

**MA in International Politics**

**Foreign policy, public diplomacy and the media:  
The case of South Africa,  
with specific reference to the denial of visas to the Dalai Lama**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study illustrates the link between foreign policy, public diplomacy and the media, with reference to the South African Government's refusal in 2009 and 2011 to issue visas to the Dalai Lama. The research question is: How do the South African media frame foreign policy and how do administrators react to this actuality? As there seems to be a void in South African international political communications, this is where this study purports to contribute. The aim is to investigate how the media frames foreign policy, specifically regarding the case study. Therefore, the media, human rights and foreign policies, and the diplomatic practices of the South African government are studied. The objective is not necessarily to prove or disprove the causal effect of media and public opinion on foreign policy but rather to illustrate the interaction between these elements in the case of the South African government's denial of visas to the Dalai Lama.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AASROC	Asian-African Sub-Regional Organisations Conference
AMPS	All Media Products Survey
ANC	African National Congress
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
BLA	Black Lawyers' Association
BrandSA	Brand South Africa
BRIC	Brazil-Russia-India-China
BRICS	Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa
CNN	Cable News Network
COPE	Congress of the People
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
DA	Democratic Alliance
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DStv	Digital Satellite Television
DTPC	Desmond Tutu Peace Centre
EU	European Union
FF+	Freedom Front Plus
FIFA	<i>Fédération Internationale de Football Association</i>
G20	Group of 20
G8	Group of 8
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNU	Government of National Unity
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSF	Helen Suzman Foundation

IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
IBSA	India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum
ICTS	International Cooperation, Trade and Security Cluster
ID	Independent Democrats
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IGD	Institute for Global Dialogue
IMC	International Marketing Council
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
LOC	Local Organising Committee
LSM	Living Standard Measurement
MAT	Media Appeals Tribunal
MDDA	Media Development and Diversity Agency
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MP	Member of Parliament
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NASPERS	Nasionale Pers
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODAC	Open Democracy Advice Centre of South Africa
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act
PDU	Public Diplomacy Unit
PIB	Protection of Information Bill
PSIB	Protection of State Information Bill
PSL	Premier Soccer League
R2K	Right2Know Campaign
SAARF	South African Audience Research Foundation
REC	Regional Economic Community
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation

SACP	South African Communist Party
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAFT	South African Friends of Tibet
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SAJBD	South African Jewish Board of Deputies
SANEF	South African National Editors' Forum
SAPA	South African Press Agency
SAPS	South African Police Service
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TNS	Taylor Nelson Sofres
TSSA	Tibet Society of South Africa
UDM	United Democratic Movement
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Introduction

Writing about constructing a post-apartheid foreign policy, Nelson Mandela on the eve of the 1994 general elections, stated that human rights would be “the light that guides South Africa’s foreign policy” (DFA, 1993).<sup>1</sup> This set the tone for South Africa’s foreign policy in the aftermath of apartheid.

Special attention was paid to Southern Africa, believing that South Africa could not remain “an island of prosperity in a sea of poverty”<sup>2</sup> and that greater involvement in the region could help promote growth and development in both South and Southern Africa. Active internationalism, primarily through multilateral institutions, was another feature of post-apartheid foreign policy. In particular African-based institutions and organisations with a ‘South’ orientation were seen as proper vehicles for the promotion of a reformist agenda reflecting South Africa’s interests in democratic practice and development (DFA, 1993).

Since 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) Government identified the promotion of human rights as a primary focus of its foreign policy (DFA, 2005). The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) spelt out South Africa's foreign policy principles.<sup>3</sup> These are a commitment to:

- the promotion of human rights;
- the promotion of democracy;
- justice and international law in the conduct of relations between nations;

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson Mandela became South Africa’s first post-apartheid democratic president and served only one term, from 1994 until 1999.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase, island of prosperity in a sea of poverty, not attributed to anyone in particular, is used in reference to a number of situations, including with regard to South Africa in relation to its neighbours.

<sup>3</sup> The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), established in 1927, was renamed the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) in 2009.

- international peace and internationally agreed-upon mechanisms for conflict resolution;
- the interests of Africa in world affairs; and
- economic development through regional and international cooperation in an interdependent world (DFA, 2005).

Despite these lofty ideals, South Africa's approach to human rights in its foreign policy, stemming from, for example, the stance the country adopted on human rights abuses by the government of President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe; South African positions as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) from 2007 to 2008 and again from 2011 to 2012, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and the decision to twice decline a visa to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to visit South Africa, put the country's commitment to a human rights-based foreign policy in question (SAIIA, 2009).<sup>4</sup>

In answer to a 2007 parliamentary question as to whether the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, would give a similar commitment to human rights in foreign affairs, the Minister confirmed that there had been "no change in the fundamental underpinnings of our foreign policy since the advent of our democracy in 1994" and that "our stand on human rights is still the same" (DFA 2007).<sup>5</sup> This being the case, the South African Government can therefore be held accountable in terms of this stated position (SAIIA, 2009).

One of the instruments employed by the South African Government to conduct its foreign policy is diplomacy (DFA, 2011). Most governments today embrace public diplomacy, at least publicly, as a particular type and practice of diplomacy (Melissen, 2011). One of the instruments used to conduct public diplomacy is the media, referred to as the "centralised mass-media approach" to public diplomacy (Nye, 2012). Governments need to correct daily misrepresentations of their policies and try to convey a longer-term strategic message (Nye, 2012). This study will scrutinise the South African government's efforts to explain its policy with regard to the non-

<sup>4</sup> "Dalai" is a Mongolian word meaning "ocean" and "Lama" is a Tibetan term corresponding to the Indian word "guru" or teacher (Chökyi 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma served as South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1999 to 2009 (<http://www.inspiringwomen.co.za/>)



approval of a visa to the Dalai Lama, also in terms of its wider foreign policy objectives.

The main strength of the mass-media approach is its audience reach, ability to generate public awareness and set the agenda (Nye, 2012). There is thus a link between foreign policy, public diplomacy and the media. How a government goes about conducting relations with the media can result in either good or tense dealings with the media.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) explained in its Annual Report 2011/12 that the purpose of the Public Diplomacy Branch was to communicate South Africa's role and position in international relations in the domestic and international arenas (DIRCO, 2012: 92). Its strategic objective was to provide public diplomacy direction nationally and internationally. The department also sought to strengthen its public engagements through the various public diplomacy platforms it coordinated nationally and internationally (DIRCO, 2012: 92).

The broader focus was on promoting South Africa's image. DIRCO, in its public diplomacy activities, focused on the media, non-governmental organisations and civil society through media statements, interviews with political principals and conducting regular outreach and public participation programmes throughout the country. Outreach programmes provided political principals with opportunities to articulate and clarify South Africa's foreign policy. Particular attention was paid to the use of social media to convey South Africa's foreign policy positions (DIRCO, 2012: 92).

The link between foreign policy, public diplomacy and the media in South Africa is clearly illustrated in the decision of the South African Government to refuse a visa to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, the exiled leader of Chinese-occupied Tibet, on two occasions.<sup>6</sup> Around March 2009, the South African Government refused a visa to the Dalai Lama. A similar decision followed in October 2011. There was wide local and international media coverage, mostly critical of the decisions of the South African Government not to grant visas to the Dalai Lama, especially in view of the

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<sup>6</sup> Reference to the Dalai Lama in this study, refers to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

fact that the Dalai Lama is globally recognised as a human rights campaigner and has been in exile since the Tibetan uprising in 1959 (Asian History, 2009).

Media reaction was amplified by the context of the refusals. In 2009, the Dalai Lama was invited to attend a peace conference linked to the 2010 *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) World Cup, which South Africa was to host in June 2010. The conference was scheduled to be held in Johannesburg in March 2009 (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 21/3/2009). The second visa refusal followed an invitation to attend the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations of anti-apartheid activist and Nobel Laureate Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in October 2011 (*Pretoria News*, 30/8/2011).

Against the aforesaid, the aim of this study is to illustrate the link between foreign policy, public diplomacy and the media, with specific reference to the South African Government's refusal on these occasions to issue visas to the Dalai Lama to visit the country. The aim is not necessarily to prove or disprove the causal effect of media opinion on foreign policy, but to investigate how the media frames and analyses South African foreign policy and very specifically regarding the matter investigated in the case study. Any cause and effect discovered in the course of the study would be incidental. While government policies would be studied as a point of departure, as a specific example of the interaction between government and the media, this incident serves as a case study especially as such a wide field of study would have to be limited to a certain point of focus.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama is considered both the Head of State and the spiritual leader of Tibet. Born in 1935 to a farming family in Amdo, north-eastern Tibet, he was recognised as the reincarnation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama at the age of two. Dalai Lamas are believed to be enlightened beings who have postponed their own nirvana and chosen to take rebirth in order to serve humanity (Dalailama, undated). By the time he was recognised as the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, the Chinese had control of Amdo (Tenzin, undated). A regent was appointed while the Dalai Lama was still a minor. However, in 1950, at 16 years old, he was forced to assume full political power during a crisis precipitated by the Chinese Communist invasion (Tenzin, undated).

