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CONTINUITY  
AND CHANGE IN  
SOUTH AFRICA'S  
PRESENT AND  
FUTURE  
FOREIGN POLICY

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*It should be noted that any opinions expressed in this article are the responsibility of the author and not of the Institute.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most contemporary scholarly literature and virtually all popular journalism about South Africa of late has quite naturally been concerned with questions relating to the domestic political, economic and social character of the post-apartheid state. The issue that has dominated most discussions is this: what will South Africa look like during, and especially after, the period of internal reconstruction? The overriding concern has been with the negotiating process itself and, assuming it gets off the ground, the character of 'the new South Africa' that emerges. As a consequence of this pre-occupation, comparatively little attention has been directed at a related but no less important issue (at least for outsiders) and that is: what will South Africa be like in the future? How will it behave in the contest of local, regional and global politics? Given that most commentators (wisely or not) now assume that the Republic has embarked on an irreversible course towards radical and perhaps even revolutionary in-house change, to what extent has the debate about the precise delineation of the 'new political dispensation' been reflected in relation to external affairs? Has the 'new thinking' about domestic arrangements spilled-over into foreign policy matters? In particular, to what extent have the major players involved in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy - and I am thinking here both of informal and formal office-holders - engaged in a sustained re-examination of traditional assumptions and policy perspectives? Is foreign policy 'on hold' in the sense that the dominant presumption is in favour of continuity, or can we expect fundamental changes in alignments, orientations and attitudes in the foreseeable future?

These are the issues raised by three important, though quite different, recent commentaries and taken together they could be construed as the opening shots in what promises to be a lively and timely debate on the future direction and scope of South Africa's foreign policy.

In so far as these papers share a common theme it is this: how is South Africa coping now and how will it cope in the future with the transformations that are currently taking place in its domestic, regional and global environments? To a long-distance observer the first impression given is that despite coming at the topic from widely dissimilar political, ideological and social perspectives, all three analysts reveal themselves to be species of the same genus. They are South Africans thinking about South Africa and as such share a common distinguishing mark: an ingrained ability to combine hope and despair in equal measure in consideration of their country's future. South Africans share with Russians an inherited, possibly genetic, predilection to wild swings of temperament, so that it is not uncommon within the same frame of reference to be hopelessly optimistic on Fridays and deeply pessimistic on Mondays, regardless of what

Saturday and Sunday might bring.

In this regard, all three papers display large doses of enthusiasm for the coming political, socio-economic order while they simultaneously debunk and debase assumptions commonly held about it, and about how the future will unfold in the regional context. My purpose in this paper then, is to focus on what might be called the demythologizing elements in these offerings: the challenges they issue to conventional wisdom about the short, medium and long term future of this volatile and highly complex area of inter-state relations. The overall intention being to highlight common key presuppositions, the clarification of which might help us understand, without benefit of emotion, South Africa's choices in regional and international politics in the 1990s.

## II. THE PRE-POST APARTHEID PERIOD

The first and most immediately relevant myth that is dispelled forms the central theme of John Barratt's thoughtful paper. And it's a deceptively simple one. That is, that before we begin to eulogise about a *post-apartheid* South Africa and the seemingly exciting policy options and opportunities open to it, we must first experience a very critical and highly contingent *transitional* state – what Barratt calls 'an in-between period'<sup>1</sup> – which may well last a number of years and which will be of crucial importance in determining South Africa's own policy preferences as well as the place it can reasonably expect to aspire to in the international community.

The idea that the end of apartheid will automatically usher in a 'new' South Africa is profoundly misleading. The transitional period is likely to be a prolonged one. Change is unlikely to be sudden and dramatic; in fact President de Klerk's new dispensation is as much an attempt to control the pace of change as it is an indication of a willingness to redistribute the spoils and prepare for a majoritarian state. Moreover decisions that are taken during this period – policy initiatives that are undertaken regarding South Africa's regional role for example – will effectively tie the hands of any future post-apartheid administration. It is therefore vital (not to say prudent) that decision-makers cast their nets as widely as possible in the search for a broad domestic consensus in consideration of likely foreign policy choices, both for their own sakes and for parties outside South Africa that have identifiable interests in the Republic's development. Bilateral, unilateral and multilateral commitments entered into during this period will condition South Africa's role in Africa and the wider world. Therefore, this intermediate stage, and how it's managed, will be a critical

phase in the overall development of South Africa's international relations.

