2009) and since 2009 the administration of Jacob Zuma. While South Africa’s foreign policy has not seen any dramatic shift since Mbeki left office, the influential players probably have. This is a natural flow; Zuma is not going to have the same personal relationships, decision-making processes, or degree of interest in foreign affairs as does Mbeki. Given this perpetual shift, it will be worth applying the actor-based methodology of this study to the Zuma administration after he leaves office. His successors will merit similar attention.

That is not to say that the past deserves no additional examination. While the author was able to talk about Mbeki’s foreign policy decision-making process with several of his key aides, many others were unavailable for interview or still serving in government. These figures—and Mbeki himself—will provide valuable insights on his administration over time through interviews or publication of their own memoirs. Even the pre-1994 period has information about these processes, hidden away in archives that hopefully in time will become declassified and more accessible to researchers. The decision-makers of the era also have more anecdotes and details to share that will shed light on this era, although they are quickly passing away. Donald Sole died shortly after our interview; Magnus Malan died before I could sit down with him. Both of

these men left autobiographies behind, but the vast majority of their counterparts have not. It is my hope that researchers will be able to capture their stories and feed them into decision-making analyses before it is too late.

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*Appendix: List of Interviews*

Please note that not all interviewees are cited in the text; some interviews were cut from the final text, and other interviewees are quoted on background. All dates are 2010 and were conducted in person unless otherwise noted.

Adekeye Adebajo	Interviewed 3 March
Rok Ajulu	Interviewed 21 July
Derek Auret	Interviewed 7 June
Niel Barnard	Interviewed 14 July
Japie Basson	Interviewed 15 June
Whitey Basson	Interviewed 30 June
Chris Bennett	Interviewed 9 September
Herbert Beukes	Interviewed 16 June
Simon Boshielo	Interviewed 25 January
Henri Boshoff	Interviewed 25 January
Con Botha	Interviewed 9 June
JSF "Frikkie" Botha	Interviewed 19 May
Pik Botha	Interviewed 1 February
Mangosuthu Buthelezi	Interviewed 3 August
Jakkie Cilliers	Interviewed by Skype 22 July 2011
Scarlett Cornelissen	Interviewed 29 June
John Daniel	Interviewed 28 July
Dawie de Villiers	Interviewed 1 November
Ebbe Dommissie	Interviewed 3 June
Peter Draper	Interviewed 14 October
Barend du Plessis	Interviewed 22 May
Jan du Plessis	Interviewed 21 July
Kent Durr	Interviewed 11 June
Colin Eglin	Interviewed 23 March 2011
Peter Fabricius	Interviewed 26 January
Jannie Ferreira	Interviewed 23 February
Andre Fourie	Interviewed 16 August
Deon Fourie	Interviewed 25 May
Dianna Games	Interviewed 11 October
Boy Geldenhuys	Interviewed 6 September
Deon Geldenhuys	Interviewed 29 January
Jannie Geldenhuys	Interviewed 28 May
Mluleki George	Interviewed 21 October
Rex Gibson	Interviewed 11 March 2011
Hermann Giliomee	Interviewed 24 February
Vasu Gounden	Interviewed 2 August
Tienie Groenewald	Interviewed 28 May

Shadrack Gutto	Interviewed 27 May
Fatima Hajaig	Interviewed 21 September
Helmoed Heitman	Interviewed 5 May
Mike Hough	Interviewed 21 July
Tim Hughes	Interviewed 3 February; 7 July
Pallo Jordan	Interviewed 25 June; Email answers received 7 April 2011
JJ Joubert	Interviewed 18 February
Reuel Khoza	Interviewed (phone), 25 October
Chris Landsberg	Interviewed 23 July
Mosiuo Lekota	Interviewed 25 March 2011
Garth le Pere	Interviewed 25 May
Albertina Luthuli	Interviewed 1 November
Rob Mackay	Interviewed 3 March
Willie Madisha	Interviewed 1 September
Mondli Makhanya	Interviewed 11 October
Vincent Maphai	Interviewed 1 June 2011
Bongani Masuku	Interviewed 25 May
Chris Matlhako	Interviewed 23 July
Richard Menatsi	Interviewed 17 February
Greg Mills	Interviewed 24 May
Sam Motsuenyane	Interviewed 29 May
Sydney Mufamadi	Interviewed 15 October
Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini	Interviewed by phone 19 November
Laurie Nathan	Interviewed 16 August
Theo Neethling	Interviewed 18 July
Louis Nel	Interviewed 11 October
Phillip Nel	Interviewed 8 September
Smuts Ngonyama	Interviewed 2 March
Cunningham Ngcukana	Interviewed 24 May
Gerrit Olivier	Interviewed 20 January
Ken Owen	Interviewed 30 June
Aziz Pahad	Interviewed 28 January
Essop Pahad	Interviewed 27 May
Father Peter John Pearson	Interviewed 4 May
Sara Pienaar	Interviewed 2 March
Sipho Pityana	Interviewed 25 May
Mzukisi Qobo	Interviewed 29 January
Hopewell Radebe	Interviewed 27 May
Mewa Ramgobin	Interviewed 10 November
Jannie Roux	Interviewed 28 May
Renier Schoeman	Interviewed 2 November
Annette Seegers	Interviewed 23 February
Gerald Shaw	Interviewed 7 July
Jeremy Shearer	Interviewed 21 July
Garth Shelton	Interviewed 26 January
Mtiken Sibande	Interviewed 1 September

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos	Interviewed 26 May
Job Sithole	Interviewed 24 May
Ben Skosana	Interviewed 21 September
Karen Smith	Interviewed 23 September
Mills Soko	Interviewed 1 March
Don Sole	Interviewed 5 May
Hussein Solomon	Interviewed 12 October
Roger Southall	Interviewed 25 January
Michael Spicer	Interviewed 11 October
Yolanda Spies	Interviewed 25 January
Johan Steenkamp	Interviewed 18 May
Willem Steenkamp	Interviewed 18 May
Dave Steward	Interviewed 4, 7 June
Raymond Suttner	Email answers received 2 June
Mathata Tsedu	Interviewed 31 May 2011
Ben Turok	Interviewed 30 September
Baby Tyawa	Email answers received 3 March 2011
Harvey Tyson	Interviewed 11 March 2011
Peter Vale	Interviewed 8 September
Janis van der Westhuizen	Interviewed 29 June
Theuns van der Westhuizen	Interviewed 14 May
Hennie van Deventer	Interviewed 21 May
Neil van Heerden	Interviewed 24 June
Albert van Niekerk	Interviewed 5 July
Anthoni van Nieuwkerk	Interviewed 26 January
Denis Venter	Interviewed 28 May
Ton Vosloo	Interviewed 9 June
Tom Wheeler	Interviewed 29 January
Denis Worrall	Interviewed 18 January 2011
Siphamandla Zondi	Interviewed 27 May