In 1954, he was invited to Beijing where he and his party met Chinese leaders intent on convincing them they would be better off under Chinese rule (Tenzin, undated). In 1959, the Tibetans rebelled, the Chinese repressed the uprising and the Dalai Lama fled to neighbouring India. He established a democratic government-in-exile to work for the freedom of Tibet and the welfare of Tibetan refugees. Three United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolutions were passed in 1959, 1961 and 1965 respectively, condemning China for "violations of the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people". In August 1991, after the violent repression of political demonstrations in Lhasa, the UN again passed a resolution, criticising Chinese policies in Tibet and calling on the Chinese "to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people" (Tibet Society, 2013).

The Dalai Lama has travelled the world, seeking support for the Tibetan cause and sharing his belief in kindness and compassion, as the ultimate solution to personal and political conflict (Tenzin, undated). Since his first visit to the West in 1973, he has met many world leaders, members of European royalty and civic and religious leaders, including His Holiness Pope John Paul II. The Dalai Lama has addressed the United States (US) Congress, the European Parliament and innumerable university, inter-faith and civic gatherings (Tibet Society, 2013).

From a Tibetan perspective, Tibet successfully avoided undue foreign influence and acted as a fully independent state from 1911 to 1950 (Tenzin, 1996). The turning point in its history came in 1949, when the People's Liberation Army of the People's Republic of China (PRC) first crossed into Tibet. The Chinese Government, in 1951, imposed a "17-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" on the Tibetan Government. Signed under duress, Tibetans feel the agreement lacks validity under international law (Tenzin, 1996).

By 1959, popular uprisings culminated in massive demonstrations in Lhasa (Tenzin, 1996). By the time China crushed the uprising, the Dalai Lama had fled to India, where he resides with the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. In 1963, the Dalai Lama promulgated a constitution for a democratic Tibet. Tibetans consider their country to be an independent state under illegal occupation and they believe that neither

China's military invasion nor the continuing occupation by the People's Liberation Army had transferred the sovereignty of Tibet to China (Tenzin, 1996).

## **2. Literature review**

In compiling this literature review a wide range of sources was studied, bearing in mind all the aspects considered in the study, namely issues of foreign policy, diplomacy, public diplomacy and communication. This was done to ensure extensive coverage of the theme, even across disciplines and subjects. The major aim was to establish whether there was a niche for a study of this kind. The finding was that the two disciplines of foreign policy and/or public diplomacy have seldom been combined in a study in the South African context. Much more has been written by international scholars on foreign policy theory, as it is an established study field.

Holsti (1991: 195-198), for example, proposed the following models founded on problems in the foreign policy milieu: foreign policy reduced to the problems related to the security dilemma; the policy maker as an achiever of goals; and foreign policy based on the perspective of problem solving. States then are faced with four problems: autonomy, prosperity, security and regime maintenance. There is also a fifth, state creation, for many developing states.

The use of soft power as a foreign policy alternative, suggests that when a state can get others to admire its ideals and want what it wants, it does not have to use sticks and carrots to move them in its direction (Nye, 2004). Seduction, therefore, according to Nye (2004), is more effective than coercion, and values like democracy, human rights and individual opportunities are deeply seductive.

Palmer (2006: 1) attempted to determine why states did what they did in their dealings with others and considered foreign policy in terms of portfolios; adopted a general perspective of foreign policy designed to all states at all times; and assumed that states pursued two goals through their foreign policies – to protect things that they value and try to alter things in the international system they dislike.

Another scholar, Lentner (1974: 113), classified the means of foreign policy as political, diplomatic, informational, economic and military. Informational means being those communications that occurred between the official sender of one state to the population, or a segment of the population, in another state. The difference in the receiving side of the communication distinguished informational means from diplomatic means. Informational means included the use of mass media – newspapers, radio and television.

Political communication scholars have developed two major approaches to understanding the government-media nexus in foreign policy. These approaches are hegemony and indexing (Entman, 2004). Indexing theorists maintain that when elites disagree about foreign policy, the media reflect the discord in ways that affect foreign policy; this means the role of the media, though limited, transcends mere transmission of propaganda, as proposed by the hegemony theorists.

King & Wells (2009: 16) propose that with regard to the government-media nexus three expounding approaches can study the institutions, actors and processes that decide the winners, losers and discourses of contemporary politics: the hegemony, indexing and cascade models. The hegemony model holds that ruling elites work persistently to ensure consent to the established political order and its main ideology through the creation and dissemination of meanings and values. They endeavour to construct political and cultural accord through influence rather than compulsion (using “cultural workers”, especially the media) to replicate, signify and restore their emergent world view and its perspective on any issue or event (King & Wells 2009: 17). The indexing model also highlights the constrained character of political discourse, but puts elite differences at its core. According to its supporters, political elites often differ about public policies and their execution. When such disagreements occur, media outlets supply the vehicle to convey the conflicting views. The greater the dissension, the more these disagreements are presented in news reports. Thus the media calibrate or index their reporting to the level of ‘dissensus’ (King & Wells 2009: 18). The cascade model examines the information flow of political narratives as the spread from centres of power to the rest of society (King & Wells 2009: 18 & 19). It tries to clarify how it ‘cascades’ descending through the different levels of the information system – from government elites, to news

organisations, by way of media news frames, to the general public. It is especially in synch with the struggle for narrative dominance, or frame contests, between the government's frame of events or issues and the rival perspectives of political opponents.

Since 1994, an abundance of writings on South Africa in the international political context emerged. It can be said that for the ANC the struggle for an apartheid-free South Africa was in many ways a struggle for human rights (Alden & Aran, 2003: 8). It was therefore no coincidence that human rights were 'canonised' as a corner stone of foreign policy. There was thus a logical symmetry between the ethical and normative constructs of the new domestic policies and the idealist foundations of its foreign policies. The new South Africa hence sought to play an activist role in international affairs.

Broderick, Burford and Freer (2001: 5) also considered South Africa's foreign policy dilemmas during the first decade after apartheid; they concurred that the defence and assertion of human rights featured prominently in debates in the early declaration of South Africa's future foreign policy. This had to be seen especially against the background of the "new South Africa" being partly the creation of a massive human rights campaign.<sup>7</sup> The ethical dimension to South Africa's foreign policy aspirations would, however, create problems regarding the country's relations with so-called "rogue states" such as Cuba, Iraq and Iran.

Landsberg (undated) analysed South Africa's policy agenda for the African continent to establish whether South Africa had been successful in meeting the stated goals of the African Agenda over the first 15 years after apartheid and what the challenges were for the next decade. He explained that the African Agenda was based on the understanding that socio-economic development could not take place without political peace and stability and that these were prerequisites for socio-economic development.

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<sup>7</sup> The term "new South Africa" is generally referred to as post-apartheid South Africa and is not ascribed to any one particular person.

Nel & Van der Westhuizen (2003: 9) investigated how far South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy could serve as a model for the rest of the continent and asked how much democracy there had been in South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy. He described the government's attitude to governing as "guardianship," meaning that the government acted alongside the perceived interests of the people, rather than allowing politics by the people (Nel, 2003: 34). It was concluded that South African citizens had good reason to have a sense of "powerlessness and impotence" regarding their government's foreign policy making (Nel, 2003: 169). Internationalisation and trans-nationalisation of foreign policy were cited as inhibiting factors, but it was argued that "the singular failure of the South African state ... to adequately provide avenues for democratic participation in policy making has exacerbated the sense of powerlessness and impotence" (Nel, 2003: 169).

Van Wyk (2004: 105) also considered South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy and explained the constructivist approach: that state identities were constructed not made.

Much has also been published about communication. Internationally, Jowett and O'Donnell (2006: 7) wrote about propaganda and defined it as the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthered the desired intent of the propagandist. It was explained that propaganda was *deliberate* in that it was wilful, intentional and predetermined. It was *systematic* as it was precise and methodical and carried out with organised regularity. Propaganda was also an attempt at directive communication with a prior objective (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006: 8). It further attempted to shape perceptions through language and images.