Given this, and given that the transformation is envisaged (in the official mind, at any rate) in terms of orderly evolution rather than instantaneous metamorphosis, how is it actually being perceived and acted upon by policy planners in Pretoria?

Further, the traditional military/security issue areas which have held centre stage for over forty years in world politics are now increasingly giving way to a new awareness of wealth/welfare/environmental concerns which render earlier orthodoxies about how to promote the 'national interest' and 'national security' at best irrelevant and at worst downright dangerous. To what extent is the South African foreign policy establishment capable of taking its cue from theories of 'complex interdependence'<sup>2</sup> rather than 'political realism' as guiding paradigms in confronting the new operational environment opening up before them?

Clearly, in this transitional period Hobbesian or Verwoedian notions of security and interest must as a matter of urgency be redefined (and be seen to be redefined) to embrace not only a multiracial South African polity, but also a multi-issue international agenda. Non-Cold War, and essentially non-statist issue areas which include migration, poverty, disease, hunger, drought, economic deprivation and eco-politics now compete for attention as essential components of threat-perception<sup>3</sup> with the more familiar security concerns of traditional Afrikaner realpolitik. Of course, old habits die hard, and any threat analysis that did not include such high-political issues as the apparently ending civil war in Angola and the still unresolved conflict in Mozambique, the continuing friction with Zimbabwe, the uncertain futures of Namibia, Zambia, Zaire and Lesotho, and especially the continuing civil unrest within the Republic itself, would not be realistic or credible. But the fact remains that to a large extent – and this is a reflection of global changes no less than local ones – 'high' and 'low' politics are now beginning to change places, or at least to merge, with the result that ideological or theoretical straitjackets moulded in post-Westphalian Europe and refined globally by the Cold War and locally by the Total National Strategy, are no longer serviceable in the quest for 'security', 'order', 'stability', 'development', 'prosperity', 'justice' or even 'interest' – however narrowly defined. Traditional competitive models of national security with their familiar emphasis on national inclusiveness and military preparedness are now giving way to broader conceptions of 'defence' where security is seen largely in terms of interdependence and non-adversarial community concerns.<sup>4</sup>

The central question therefore is this: how far and to what extent has the South African decision-making community altered its ancestral mind-set to encompass these new and quite radical inputs into policy formulation? Is the psychological environment in which policy is made in Pretoria really capable of perceiving, and acting upon, a new definition of the situation? In other words, how new is Neil van Heerden's much vaunted 'New Diplomacy'<sup>5</sup>? Is it cut from the same cloth as President Bush's somewhat fraudulent 'new world order'? Is it mere rhetoric (what's new? which world? whose order?) or does it contain matters of real substance?

No one can doubt that official utterances from Pretoria over the last eighteen months or so do suggest at least an awareness of structural alterations in the external environment but whether or not this leads to what Mr. van Heerden calls 'a significant change in the *quality* of South Africa's international relations'<sup>6</sup> is still very much an open question.

The record shows that the *quantity* of her international relations has increased - for example the opening up of semi-diplomatic ties with Eastern Europe and the USSR, and at least eighteen African states over the past twelve months - but this in itself still falls short of what one might reasonably expect from the promise of 'new thinking' and the *qualitative* changes this implies.

In any case, it could be argued that this sudden emergence from isolation is as much a consequence of external factors unrelated to events within South Africa, as it is to any fundamental reappraisal of policy goals by Pretoria. The collapse of communism and the consequent release of Southern Africa from Cold War politics, combined with a world-wide weariness with Africa and a consequent reordering of Western political and economic priorities,<sup>7</sup> leads one to suspect that South Africa's reorientation is basically reactive rather than proactive. Quite simply, over the past two years, structural adjustments in the external environment have caused walls to fall and doors to swing invitingly open.

It is telling that the Director General of Pretoria's Department of Foreign Affairs speaks of 'new diplomacy' not 'new foreign policy'. The difference, as Barratt points out,<sup>8</sup> is important. Diplomacy is not a synonym for foreign policy, though it is often used as such. Whereas the latter can be described as the substance, aims and attitudes of a state's relations with others, diplomacy is one of the instruments employed to put these into effect. So Mr. van Heerden's 'new diplomacy' suggests that the changes he envisages refer only to the enabling vehicle. They do not encompass a change in the composition of the passengers,

the purpose of the journey or significantly, the eventual destination. This vehicle change (from a Casspir to a lead-free, user-friendly bakkie?) reflects a change in style rather than substance, in manner rather than matter. It is important not to confuse the two if we are to assess the intentions of the South African government during this transitional period.

Barratt identifies the overall goal of South Africa's foreign policy from 1948 onwards as 'one of trying to ensure the security, status and legitimacy of the state within the international system against the background domestically of preserving a white-controlled state'.<sup>9</sup> In the absence of any tangible evidence to the contrary, and assuming that Mr. van Heerden is fastidious in his choice of words, (and I believe he is, if for no other reason than the fact that precision with language is one the most important tools of the diplomat's trade) we must conclude that although the means are diversifying, the ends of policy are still essentially the same.

Since developments during the present period will condition South Africa's role in regional and international affairs, the questions that Pretoria ought now to be addressing are: whose security? whose status? and whose legitimacy? Although the means can frequently eat away or corrode the ends of policy, unless or until South Africa as a matter of deliberate policy-planning begins to broaden out or redefine these concepts to include the interests and aspirations of groups other than those of the hitherto dominant political elites, the contradiction between substance and form that lies at the heart of South Africa's external relations will remain.

In this pre-post-apartheid phase the extent to which the decision-making community is willing and able to co-opt previously excluded interest groups into the process of formulation and conduct of policy will be crucial. Sooner rather than later there must be a conscious effort to integrate the ANC's Department of Foreign Affairs with Pretoria's.

Absorbing elements of the ANC's international section would of course involve some movement on the issue of goals and objectives but since perceptions of the 'national interest' are not likely to be radically different (at least on matters of 'high' politics) this is a practical possibility. After all, once the sanctions/disinvestment issue is out of the way, and there are indications that this has a momentum of its own regardless of attempts by internal actors to manipulate it, then very little of real moment remains. This merger would, as a matter of practical politics, be a far easier task at present than integration of the SADF with Imkhonto we Sizwe, given the uncertainty still surrounding the

policy of 'the armed struggle', and it would indicate to the ANC that the government's new political dispensation is not partial or selective. That it really is top-down as well as bottom-up.

As Peter Vale argues in a characteristically iconoclastic paper, this is an idea whose time has now come. In his words, 'the liberation of foreign policy-making from the coterie of white officials who have thus far been involved'<sup>10</sup>, is now imperative. If the present government wants a *controlled* evolution towards 'normalising' its foreign relations the requirements of the emerging internal and external order dictate collaboration and a declared willingness to seek out issue areas where genuine bipartisanship can be effected. In this regard, the transitional period must involve a reappraisal of content as well as packaging: neither old wine in new bottles nor new wine in old bottle will suffice. As Vale suggests, 'South Africa cannot simply walk away from its history',<sup>11</sup> but it can make an effort to swim with its tide rather than against it. At the moment though, despite reassuring noises from Pretoria, there is no unambiguous signal that a fundamental re-evaluation of the means/ends formula is under way. We must conclude that the new political dispensation has not, so far, spilt over into the foreign policy realm.

### III. THE NORMALISATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

Another assumption commonly held by participants and observers concerns South Africa's rehabilitation in the international community. Most commentaries on post-apartheid foreign policy assume that once a non-racial majoritarian state has been established, South Africa can return to 'normalcy' in its external relations. Indeed, most Pretoria-watchers point to South Africa's role in the negotiation process leading to Namibian independence during the 1989-90 period as marking a watershed in this quest.<sup>12</sup> The very public success of this, combined with de Klerk's internal initiatives and the world-wide collapse of communism, has led many to believe that 'normal' state-to-state relations are just around the corner. That South Africa's period of solitary confinement is about to end and that a forgiving international community is eagerly awaiting its first steps into the sunlight. The question of issue here is what are 'normal' international relations and can South Africa properly aspire to such a thing?

As we noted earlier, discussions of the post-apartheid state are, quite reasonably, obsessed with the problems of internal, or domestic, reconstruction and tend to assume that as a matter of course once the problem of domestic order and legitimacy has been resolved then questions relating to foreign policy

will more or less slot into place and will naturally reflect the interests of the prevailing balance of forces within the new Republic. On this view, foreign policy is seen as a second-order problem which can be relegated to the outer edges of any discussion of what post-apartheid South Africa might look like.

This separation of the internal and external aspects of state behaviour is a common (and mistaken) assumption not merely of South African adherents to crude political realism, but also of mainstream Western international thought. For example, the old British adage that 'politics ceases at the water's edge' is not exclusively about the practical desirability of a bipartisan approach to the outside world. It also expresses a tacit belief that external relations are qualitatively different from the domestic variety and may not in fact be worthy of the epithet 'politics' at all. Foreign policy then becomes a discrete and segregated area of concern which is empirically and analytically distinct from the processes and structures of internal politics.