Van Schoor (1977: 1) contended that the basis of human communication was the imparting and deciphering of messages, from which the communication structure could be deduced. The source deliberately sent a message (Van Schoor, 1977: 13-26). The message needed to be given a sensory observable stature, which was referred to as the encoding of the message. Such a code of signs institutionalised in a community was a medium of communication. Communication did not end at the delivery of the message and encoding thereof by the communicator. The message

first had to be received and interpreted by the receiver. He decoded the message and could become so actively involved in the process, that he reacted by sending a new message of his own. The receiver then became the new source (Van Schoor, 1977: 13-26).

International academics have also written about political communications. Entman (2004: 2), for example, suggested that in practice the relationship between governing elites and news organisations was less distant and more cooperative than the ideal envisioned, especially in foreign affairs. He explained that the question was really one of degree: Just how close is the association? Does it become cosier in some conditions than in others? How exactly is this relationship reflected in the news? What are the effects on foreign policy and democratic accountability?

O’Heffernan (1991: 89) contended that the media’s role as a check on official governmental information provided them with power, based both on fear and usefulness. According to policy-makers, the media helped to keep other agencies honest or provided information which indicated when they were not honest. Policy makers admitted that it hurt when the same reporting zeal was applied to their own outputs. Media was needed as an output to communicate with and influence other nations and segments of the foreign policy community.

Miller (2007: 3) quoted commentators expressing concern about the dangers of a media-dictated foreign policy, as it increased the pressure on politicians to react promptly to news accounts that were incomplete by nature, without context and often inaccurate. He noted that realist critics had decried the “CNN (Cable News Network) effect” calling for elite control of foreign policy (Miller, 2007: 11-12).<sup>8</sup> The foreign policy community did, however, become more sensitive to the notion of humanitarian intervention and called for a more ethical foreign policy. As a result, there had been greater appreciation among policy makers and advisers regarding the beneficial role of the news media. Notwithstanding these developments, the established tone within

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<sup>8</sup> The CNN Effect refers to where television's instantly transmitted images fire public opinion, demanding instant responses from government officials, almost immediately shaping and reshaping foreign policy (Strobel 1996).



foreign policy circles tended to revolve around concern about the damaging impact of coverage on sound policy making.

It is, therefore, clear that international and local academics writing about communications, and even international academics writing about political communications have produced a significant body of work. There is, however, a void in the area of South African international political communications. This is where this study purports to make a contribution. Although the media reported extensively on South Africa's refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama, according to the Sabinet database during the conduct of this research, no academic dissertations or theses had been completed on the matter.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Importance of the research and the research question**

The South African Government's refusal of the Dalai Lama's visa applications is important for several reasons. In the first instance, it contradicts the South African Government's stated human rights-based foreign policy. The South African Government, like other governments, is often criticised for taking certain policy positions. South Africa's 2007 decision to join Russia and China to veto the UNSC resolution to condemn Chinese oppression in Myanmar, while serving as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, serves as one example.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, it raises questions about the conduct of South Africa's diplomacy. John Herskowitz writing for *Reuters* (10/10/2011) said that Africa's biggest economy had already shown that it cast "a tiny foreign policy shadow" and the "diplomatic debacle" over a visa for the Dalai Lama had likely further diminished its stature by showing how easily it could be "bullied", citing the Chinese influence on South Africa. *Daily Maverick* (3/1/2011), an independent South African publication, concurred saying it was the Chinese influence on South Africa that was bemoaned when a delay in processing a visa application of the Dalai Lama caused him to cancel his trip.

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<sup>9</sup> Sabinet facilitates access to electronic information (Sabinet 2013).

<sup>10</sup> South Africa twice served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, from 2007 to 2008 and again from 2011 to 2012 (Cilliers *et al.* 2010).

Thirdly, it raises questions about certain constitutional guarantees in South Africa. Prof Loyiso Nongxa, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand, expressed dismay in 2011, saying South Africans had a moral obligation to provide a platform for all voices to be heard, including the voice of the Dalai Lama (*News24*, 4/10/2011). The university condemned the state for again not granting a visa for this “stalwart of peace” to enter the country. He argued that the state's deliberate indecision ridiculed the values pertaining to freedom of speech, expression and movement enshrined in the Constitution (Act 106 of 1996) (hereafter the Constitution) (*News24*, 4/10/2011).

With regard to the role of the media in South Africa, the head of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, Prof Guy Berger, observed that, in practice, the South African media was prepared to “speak truth to power” and confront abuses (*iol*, 1/1/2010).

Whereas post-apartheid South Africa enjoys unprecedented media freedom, espoused in the Constitution and legislation to this effect, the media's response to the government's foreign policy and actions often caused some tension between government and the media. The proposed Protection of Information Bill (PIB)/ Protection of State Information Bill (PSIB) and Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT), as well as the appointment of perceived as less-than-media-friendly Cabinet spokesperson/Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jimmy Manyi, contributed to an even more volatile relationship.<sup>11</sup> At the end of Manyi's tenure, political analyst Zamikhaya Maseti said that those who were behind his appointment should take the blame for the poor state of the GCIS and its hostile relationship with the media under his leadership (*Mail & Guardian*, 27/8/2012).

The South African media is well-established and sophisticated, comprising print media (newspapers and magazines), broadcast media (radio and television) and electronic media (Internet) (Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa [OSISA], 2010:

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<sup>11</sup> Parliament passed the PSIB in April 2013 after three years of debate and redrafting, but opponents signalled a court challenge is still on the cards (*Mail & Guardian* 25/4/2013).

19).<sup>12</sup> Though South Africa has a wide-ranging media and media-publishing sector, many South Africans in remote rural areas still do not have access to a diverse range of information.

Finally, it raises questions about the relations between China and South Africa as China has been accused of “Dalai Lama Economics” (*Mail & Guardian*, 7/10/2011). China is a permanent member of the UNSC and one of South Africa’s largest trading partners (GCIS, 2012). It was speculated from the outset that the South African Government had bowed to pressure from China not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 21/3/2009). South Africa initially denied that China had influenced its decision to bar the Dalai Lama from entering South Africa (*Pretoria News*, 23/3/2009), insisting that his presence (*Pretoria News*, 24/3/2009) would divert the attention of the country and the world from the 2010 FIFA World Cup and that he was welcome to visit South Africa, but not then.

It was later conceded that South African interests would be better served by ensuring relations with China were not jeopardised (*The Mercury*, 24/3/2009). The South African Government was widely criticised for its decision and the media described it as a “disgrace” and an “embarrassment” concluding that the government believed that sticking to the spirit of the Constitution and abiding by a commitment to international human rights was less in South Africa’s interests than “kowtowing” to “dictators” and “big brothers” (*Weekend Argus*, 22/3/2009).

The research question of a study presents the idea to be examined (Harber, undated: 28). Social scientists aim to explain what would cause something to happen, although the complexity of human behaviour impedes the development of causal explanations (Mill, 1874: 586). Researchers do however think in terms of “cause and effect” when setting up a problem for investigation. In this study, the aim is rather to establish whether something happens.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether media reporting has any effect on foreign policy, especially in the South African context. Therefore, the primary aim is

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<sup>12</sup> OSISA is an African institution committed to deepening democracy, protecting human rights and enhancing good governance in Southern Africa (OSISA, undated).

to illustrate the relationship between the media and a country's foreign policy, as conducted through public diplomacy, with specific reference to South Africa. This study investigates South African foreign policy, how the media frames and analyses this policy and subsequently again tracking government reaction to these.

As stated before, the aim is not necessarily to prove or disprove the causal effect of media opinion on foreign policy, but to investigate how the media frames and analyses South African foreign policy, and very specifically with regard to the matter investigated in the case study. Any cause and effect discovered in the course of the study would be incidental.

In identifying a research question the aim was to pose a question whose answer contributes to the understanding of the discipline. The question has in mind the nexus of media power and foreign policy, where television's instantly transmitted images fire public opinion, demanding instant responses from government officials, almost immediately shaping and reshaping foreign policy, known as the CNN Effect (Strobel, 1996). This influence of media on foreign policy has thus become almost axiomatic, though also disputed by some, such as US diplomat George Kennan, asking: "If CNN determines foreign policy, why do we need administrators and legislators" (Strobel, 1996)?

The research question posed is thus: How do the South African media frame foreign policy and how do administrators react to this actuality? The discourse between the South African media and government regarding South Africa's foreign policy is clearly illustrated in the matter of the South African Government not granting a visa to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama on two occasions, in 2009 and 2011 respectively. This serves as a study case of the interchanges between the media and the government on the matter. If any causal effect can be established from this investigation, it would be so indicated.