In other words, the addition of an 's' to the word 'state' creates not just a plural, but involves crossing a conceptual boundary where the concept of a monolithic and objective 'national interest' reigns supreme. 'Continuity' therefore becomes at once a key value and a rational goal. As long as the 'national interest' (security, survival and prosperity in an anarchic and potentially hostile environment) is deemed to be an objective entity existing above, beyond and distinct from domestic issues involving resource allocation, then the separation of the two realms is complete. Foreign policy, in Morgenthau's famous formulation, is about 'the national interest defined in terms of power',<sup>13</sup> therefore its proper or 'normal' conduct requires the virtual exclusion of variables such as ideological values or moral principles. On this view, the extent to which matters 'domestic' impinge on matters 'external' is a measure of a state's abnormality. 'Normal' states conduct their policies with due regard to geo-political realities and maximise their gain-potential by eschewing potentially divisive and therefore weakening, internal ideological considerations.

Thus, in 1948 South Africa began its descent into abnormality since from that date the dividing line between internal and external affairs became blurred. Apartheid began to eat its way into the body politic to the extent that the state's external projection was totally conditioned by its internal structure.<sup>14</sup> From 1948 onwards South Africa has assumed the role of 'pariah' and 'deviant' since the overriding objective of foreign policy was an essentially domestic matter: the preservation of a white controlled state. All other considerations were subordinate to this.<sup>15</sup>

On this reading, the 'normalisation' of South Africa's role in world politics is a direct function of the demise of apartheid, to the extent that the arrival of the former is conditional on the departure of the latter. This pertains not merely in the sense that having abandoned the 'crime against humanity' it could not legitimately re-enter the comity of nations, but also in the sense that its foreign policy perspectives would not be freed from the awesome, debilitating baggage of domestic concerns.

It is no secret now that, in John Barratt's words, 'after decades of severe diplomatic limitations ... the mood in South African foreign affairs circles is very upbeat.'<sup>16</sup> The main reason for this is a belief that once apartheid has gone, the foreign policy establishment will be freed to get on with the job they imagine they were trained to do – pursue their considered vision of the national interest unencumbered by ideological and essentially domestic concerns.

However, although the removal of apartheid will bring South Africa in from the cold in world politics, this will not mean that domestic affairs will be a static variable in foreign policy formulation. As Peter Vale has pointed out, foreign policy is essentially contested ground in South African politics.<sup>17</sup> It is likely to remain so throughout the transition period and beyond.

Properly conceived, foreign policy is a 'boundary' activity.<sup>18</sup> That is, those making policy straddle two environments: an internal or domestic environment and an external or international one. Policy makers and the policy system itself stands at the juncture between the two and must therefore seek to mediate between the various milieu. The domestic environment forms the background context against which policy is made. Thus, factors such as the resource base of the state, its position geographically in relation to others, the nature and level of development of its economy, its demographic structure, its ideology and fundamental values will form the domestic or internal milieu. This is the context in which policy is formulated: the external environment is where it is implemented. Although Pretoria may want to assume that the domestic inputs form part of a unified whole and are essentially non-contested, this is of course far from being the case. The organisational perspective of today's decision-makers may lead them to wish to construct their external reality – their definition of the situation – without much regard for internal considerations, but the fact remains that the domestic environment, particularly issues relating to the nature and level of interest articulation, economic development, demographic structure, its ideology and fundamental values will form the domestic or internal milieu. This is the context in which policy is formulated: the external environment is where it is implemented. Although Pretoria may want to assume

that the domestic inputs form part of a unified whole and are essentially non-contested, this is of course far from being the case. The organisational perspective of today's decision-makers may lead them to wish to construct their external reality - their definition of the situation - without much regard for internal considerations, but the fact remains that the domestic environment, particularly issues relating to the nature and level of interest articulation, economic development, demographic structure and especially ideology or fundamental values, are crucial to the success of the normalisation process.

In other words, South Africa's foreign policy will not be 'normal' merely because apartheid has disappeared. Normality is not just a matter of aspiring to full diplomatic recognition by the international community. It is also concerned with seeking a basic consensus on aims and objectives within the domestic context. There appears to be little effort so far to begin this process. The South African foreign policy establishment has made no movement in the direction of co-opting or even consulting the ANC and other excluded interest groups. The ideology and the fundamental values remain those of the dominant white groups.