#### **4. Theoretical and analytical framework**

There are various approaches to foreign policy analysis, including decision making, comparative foreign policy, rational actor theory, bureaucratic politics, organisational

processes, role theory, cognitive approach, problem areas, political economic approaches, regime theory, implementation approach, and change as focus and identity studies. A combination of these approaches is used as the theoretical framework to enrich the study and ensure that it is multifaceted and does not become too linear in approach.

However, the study predominantly accepts the constructivist approach as theoretical foundation in analysing the relationship between government entities and the media. Wendt (1999: 1) refers to two basic tenets of constructivism, namely that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.

Constructivism focuses on the power of ideas in defining actions and interactions; on the importance of identity in defining what actors want; on the cyclical relationship between an actor's interests, identities and behaviour; and the social context in which the actor exists (Van Wyk et al, 2007: 24). Wendt (1999: 1) refers to two increasingly accepted basic outlooks of constructivism, namely that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces; and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.

The key tenet of constructivism is the belief that "international politics is shaped by persuasive ideas, collective values, culture and social identities" (Snyder, 2004: 52). Adler (1997: 319) states that constructivism occupies a middle ground between rationalist and interpretative theories of international relations.

Constructivism shares two broad assumptions with neo-realism, neo-liberalism and liberalism, *i.e.* commitments to explanation and rationality (Banchoff, 2008: Internet). First, constructivists seek primarily to explain, and not simply to interpret critique or transform the dynamics of international politics. Second, constructivists endorse assumptions of rationality. Like neo-realism, neo-liberalism and liberalism, it conceives of international and domestic actors in rational pursuit of interests within

constraints. Most constructivists view human rationality as a causal mechanism linking interests, constraints and action (Banchoff, 2008: Internet).

Constructivists primarily seek to demonstrate how many core aspects of international relations are, contrary to the assumptions of neo-realism and neo-liberalism, socially constructed, that is, they are given their form by ongoing processes of social practice and interaction (Jackson, 2006: 168). Rather than wrestle with the agent-structure dilemma, constructivists seek to transcend or account for it (Green, 2002: 62-63). The focal points would be rationality of agents, structures and culture as source of meanings.

Constructivists shift away from objects (actors, structures) to processes (construction, creation), considering the thought processes through which agents construct structures and structures constitute agents. Answers follow from constructivists' three premises: agents, structures and social processes. Agents are least problematic, possessing interests which the rational pursue, given their capabilities (Green, 2002: 62-63).

Constructivists' premise that social structures constitute actors' identities, interests or capabilities, just as actors' choices constitute patterned social structures (Green, 2002: 62). The social, rather than material, structures in world politics possess two features: while structures in part consist of the distribution of material resources and capabilities, they alone own no explanatory power unless embedded in a system of meanings and values defining understandings and meanings; and the meanings conveyed in socially shared knowledge structure social relationships. Furthermore, both agents and structures exist by process. Process is the key to constructivist thought; rules are central to the process of social construction (Green, 2002: 62).

Human rights concerns in South Africa's foreign policy should not only be considered 'constitutional' in the national sense (from South Africa's Constitution), but also 'international' (from international human rights instruments) (Titus 2009: 8). When South Africa is engaging on human rights at international forums, it is not so much in terms of its Constitution, but to what degree the country is giving effect to its international commitments (Titus 2009: 9).

Public concern over South Africa's approach to human rights in its foreign policy stemmed from the position the country assumed on the crisis in Zimbabwe and positions it took as a member of the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council (Titus 2009: 11). The decision to twice deny a visa to the Dalai Lama is consistent with this trend. Analysts suggested that human rights were no longer a prominent consideration for South Africa's foreign policy (Titus 2009: 11). However, as far as the South African government was concerned, the status quo on human rights and foreign policy was unmistakably established and human rights remained the accepted "light that guides our foreign affairs" (Titus 2009: 11-12). As with other claims of a shift in its human rights approach, the government through the ruling party insisted that the 2009 refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama did not mark the undermining of human rights. They thought this country was "more sensitive to human rights than many" (*Cape Argus*, 27/3/2009).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) expressed concern for the place occupied by human rights considerations in the country's foreign policy (Titus 2009: 12). It was noted that supporters of human rights watched in elation as apartheid ended in South Africa, but many were dismayed as the country's foreign policy later often aligned with global enemies of human rights. HRW also emphasised the swing of post-apartheid South Africa towards arguments in favour of the defence of sovereignty. This is favoured by violators of human rights, and is a central challenge to the institutionalisation of human rights in foreign policy (Titus 2009: 12).

Human rights do not focus on the promotion of a country's material interests (Titus 2009: 15). The promotion of human rights can even be in conflict with a country's material interests. Countries that wish to promote human rights in other countries therefore consistently find themselves balancing interests and determining priorities. (Titus 2009: 15). In the case of South Africa denying the Dalai Lama a visa, presumably under pressure from China, it is clearly in conflict with its own ideational interest, as its domestic constituency is clearly in favour of granting him a visa based on human rights considerations. The government, however, considers it to be in the country's material interest not to grant the visa, as trade and other relations with China might be harmed.

However, the Helen Suzman Foundation (HSF) comes out in defence of interests over human rights in South Africa's foreign policy pursuits, saying that it is naive to imagine that South Africa can have a selfless foreign policy based solely on human rights. The promotion of national interest is any government's moral duty to its citizens. It would not be surprising if South Africa wished to modify a purist human rights stand to stay on side with states with whom its trade, investment or defence links are particularly strong (HSF, 1996).<sup>13</sup>

Foreign policy, while serving the national interests in the international system, also aids in creating and re-constructing the national collective identity. This is true for all states. Telhami and Barnett (2002: 7) noted that identity appears at different places in the causal chain. It can be an ideological device to justify self-interested politics, it can be part of the cultural terrain and thus conditions the possible and the actual, or it can provide a direct link to a discrete foreign policy preference or outcome.

Rittberger (2001: 121) notes that norms can be invoked by actors within and outside states and be expressed by either of them as expressions of appropriate behaviour addressed to a state's foreign policy decision makers. Especially prominent norms, such as the protection of human rights or the promotion of free trade, are widely shared both within states and at the level of international society.

Interests, norms and identity are also considered when evaluating the media's agenda. Herman and Chomsky's (1988: xi) "propaganda model" of the media postulates a set of five filters that act to screen the news and other material disseminated by the media. These filters result in a media that reflects elite viewpoints and interests and mobilises support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity. These filters, according to Herman and Chomsky (1988: xi), are:

- the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and profit orientation of dominant mass-media firms;
- advertising as the primary income source of mass media;

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<sup>13</sup> The HSF promotes liberal constitutional democracy through broadening public debate and research (HSF, undated).



- the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and experts funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
- "flak" (negative responses to a media report) as a means of disciplining the media; and
- (at that stage on the media agenda) "Anti-communism" as a national religion and control mechanism.

With regard to media identity, Nicholas and Price (1998: 20-21) notes that media owners argue that ultimately it is the consumers who determine the nature of media products. However, he contends that the news organisation's origins should be taken into account to understand its identity. Some were set up by individuals seeking political influence.

A local media organisation has to identify with its region very strongly, while a national media organisation can upset the odd local community or two and still survive. A media organisation's critical independence can be affected by its relationship with other organisations which need publicity. Hard economic facts may be difficult to determine, as they are often sensitive, but they have a very strong influence on identity through advertisement and other financing (Nicholas & Price, 1998: 20-21).

The method used in this study is to concentrate on one carefully selected case study to examine the issue at hand. Case studies are described as complex examples, which give an insight into the context of a problem, as well as illustrate the main point (Savin-Baden, 2003). Selecting cases is difficult, but the selection offers the opportunity to maximise what can be learned, knowing that time is limited (Stake, 1995). Cases selected should be easy and willing subjects. A good instrumental case does not have to defend its typicality. Case studies must have boundaries. The cases that are selected should serve to maximise what can be learned, in the time available for the study.

The case study selected for this study offers an example where government decisions drew strong reaction from the media, there was significant media coverage of various angles to the story, there were statements from government in reaction to the publicity and there was a final conclusion to the matter that facilitates a fully rounded analysis. There is thus enough evidence of interaction between media coverage and government reaction to make a study thereof feasible.

Constructivism is selected as the main theoretical approach from which to conduct this study, as the findings of the study of the dealings between the South African Government and the media in this study, may result in the outcome of these leading to a newly constructed foreign policy stance. Issues of values and interests are also repeatedly highlighted in arguments in the disputes in both instances when the Dalai Lama's visa was not granted.

## **5. Conceptual clarification**

Although Chapter Two provides a conceptual analysis, preliminary clarification is provided on certain concepts relevant to this study, namely foreign policy, diplomacy, public diplomacy, economic diplomacy and the media.

Foreign policy can be defined as the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations (Hill, 2003: 3). The term "official" allows for inclusion of inputs from all parts of the governing mechanisms of the state, while also putting limitations to the international transactions being conducted; policy is the "sum" of these relations, so as not to see every particular action as a separate foreign policy; and it is "foreign" as the world is still more separated into distinctive communities than a homogenous entity (Hill, 2003: 3).

Foreign policy attempts to coordinate priorities between competing externally projected interests. It should also project those values considered by society as being universal. All of this implies the underlying possibility of constructing and reconstructing policy considering the interests and values of the relevant society (Hill, 2003: 5).

Chief among a state's foreign policy instruments is the activity of diplomacy (Berridge, 2001: 1). This refers to the "official channels of communication employed by the members of a system of states" (Berridge, 2001: 1). In this context, diplomacy's chief purpose is to "enable states to secure the objectives of their foreign policies without resort to force, propaganda, or law" (Berridge, 2001: 1). Diplomacy is a peaceful means of implementing national strategy through win-win approaches (Voskopoulos, undated).

Since the international environment is anarchic, each state focuses its policy on sustaining its status quo or improving its position in a clearly hierarchical system in the form of a pyramid. The closer a state is to the top, the better its chances to achieve its goals. Consequently, diplomacy is more probable to bear fruit when a country is independent, autonomous and developed (Voskopoulos, undated).

The diplomacy practised by powerful states may be different and has diametrically different goals from that of smaller states (Voskopoulos, undated). Bull (1977: 162) suggests diplomacy may be defined as the management of international relations by negotiation, typically through ambassadors or diplomats. Where diplomacy is concerned, constructivism mentions that "diplomacy is an agent for change" in international relations (Kegley & Wittkopf, 2005: 55). Constructivist approaches can be used to understand the diplomatic process of negotiation (Bayne & Woolcock, 2011: 25). A constructivist analysis of negotiation allows for persuasion based on argumentation or concepts of fairness, to change positions or preferences of the parties concerned.

Public diplomacy, like constructivism, challenges the primacy of material power in achieving outcomes and offers an alternative model of practice that understands the normative or ideational structures underpinning audience identities (Byrne, 2012). In defining public diplomacy, Gregory (2008) suggests that it is "the means by which states, associations of states and non-state actors *understand* cultures, attitudes and behaviour, *build and manage* relationships; and *influence* opinions and actions to advance their interests and values".

Public diplomacy has the capacity to bridge perceptual gaps that exist with some public audiences as a result of the normative or ideational structures from within which they operate and make sense of their world (Bruce, 2012). This puts the practice of public diplomacy squarely within the inter-subjective dimension of constructivism.

Effective public diplomacy practitioners are engaged in this dimension to understand the identities, value positions and norms - both relevant to their own and to others' ideational structures – to successfully engage and influence publics and achieve policy objectives (Bruce, 2012). By dealing in the very currencies of constructivism and engaging in this dimension, public diplomacy offers a vehicle for operationalising constructivist approaches. Public diplomacy manifests through an expansive range of instruments, ranging from information delivery such as opinion pieces in media, to educational or professional exchange through various modes, speeches and actions of high profile leaders or celebrities, journalistic tours, cultural engagement through arts, sport and literature, to the very policies that a nation employs that reflect its identity.

The public diplomacy instrument chosen in any particular case will depend in each case upon the strategic objective, context relevant to the target audience, and organisational capacities or networks available to conduct or oversee the activity. Effective modern public diplomacy is widely accepted to represent a two-way street, which might solicit an interpretation and response from the receiver, but also encourage listening and genuine dialogue with publics (Byrne, 2012).

Economic diplomacy is the process through which countries engage the outside world, to maximise their national gain in all the fields of activity, including trade, investment and other forms of economically beneficial exchanges, where they enjoy comparative advantage (Rana, undated). It has bilateral, regional and multilateral dimensions, each of which is important. No longer the monopoly of state entities, the official agents (the foreign and economic ministries, the diplomatic and commercial services, plus their promotional agencies) now engage in dynamic partnerships with an array of non-state actors. Such domestic collaboration is essential for effective

external outreach. In mirror fashion, the actions similarly address a wide field of foreign stakeholders.

Whereas this study also treads on the terrain of the communication sciences, some terms relevant to these need to be considered. Communication as such is an urge for shared understanding (Van Schoor, 1982: 68). A number of actions need to be concluded starting with an outgoing statement, which is changed into a message-carrying medium, which is then transformed into a clarification. This can be described as message traffic. It has to be repeated to confirm the significance of mutual understanding. Mutual understanding is a synthesis of all the parts of communication.

Van Schoor (1977: 1) contends that the basis of human communication is the imparting and deciphering of messages, from which the communication structure can be deducted. The source deliberately sends a message (Van Schoor, 1977: 13-26) or the content of what needs to be conveyed. The message needs to be given a sensory observable stature, which is referred to as the encoding of the message. Such a code of signs institutionalised in a community is a medium of communication. Communication does not end at the delivery of the message and encoding thereof by the communicator. The message first has to be received and interpreted by the receiver. He decodes the message and can become so actively involved in the process, that he reacts by sending a new message of his own. The receiver then becomes the new source.

Constructivism is a concept with varying interpretations in different fields (Wong, 2006). In communication, constructivism is a cognitive theory of human communication that describes how human perception influences the skilful production and interpretation of a variety of social influence messages (Delia, O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 1982). According to Burleson (2006: 108), constructivism seeks to explain individual differences in the ability to communicate skilfully:

- It identifies what counts as skilful conduct with respect to several processes, including social perception (the ability to acquire, retain, manipulate and use information about the social world); message production (the ability to

generate verbal and nonverbal messages that efficiently and effectively accomplish various personal and social goals); and message reception (the ability to fully comprehend the meaning of others' messages and, when appropriate, go beyond those messages to understand the source's intentions and motives);

- It explains why there are individual differences in these communication skills. That is, constructivism specifies the characteristics and qualities people must possess if they are to communicate in a skilful way; and
- It clarifies the source or origin of individual differences in the characteristics that lead some people to be more skilful communicators than others.

Constructivism maintains that the interpretive or perceptual processes of individuals play a central role in all communicative conduct (Burleson, 2006: 108).

Mass media is any medium used to transmit mass communication. Telecommunications and technology author Tomi Ahonen (2008: Internet) coined the term "Seventh of the Mass Media" to explain why services on cellular phones need not be copies of internet or television content and described the evolution and convergence of mass media from print to recordings, cinema, radio, television, internet and cellular phones.

For the purpose of this study, a distinction is made between the state-owned public media and privately-owned media in South Africa. In South Africa, state-owned media include the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) through its SAnews "news agency" and publications such as *Vuk'uzenzele*. The GCIS (2013) sets and influences adherence to standards for an effective government communication system; and drives coherent government messaging and proactively communicate with the public about government policies, plans programmes and achievements (GCIS, 2010).

The purpose of GCIS (2010) is to lead government communication through submitting a National Communication Strategy (NSC) to Cabinet and ensuring

coherent messages, as well as open and extended channels of communication between government and the people, towards a shared vision. GCIS also provides communication and information services to the domestic and foreign media to improve their knowledge of government-related issues.

With regard to international relations, GCIS' Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) (GCIS, 2009) states that it leads the international marketing of the country and provides overall guidance, ensuring that the country is marketed abroad through the International Marketing Council (IMC). It assists the IMC in the development of the country brand in line with government's vision, and builds consensus among key stakeholders in support of the country's marketing initiative. The NSC, which would probably encompass GCIS' media policy, is not available for public consumption.

There is one public broadcaster, the SABC, as well as a number of commercial radio stations and numerous community radio stations (OSISA, 2010: 24). There is no national commercial radio station in South Africa. Regional and city-wide stations mostly broadcast in English. Six of the SABC's existing services were sold to private entities in 1996. These stations all have a regional profile (covering provinces rather than just cities). Television has been available in the country since 1976 (OSISA, 2010: 24), with satellite television being available from the mid 1990s. Besides the public broadcaster, SABC, there are also a number of commercial broadcasters. Key issues facing the media industry include the role of the press in a fledgling democracy, illiteracy and the attraction and retention of advertising revenue.<sup>14</sup>

In respect of privately owned media in South Africa, there are four major press groups in the country, namely Independent Newspapers, Nasionale Pers (Naspers), Caxton and Avusa (OSISA, 2010: 20). Radio has the greatest reach of any media in South Africa. South Africa has a large radio network, with private, public and community broadcasting (OSISA, 2010: 23).