On another level, given its turbulent history, can South Africa ever have 'normal' state-to-state relations with its neighbours? How long does it take to forget the past? An important input into foreign policy is the inherited memories that surround it and to a certain extent shape it. It is a mistake to assume that these can be exorcised overnight, that South Africa in the post-apartheid period can begin all over again with a virtual blank sheet. South Africa will not be a 'new state' in world politics.<sup>19</sup> Its foreign policy will to a large degree be conditioned by its own past and by perceptions of this on the part of other key actors. It will still for example, be a lower middle ranking power with a strong regional presence. Its relations with its neighbours will inevitably reflect this.

It may well be that 'normalisation' is a false God, except in the limited sense of aspiring to full diplomatic recognition by the wider international community. If, due to the notorious perversity of international politics, recognition precedes full integration on the domestic level, it will be a grave error to suppose that the normalisation process is then complete. A normal state is not one which seeks to separate foreign and domestic policy as many South African policy makers would have us believe, it is rather one where the domestic context of policy formulation has become fully integrated into the policy system itself. The 'New Diplomacy' in so far as it is in essence a response to external stimuli is ominously silent on these matters. this does not auger well for the future.

#### IV. THE REGION AND SOUTH AFRICA'S ROLE IN IT

An aspect of normalisation that has been a central concern of 'New Diplomacy' is South Africa's role in the region. It is a common assumption, especially amongst Machiavellians who are enthralled with what Deon Geldenhuys calls 'giantism'<sup>20</sup>, that South Africa as the economic superpower will inevitably play a dominant and self-willed role in shaping the contours of security, co-operation and development throughout much of the sub-Saharan region. That whoever formulates policy in future, geo-political and economic realities dictate that South Africa will automatically gravitate towards its 'natural' role as regional hegemon: that of the giant in a small room.

Overlying this thesis is the belief that the giant will be a gentle one; that the new South Africa will be a beneficial and benevolent force in the neighbourhood. Once 'apartheid' has been replaced by 'togetherness'<sup>21</sup>, the bully-boy on the bloc will be transformed into the genial policeman-cum-social worker who maintains order and dispenses largesse and aid in equal measure to all and sundry without fear or favour.

Both Mr. Neil van Heerden and Mr. Thabo Mbeki<sup>22</sup> share this idealist vision of harmonious and non-exploitive relations with their neighbours. Mr. van Heerden's inspiration derives from liberal ideas about 'the harmony of interests' doctrine, which assume that rational calculation of interest, within an overall framework of market economics, ensures that 'the national interest' and 'the international interest' become one and the same.<sup>23</sup> Thabo Mbeki, on the other hand, reaches the same general conclusion through a Marxist/Leninist prism maintaining that the downfall of imperialism will usher in a society of like-minded states which will be free of conflict since there is general agreement on matters of ideology, resource allocation and development. Both Pretoria and the ANC agree that the region can be made safe for democracy, and that the new South Africa will play a crucial role in the process.

Are these assumptions justified? Will South Africa emerge as the engine-room for regional development and growth? And if so, how will it treat its neighbours?

It could well be argued that contrary to popular belief, a post-apartheid South Africa will in all likelihood be a net *recipient* of aid rather than a more or less benevolent *donor* of it.<sup>24</sup> Given the present parlous state of its economy and bearing in mind the awesome costs of internal reconstruction, the pressing priority for any government must be to redress the imbalances created by over

a century of colonialism and apartheid. A major foreign policy aim of future governments would thus be to restore South Africa's investment attractiveness to the West and to open up credit facilities with the IMF and World Bank.

Part of the rationale of this would inevitably involve regional co-operation in trade and resource development, but it is difficult to envisage that its primary purpose would be anything other than domestic economic uplift and nation-building. Even the ANC must now recognise that the honouring of promises made to neighbours in the wilderness of exile will of necessity be subordinated to satisfying the minimum basic demands of the majority of South Africans. As Sipho Shezi points out, the ANC in the transition from liberation movement to government will have to cast off the rhetoric and ideological preferences built up in the days of Cold War politics, and embrace a political and economic pragmatism which a mere two years ago would have been an unthinkable deviation. The demands of its own internal constituency reinforced by its understandable fear of being overtaken by events combine to place the organisation under great duress with respect to sustaining traditional foreign policy perspectives.<sup>25</sup>

Further, putting one's own house in order while simultaneously acting as 'good neighbour' will inevitably be complicated by threatening cross-boundary issues such as migration and AIDS. Indeed, these two factors could well become the overwhelming 'security dilemma' of the new South Africa. In which case 'open-door' policies connected with concessionary or affirmative regional economic co-operation would become the first casualty of the ANC's difficult trek down from the moral high ground of exile politics.<sup>26</sup>

No one doubts that South Africa is the natural regional hegemon and in the long term perhaps this is likely to be beneficial to its neighbours – especially with regard to technological transfers and resource development. But in the short term, despite probable membership of SADCC and the OAU, pre-occupation with the demands of internal reconstruction is likely to orientate foreign policy towards covert forms of manipulation and dominance. Despite a presumption in favour of equality with its neighbours, a new majority-rule government, perhaps after a brief honeymoon period, would be unable to resist the obvious benefits of being the key player in local balance of power politics. This would not preclude regional co-operation or the creation of an integrated trading bloc, but this is bound to be on South Africa's terms. In the absence of an external force, the role of manipulating 'balances' seems to be pre-ordained, whoever occupies the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

The Nationalist Party has since 1948, sought to lock the neighbouring states into Pretoria's orbit – this after all was the purpose of the 'constellation of states' (CONSAS) – but was prevented from doing so by a combination of regional and global pressures. The disappearance of apartheid and the absence of compellence from outside, now makes this goal a realizable one. It is extremely unlikely that a reconstructed ANC in office, would be able to resist the temptation to lord it over the neighbouring states, who for all their sound and fury regarding the white-ruled state, invariably regarded their own particular interests as paramount. It is unlikely to forget that even in intra-African international organizations like the OAU, it was never accorded the status it sought: that of sole authentic representative of South Africa.<sup>27</sup>

Special consideration may for a time be given to the needs of some of its neighbours – perhaps Zambia, Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique and Namibia – but these relationships are unlikely to be sustained on sentiment alone. Like all states, the new South Africa will, in the final analysis, base its international relations on interest, capability and reciprocity. After all, its one of the very few truisms of world politics that neither ideological affinity nor emotional attachment will preserve 'special relationships' for long unless they are firmly grounded in a bedrock of mutual interest.<sup>28</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined a number of assumptions commonly held about South Africa's foreign policy in the post-apartheid period. In particular, it questions the extent to which the 'new political dispensation' has an external as well as internal dimension. The much vaunted 'New Diplomacy' is neither particularly new, nor does it involve a significant deviation from South Africa's traditional regional and international objectives. The transitional period – which in all likelihood will be a lengthy process – has not so far witnessed any sustained or coherent re-examination of prevailing assumptions and perspectives even though developments during this critical phase are likely to have long term effects for the region as a whole and South Africa's place in it. The competitive model of national security retains its appeal for Pretoria despite high sounding rhetoric about greater interdependence and neighbourly co-operation. In addition, the concept of the 'national interest' has not been extended to include interests other than those of the dominant white elite and the decision-making community is still an exclusive one. Before South Africa can 'normalise' its international relations (assuming that such a thing is at all possible) there must be structural changes in orientation and agenda formulation.

At a time when the West is more and more pre-occupied with what might be called 'Out of Africa' affairs, it is vital that Southern Africa as a whole restores its investment attractiveness and moves towards the creation of a coherent, self-contained regional trading bloc. South Africa's role in this will obviously be crucial.<sup>29</sup>

To remove foreign policy – at least in terms of this broad objective – from the area of essentially contested values, will involve significant shifts in orientation on both sides. So far this does not appear to be happening. At first glance, Mr. van Heerden's 'New Diplomacy' seems to be a gesture in this direction; on closer examination it is little more than power politics in disguise. The ANC for its part is still wedded to a Marxist-Leninist vision of international relations and has not yet adjusted to the profound structural changes that have occurred throughout the international system. On this evidence, a consensual or a bipartisan approach to foreign policy still awaits an internal settlement.

For the best part of thirty years South Africa has projected itself globally in two distinct and disparate directions, and up until recently the ANC's international policy was arguably the most effective. Certainly, South Africa's pariah status in the international community has much to do with effective lobbying on the part of the ANC's International Department. The reversal of fortunes during this transitional period, where the government has taken the initiative away from the opposition, especially regarding the issue of sanctions and the extension of diplomatic contacts with the outside world, has, for the moment at least, thrown the ANC into disarray and confusion.