## **6. Methodology**

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<sup>14</sup> For the purpose of this study, a distinction between the concepts press and media is made. The press refers to newspapers. The media as an encompassing term refers to newspapers, radio, television and internet.

The method used is to concentrate on one carefully selected case study to examine the issue at hand. Case studies are complex examples, which provide insight into the context of a problem, as well as illustrate the main point (Savin-Baden, 2003). Feigin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991: 172) state that irrespective of the purpose, unit of analysis, or design, rigour is a central concern. They suggest that, while proponents of multiple case studies may argue for replication, using more than one case may dilute the importance and meaning of the single case. Case study can be seen to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method, which is used here, namely describing, understanding and explaining (Savin-Baden, 2003).

Selecting cases is difficult, but offers the opportunity to maximise what can be learned, knowing that time is limited (Stake, 1995). Cases selected should be easy and willing subjects. A good instrumental case does not have to defend its typicality. Case studies must have boundaries. Selected cases should allow the researcher to maximise what can be learned, in the time available for the study.

In this research, a single case study is used. It covers two related incidents over a period of two years. The chosen case study is the decision by the South African Government not to issue visas to the Dalai Lama in 2009 and 2011 respectively. This case study was chosen because it is an example of government decisions drawing strong reaction from the media; there was significant media coverage of various angles to the stories; there were statements from government in reaction to the publicity; and there was a final conclusion to the matter that facilitates a fully rounded analysis. There is thus enough evidence of interaction between media coverage and government reaction to make a study thereof feasible. This interaction will then be described to gather a better understanding of what transpired during these events to be able to explain the relationship between media coverage and government reaction, and perhaps policy decisions.

According to Yin (1994: 21), the case study design must have five components, namely the research question, its proposition, its units of analysis, a determination of how the data is linked to the proposition and criteria to interpret the findings. Yin



(1994: 26) concluded that operationally defining the unit of analysis assists with replication and efforts at case comparison.

The case study considers the research question, which is to investigate South African foreign policy; how the media frames and analyses this policy; and subsequently again tracks government reaction to these, directly. It looks at a specific aspect of South African foreign policy (the matter of issuing a visa to the Dalai Lama and the related questions of human rights and succumbing to economic pressure), how the media framed this specific issue and how government reacted to the media's coverage of the matter.

The assumption that there is a link between media coverage and foreign-policy decisions will be considered if such a connection is coincidentally discovered through the study. The unit of analysis will be media reports on the events under investigation and mostly from the Independent News & Media. The content of media coverage on the matter and the reaction of the South African Government to these will guide the interpretation of the findings.

The purposes of case study research may be exploratory, descriptive, interpretive, experimental and/or explanatory (Fitzpatrick, 2006: 61). This study is mostly descriptive, tracking the interplay between media coverage and government reaction in the matter of the Dalai Lama visa disputes. It is also exploratory in that an effort will also be made to probe the nature of the interaction. It will also be interpretive as an attempt will be made to better understand the said relationship.

Gathering information is mainly from primary and secondary sources, consisting of media coverage, Internet information and academic reference material. For the purpose of this study, a specific South African media source, Independent News & Media Plc, is used in tracking both government positions and media reactions. Analyst opinions and government reactions on the same are often also quoted in these media sources.

Primary sources for this study include government policies, legislation, media statements issued by government through GCIS, and speeches by government

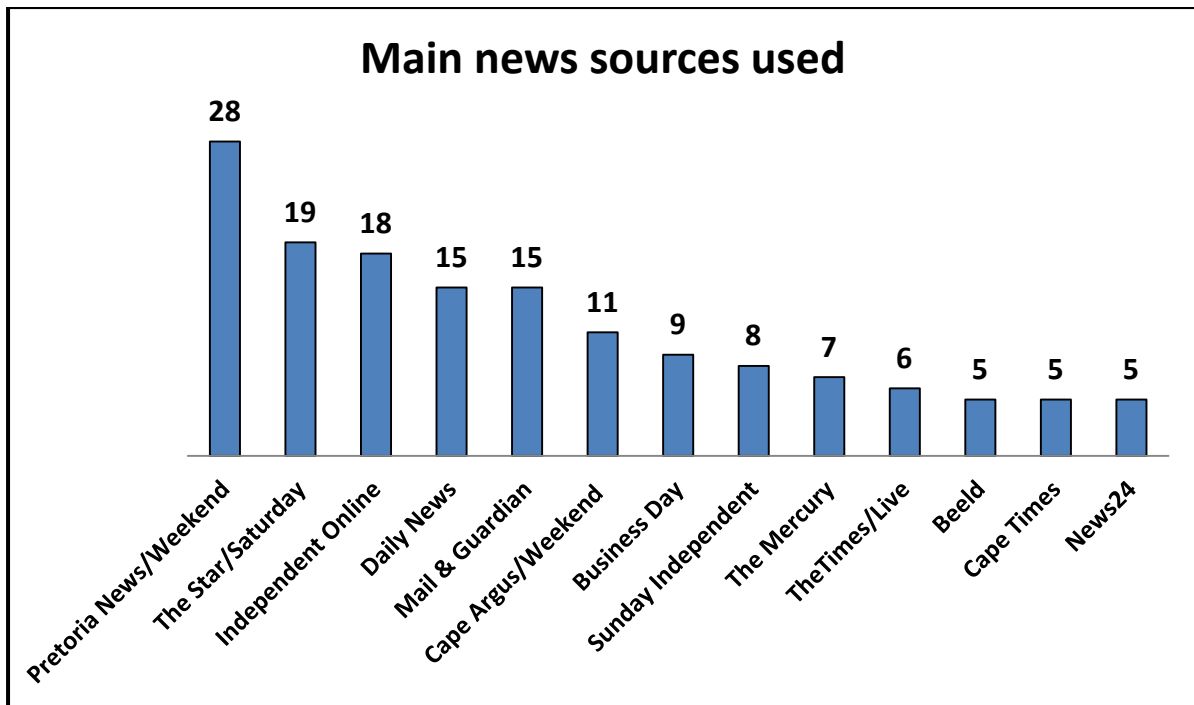
decision makers and diplomats. The daily publications the *Pretoria News* and *The Star*, as well as the *Sunday Independent* are used to focus on the Gauteng-published Independent Newspapers. Gauteng-published media are the main source of information in this study. While it is the country's smallest province, it has the largest population and by far the highest population density of around 675 people per square kilometre (BrandSA, 2013).

With only 1,4 per cent of South Africa's land area, the province contributes more than 33 per cent to the national economy and a phenomenal 10 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the entire African continent (BrandSA, 2013). Pretoria, also in Gauteng, is the (administrative) capital of the country and hosts the seat of government (BrandSA, 2013). It can be assumed that as the Gauteng-published media are in the government's immediate environment, the government itself pays most attention to these sources in considering its reaction to media reporting.

Attention is given to news reports, feature articles, letters from influential readers, as well as editorials. Where possible and where a relevant differing or enriching view is found in any of the Independent publications from another province, these are also included in the study. Media sources other than Independent Media may be used when the content seems vital to the study.