In the meantime, the continuing 'competition'<sup>30</sup> between the policies of the formal and informal office-holders as to which side in the run-up to the post-apartheid state is best equipped to deal with the outside world, is bound to be damaging to South Africa's long term interests and especially the quest to normalise its international relations.

So, what are South Africa's foreign policy options for the 1990s? Assuming a reasonably stable transition to majority-rule and allowing for early membership of SADCC and the OAU, South Africa is likely to be a powerful regional player in sub-Saharan politics. As we have seen, its a widespread and not unreasonable assumption that, in its immediate locale at least, it is the 'natural' hegemon. However, despite what Saatchi and Saatchi might want us to believe, 'natural' does not necessarily mean 'good'. A more plausible definition of this context is 'pertaining to the state of nature'. In which case the removal

of apartheid might well become something of a mixed blessing for the neighbouring states; in the same way perhaps as the unification of Germany might not altogether be good news for peripheral Western European states, like the U.K. But whatever the future holds (barring disintegration of course), South Africa will not only continue to be the leading protagonist in the region, it will also to a large extent assume the prerogative of writing the script.<sup>31</sup>

On the global level, it is safe to assume that the new South Africa will not as a matter of deliberate choice opt for a policy of isolationism. South Africa will not exchange enforced isolation for self-isolationism.<sup>32</sup> South Africa will not exchange enforced isolation for self-willed isolation. The new Republic, like the old one will desperately seek to play a prominent part in regional affairs as well as integrate fully into the international community. The precise form or structure that integration takes may be problematic, but all visions of South Africa's future foreign policy role coalesce around the notion of full participation in international affairs. Isolationism, whether of the 'splendid' variety or not, will not be a likely orientation for any future administration. In this respect there will be *continuity* (in the sense that the 'New' will have the same basic desires as the 'Old') and *change* (in the sense that some of those objectives will not be realizable).

While South Africa will in all likelihood play active roles in the Commonwealth and the U.N. – probably as a spokesman for Third World concerns in the areas of wealth and technology transfers – it is not at all clear, despite what some commentators allege<sup>33</sup>, that the Non-Aligned Movement will be its natural home. In so far as non-alignment was a resistance movement against attempts to produce carbon copies of NATO or the Warsaw Pact in the Third World after 1949, the demise of Cold War politics has clearly rendered it anachronistic. By definition the non-aligned position is inappropriate in the context of wealth-welfare, North-South issues since its rationale is a rejection of the system of competitive groupings established around the Cold War confrontation zones in the post-1945 bipolar system. In this sense, non-alignment as an orientation is only relevant to military/security questions and, even within that category, to threats posed externally from outside the state by the activities of the superpowers and their allies. Accordingly, the value of non-alignment as a policy option has been severely circumscribed by the collapse of communism and the withering away of Cold War structures. In so far as non-alignment continues to be a relevant approach to world politics, it will, unless radically restructured, revert to being merely a quaint taxonomy or label for a large but very divisive group of states.<sup>34</sup> So until its rationale has been reconsidered (and South Africa might well play an important part in this), non-

alignment as presently understood, is not a particularly gainful international posture. The same applies to a variant of this idea - 'positive neutralism'. Indeed, recent experience regarding the impact of the Gulf War within the Republic suggests that the new South Africa, whatever amalgam of interests its foreign policy might represent, will be hard put to maintain the political and ideological indifference to, or aloofness from, global issues that his kind of neutralism implies.

In sum, South Africa's future role in world politics in the medium to long term is bound to be conditioned and constrained by its success at the local and regional levels. Within sub-Saharan Africa and in the Southern Atlantic and Indian Ocean it will obviously be a positive and probably decisive presence. And by virtue of the special responsibilities it assumes at this sub-systemic level, it could well aspire to a leadership role in South-South relations and perhaps an intercessionary position regarding North-South encounters. In the short term though, its foreign policy choices will inevitably reflect the economic costs and the social consequences of the quest for growth and adjustment to the demands of the reallocation and redistribution of available resources within the state. In this regard, although the absence of a competitive regional counterweight might appear to give it a relatively free hand, this does not mean that the new South Africa begins its external life with the proverbial diplomatic 'carte blanche'. The inescapable priority will be the search for internal political stability allied to, or growing out of, economic growth. In this way the primacy of domestic politics is likely to mitigate against adventurous or heroic foreign policy postures that do not directly contribute to the amelioration of the social and economic injustices inherited from and bequeathed by the 'ancien regime'.