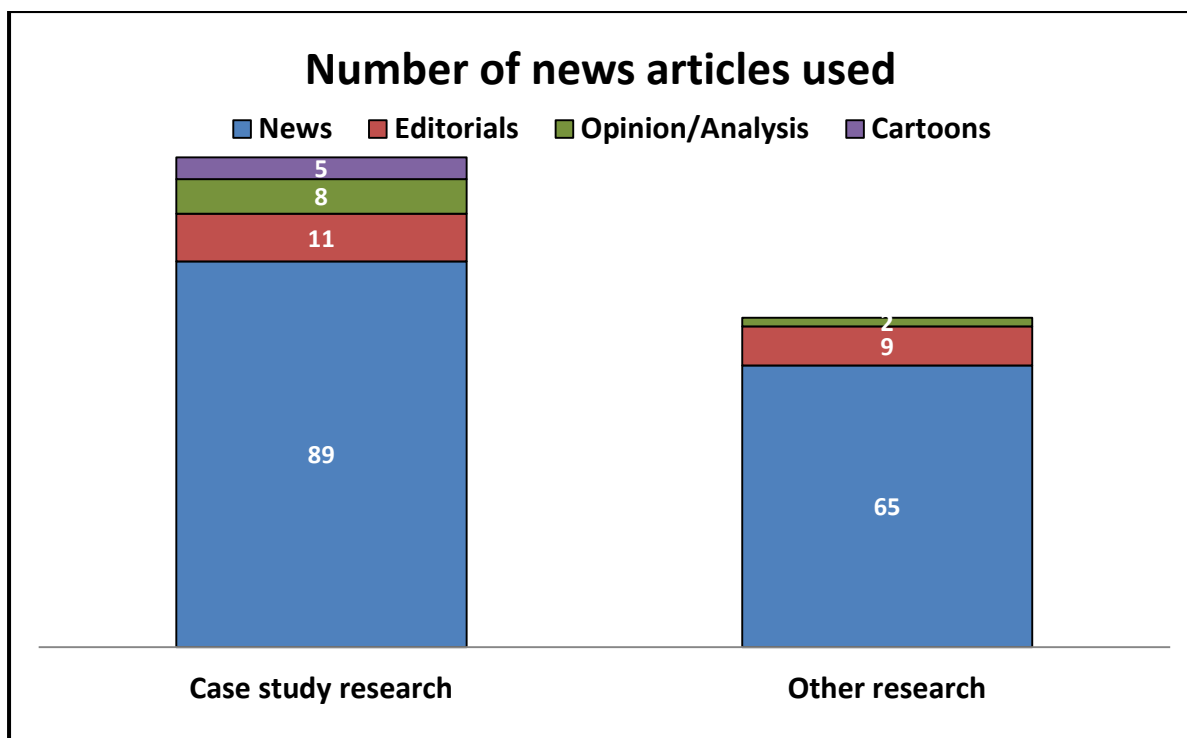
In total 286 news items were sourced. This includes news articles, editorials, opinion/analysis articles and cartoons. Of these 189 were quoted in this study. *Pretoria News*, *The Star* and *Independent Online* were the news sources most often quoted in the study. (See Figure 1: Main News sources used.) This is consistent with the choice of Independent Media publications as the main source of information in this study. These articles were analysed according to issue, events affecting the development of the narrative, voices quoted, outcome and inferences to be made from the overall depiction.

### **Figure 1: Main news sources used**



For the case study 113 articles were used and for other research (mostly in relation to proposed legislation affecting the government's relations with the media) 76 news items were used. (See figure 2: Number of news articles used.) With regard to the case study the oldest article used is from *Punch Magazine* and dates back to 10/12/1892. It relates to the Rhodes Colossus cartoon. The latest is from *The New Age* and is dated 30/11/2013. It recounts the outcome of the court action about the Dalai Lama's visa application. The oldest other media article is from *Mail & Guardian* of 28/1/2008 and is about the regulation of press freedom. The latest article used about issues other than the case study is from *The New Age*, dated 20/9/2013, about a request to President Zuma not to sign the Protection of State Information Bill (PSIB) into law.

**Figure 2: Number of news articles used**



In Cape Town, the Independent News & Media Plc group publishes a daily 'red-top' mass market tabloid, the *Daily Voice*, and mainstream titles in the morning (the *Cape Times*), the afternoon (the *Cape Argus*) and over weekends (the *Weekend Argus Saturday* and the *Weekend Argus Sunday*), as well as weekly community newspapers (Independent News & Media Plc, 2012). The group's flagship title, *The Star*, is published in Gauteng along with the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg, the *Pretoria News* (which includes a weekend edition) in Pretoria, and the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* in Kimberley (Independent News & Media Plc, 2012). The Gauteng operation also publishes the *Sunday Independent* nationally and holds interests in 12 free/community newspapers in Pretoria (Independent News & Media Plc, 2012).

In KwaZulu-Natal, the Group publishes the *Daily News*, *The Mercury*, the *Post*, the *Independent on Saturday*, the *Sunday Tribune*, the daily Zulu language newspaper, the *Isolezwe* (which also has a Saturday and Sunday edition, the *Isolezwe ngoMgqibelo* and the *Isolezwe ngeSonto* respectively, as well as an interest in a number of free/community newspapers which are distributed in and around Durban (Independent News & Media Plc, 2012). The *www.iol.co.za* portal is one of South Africa's leading news, current affairs and classified sites and it, together with the

group's individual newspaper titles and other niche sites, comfortably delivers over 2,1 million unique visitors per month (Independent News & Media Plc, 2012).

## **7. Contribution of study**

Analytically, constructivism seeks to demonstrate how many core aspects of international relations are socially constructed, that is, they are given their form by ongoing processes of social practice and interaction (Jackson, 2006: 168). The primary aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between the media and a country's foreign policy, as conducted through public diplomacy, with specific reference to South Africa.

This study investigates South African foreign policy, how the media frames and analyses this policy and subsequently again tracks government reaction to these. This is analysed against the background of the South African Government's refusal of the visit of the Dalai Lama on two occasions. The role of the media in the state's use of public diplomacy is also considered. Constructivism offers a sound analytical basis for this investigation in that it accepts the outcomes of these types of exchanges as the foundation for the construction of international relations.

Theoretically, this study aims to contribute to the study of international political communications. Much has been written by international scholars on foreign policy theory, as it is an established study field. There is also an abundance of writings on South Africa in international political context. Much has also been published about communications, internationally and locally. International academics have also written about political communications.

International and local academics writing about communications and even international academics writing about political communications have produced a significant body of work. There is, however, a void in the area of South African international political communications. This is where this study purports to make a contribution. As stated previously, the media wrote extensively about South Africa's refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama, but according to the Sabinet database no theses have been done on the matter.

## **8. Scope and limitations of study**

The study is limited to a specific case study and period, namely the proposed visits to South Africa by the Dalai Lama in 2009 and 2011 and the South African Government's refusal to issue a visa on both occasions, against the background of the theoretical framework as discussed. The government was severely criticised for these decisions against the background of its own proclaimed foreign policy principles. These decisions had high-impact media coverage and diplomatic activity with a clear outcome to study. It thus offers ample material and substance as a case study. There is enough evidence of interaction between media coverage and government reaction to make a study thereof feasible.

Murrow (2007: 48) observed that "no cash register ever rings when a mind is changed". Thus, measuring success in public diplomacy is a challenge. As the impact of public diplomacy programmes can take decades to manifest, the investment in public diplomacy rarely results in dramatic, demonstrable change in the short term. In the current "culture of measurement," the need to procure results cannot, however, be ignored. This is the scope of the problem for measuring the success of public diplomacy (CPD, 2012). Evaluating public diplomacy is thus difficult, but important (Banks, 2007: 7).

The constructivist approach followed in this study sees international relations as socially constructed sets (Vogt, 2010). The basic observation of constructivism is that human relations are guided more by ideas than by material effects. Where realists assumed that states' identities and interests were fixed and relatively uncomplicated, constructivists consider how states perceive themselves and assume that their actions change (Vogt, 2010). Constructivists merely assert that present social structures are socially constructed; it does not suggest which social constructions are preferable to others, nor does it suggest, except in vague terms, how one might consciously alter the continuing evolution of state identity and interest in the international system (Vogt, 2010). In the constructivist tradition, the approach would thus be to describe South African foreign policy (how the government perceives itself) and after studying how the two prospective visits of 2009 and 2011

by the Dalai Lama to South Africa was handled, ascertain whether a new reality may not in fact have been constructed.

The gap in the literature that may be filled by this study would be to contribute to the understanding of the interaction between foreign policy and media framing thereof. It is an almost axiomatic assumption that the media influences government policy and by definition then also foreign policy. This study will not attempt to prove such causality in this relationship, but would give an indication of the communications relationship between government and the media regarding foreign policy. It will analyse the process by means of a case study, describing the process and explaining what was learned from it, in order to reach a better understanding.

This study does not attempt to investigate the gate-keeping<sup>15</sup> role of the media. Where media quotes of sources such as political parties or civil society organisations are included in this study, it is done to gauge the possible reaction of the government to these pronouncements. What is of importance to this study is what was out in the public domain (what the media chose to publish), what the government chose to react to and any possible changes that might have occurred in government's foreign policy stance.

It was further found that none of the original media statements by the DFA and DIRCO on the Dalai Lama were available on the department's website. Thus, no comparison of what they actually said on the matter to what was reported in the media was feasible. It is possible that the statements mentioned in the media were made in response to enquiries by the media and not actually initiated and formally issued by the Department.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding public diplomacy, this study endeavours to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between the government and the media, especially in the South African context. DIRCO has a number of agencies in its Public Diplomacy Branch, whose mandate is specifically tailored to deal with media-related issues and opportunities. This study aims to establish how the matter at hand in the

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<sup>15</sup> Regulating the flow of information. (White: 1964: 161)

<sup>16</sup> 'Department' refers to the DFA and DIRCO.

specific issue studied was dealt with to gauge the influence of public attitudes in the responses of DIRCO, as it reacts to the reporting of foreign affairs.