## ENDNOTES

1. John Barratt, 'Current Constraints and Opportunities on South Africa's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy', p.1.
2. For the contrast between the two approaches see Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1977, pp.23-37.
3. See M. Hough, 'National Security and Strategic Doctrine in the RSA', *Paratus*, Oct., 1990, p.54.
4. For a broader discussion of these issues see especially Peter Mangold, *National Security and International Relations*, Routledge, London 1990.
5. *Southern Africa: The New Diplomacy*, Embassy of South Africa publication, Washington D.C., 1990, p.17.

Also Neil van Heerden, *Developments in Southern Africa*, Occasional Paper, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, Dec. 1990.

6. See van Heerden above.
7. For an interesting perspective on this see Christopher Coker, 'Experiencing Southern Africa in the twenty-first century', *International Affairs*, Vol.67, No.2, April 1991, pp.281-292.
8. John Barratt, p.2. See also Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, *The Dictionary of World Politics, A Reference Guide to Concepts, Ideas and Institutions*, Harvester and Wheatsheaf, 1990, p.88.
9. John Barratt, p.4. This theme forms the conceptual framework of James Barber and John Barratt's seminal study, *South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security 1945-1988*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
10. Peter Vale, 'Points of Re-entry: Prospects for a post-apartheid Foreign Policy', p.19.

11. Peter Vale, p.11.
12. John Barratt, p.12. Also André du Pisani, 'The Role of New States in the Region: The Namibian Example' (unpublished paper presented to the Leicester Conference, 20-22 March 1991).
13. See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5th ed. Knopf, New York, 1973. Also, *In Defence of the national Interest*, Knopf, New York, 1951.
14. See for example, J.E. Spence, *Republic Under Pressure*, Chatham House Essays No.9, Oxford Univ. Press, 1965.
15. James Barber and John Barratt, *op.cit. Introduction*, pp.1-12.
16. John Barratt, p.16.
17. Peter Vale, p.3.
18. See Evans and Newnham, *Dictionary, op.cit.*, p.123 for an elaboration of this notion.
19. This point arose in response to André du Pisani's paper. See Note 12.
20. See for example, Simon Baynham, 'Defence and Security Issues in a Transitional South Africa', *International Affairs Bulletin*, Vol.14, No.3, 1990, p.6.
21. The term is P.J. O'Rourke's. See *Holidays in Hell*, Picador Books, London 1989, pp.166-186.
22. N. van Heerden, *Developments in Southern Africa, op.cit.*, Thabo Mbeki, 'Domestic and Foreign Policies of a New South Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, No.11, (Jan-April 1978).
23. For a robust critique of the 'harmony of interests' doctrine see E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939*, Macmillan, London, 2nd Edition, 1946, pp.41-62.
24. Peter Vale, p.3.

25. Siphso Shezi, 'The African National Congress's Approach to Foreign Policy', pp.25-26.
26. The twin issues of Migration (economic and political) and AIDS of course, may not be unconnected, and as Professor Jack Spence suggested, they should not be seen (exclusively) as problems of *African* threat perception. These issues will loom large in First World threat-assessment exercises in the near future. However, the problem is likely to be especially acute for South Africa since in all probability the post-apartheid state will act as a magnet for 'the best and brightest' (Vale, p.10) of the region. If this does occur, the ANC in particular, will face difficult choices in respect of 'open door' policies versus tight immigration control. It may well be that we have not heard the last of the 'hedge of bitter almonds' in South Africa's history, though this time it may derive from a hitherto unsuspected source.
27. See Scott Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation: The International Relations of the African National Congress of South Africa, 1960-1985*. Unpublished PhD. Thesis, University of London, October 1989.
28. See Evans and Newnham, *Dictionary*, op.cit., p.371.
29. Discussing the impact on Africa a post-apartheid South Africa might have, Peter Vale quotes General Olusegun Obusango's observation that Africa was rapidly becoming 'the Third World's Third World' (Vale, p.14). This phrase of course, was popularised by V.S. Naipaul in 1973 when he used it to refer to the plight of the Caribbean States. See Peter Worsley, 'How Many Worlds?', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.2, p.104, April 1979.
30. See John Barratt, p.16.
31. I owe this point to André du Pisani.
32. For a similar analysis, though with different conclusions, see Deon Geldenhuys, 'South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy', *South Africa Foundation Review*, Vol.16, No.12, Dec. 1990, p.2.
33. *Ibid.*, p.2. Also Peter Vale, p.3.
34. See Evans and Newnham, *Dictionary*, p.277.