## **9. Structure of study**

This study is divided into six chapters. This chapter, Chapter One, offers an introduction to the study and explains the study framework.

Chapter Two offers a conceptual analysis of diplomacy and public diplomacy as instruments of foreign policy, defining and discussing both aspects at length.

Chapter Three discusses the South African media landscape (print media, news agencies, broadcasting, internet and telecommunications) and the interests, norms and identity underlying the media.

In Chapter Four the legislative and regulatory environment in which the media in South Africa operates is thrashed out, with specific reference to the pending PIB/PSIB and the proposed MAT.

Chapter Five considers the elements, pillars, principles and main actors in post-apartheid South African foreign policy. It also studies South Africa's diplomatic and public diplomacy institutions.

Chapters Six and Seven offer a study case on how government and the media relate on a matter of contention in the public diplomacy sphere, looking at the 2009 and 2011 proposed visits to South Africa by the Dalai Lama.

The final chapter, Chapter Eight, offers a conclusion and recommendations on findings made in the study.

## **10. Conclusion**



South Africa's foreign policy, diplomacy and media environment underwent major changes since the advent of democracy in this country in 1994. Widely lauded for its human rights approach to foreign policy, the ANC-led government expanded the country's foreign relations to an unprecedented level. However, several contradictions soon became evident as the country's foreign relations did not always correspond to its stated human rights-based foreign policy. This is clearly illustrated in the case study selected for this study. The case study is also an illustrative example of the intricate link between foreign policy, diplomacy and the media in a country.

Constructivism maintains that states go through a process of socialisation into international values, including those related to human rights. They consider how states internalise norms and how this forms foreign policy. This study will investigate aspects of this process through the case study.

The following chapter offers a conceptual analysis of diplomacy and public diplomacy, defining the ideas and considering the purpose and practice of both.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AS INSTRUMENTS OF FOREIGN POLICY

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter considers the relationship between diplomacy, public diplomacy and propaganda, and how diplomacy and public diplomacy are used as instruments of diplomacy. It defines diplomacy, looks at the purpose of diplomacy, and considers diplomacy in democracies, types of diplomacy and the practice of diplomacy. Public diplomacy is also studied as a type of diplomacy, including the elements of public diplomacy, public diplomacy and power, propaganda and the practice of public diplomacy. In addition, visa diplomacy is also considered as a particular type of public diplomacy.

Effective, forceful and active diplomacy is an important aspect of foreign policy and a valuable instrument of securing national interests and attaining the goals and objectives of foreign policy in regional and global politics (Dahl, 2011). Public diplomacy can be seen as a specific type of diplomacy, but is different from traditional diplomacy as it deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies, and encompasses the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries (PDAA, 2008). Public diplomacy is also to be distinguished from propaganda though there is a connection. Propaganda always carries with it a negative connotation, implying distortion and manipulation, which public diplomacy would not necessarily entail (Brown, 2008).

Hendrickson defined public diplomacy as the conduct of international relations by governments through public communications media and through dealings with a wide range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for the purpose of influencing the politics and actions of other governments (CPD, 2013). Crocker Snow Jr. (CPD, 2013) argued that public diplomacy, which traditionally represented actions of governments to influence overseas publics within the foreign policy process, had

expanded - by accident and design - beyond the realm of governments to include the media, multinational corporations, NGOs and faith-based organisations as active participants in the field.

This study will focus more specifically on public diplomacy through the media and the media's framing of foreign policy issues.

## **2. Defining diplomacy**

Briggs (1968: 202) describes diplomacy as an instrument of a government's foreign policy and as the conduct of official business by trained personnel representing governments. Berridge (2001: 69-70) defines diplomacy as the "conduct of relations between sovereign states through the medium of officials based at home or abroad."

The main objective of this chapter is to provide a conceptual analysis of diplomacy and public diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy. For the purposes of this study, public diplomacy is defined as the conduct of international relations by governments through the mass media.

## **3. Purpose of diplomacy**

The purpose of diplomacy is to reach agreements within a framework of policy. US foreign officer James Reeves Childs (in Plischke 1979: 672) offers another view:

The art of diplomacy consists of making the policy of one government understood, and if possible, accepted by other governments. Policy is thus the substance of foreign relations; diplomacy is the process by which it is carried out.

Diplomacy is an inseparable part of international relations (Voskopoulos, undated). States use diplomatic missions to recognise other states. Once diplomats are sent to a host country, this country is *de facto* and *de jure* recognised and is accorded political standing. Diplomacy also involves collecting, interpreting and decoding information collected in the host country. Diplomats collect information, sort it

coherently and transmit it to their country to produce an accurate reflection of the local political situation and the strategy of the host country. What is mostly needed is unbiased information. Diplomats residing in one country not only collect information, but also interpret it.

Foreign policy making is related, *inter alia*, to the domestic environment (Voskopoulos, undated). It is a situation where one variable is inter-connected to another. Effective and accurate diplomacy helps balance the equation between the domestic and international political systems, which are tied together. It is not only an instrument of foreign policy, but also a contributor to its formulation. All the information collected through diplomatic channels is assessed, valued and taken into consideration when it comes to foreign policy planning.

The primary contribution of constructivism to the process of diplomacy is in the emphasis placed on understanding how interests and identities shift over time through discussion and dialogue (Woolcock & Bayne, 2007: 33). This is often applied to processes of bargaining and negotiation and to how diplomatic agents use persuasion, threat or inducement, public diplomacy and information to alter the negotiating positions of others (Ulbert & Risse, 2005).

#### **4. Diplomacy in democracies**

The function of diplomacy between democracies is the management of relations between independent states by processes of negotiation (Nicolson, 1969: 41-42). The professional diplomat is the servant of the sovereign authority in his own country. In democratic states sovereign authority is represented by an elected majority of legislators and a government to whom the majority accord executive powers.

The civil service of which the diplomatic service is a branch, is supposed to possess no politics. Its duty is to place its experience at the disposal of the government in power, to tender advice, and if need be raise objections, but execute the instructions of the government without resistance. The civil service must loyally serve all

constitutional governments irrespective of the party and the government should have confidence in all civil servants irrespective of their party sympathies.

A career diplomat, Sir Harold Nicolson (1969), has a somewhat harsh judgement of the electorate and the public. He lists a number of pitfalls for diplomacy and foreign policy management emanating from the nature of the diplomatic state.

Firstly, although the people are the sovereign authority which ultimately controls foreign policy, they are not always aware of the responsibilities this entail (Nicolson, 1969: 47). In a democracy the innumerable anonymous and 'unconscious' electorate controls foreign policy, and a sense of personal or corporate responsibility no longer exists as was the case with an individual monarch or a governing class. The sovereign people are not conscious of their sovereignty and are unaware that they have caused certain treaties to be signed. This 'irresponsibility' is encouraged by the media advocating the repudiation of pledges without mentioning that these pledges were incurred by a duly elected government and ratified by legislators.

Secondly, this problem is also connected to the problem of 'ignorance' (Nicolson, 1969: 47-8). He argues that even educated electors are "almost totally unaware" of the treaties by which their countries are bound. Though they have been published, debated by legislators and discussed by the media, the majority of people have no conception of their existence and would clamour about "secret diplomacy" once they were invoked. It is only when honouring national engagements becomes a matter of topical concern that the public takes note of their existence. Only at that stage will the sovereign people clamour for the appeal of contracts of which they had approved.

In the third instance, it is contested that the ordinary elector does not apply to foreign affairs the same thought he devotes to domestic matters (Nicolson, 1969: 48). He is "unwilling to make an effort of comprehension or to try to understand the simplest elements of the problem". They imagine that foreign policy is framed in much the same manner as domestic policies: prepared by a responsible minister, submitted to the executive, approved by the legislature and handed to the department for execution. They ignore the fact that other countries with equally powerful

armaments, interests and prejudices, must be consulted if any policy is to be effective.

Fourthly, Nicolson also warns against certain forms of popular knowledge (Nicolson, 1969: 48-49). The professional diplomat is cautious of generalisation based on hastily observed phenomena, but the elector shows no such hesitation. Nicolson argues that judgement of the elector is based on feelings rather than upon thoughts, leaving him to the mercy of any chance encounter or accidental conversation (or influence of the media, one might add).

In the fifth place, the danger of delay is also mentioned (Nicolson, 1969: 49). An absolute monarch or dictator can frame and execute a policy within the space of hours. A democratic government has to wait for public opinion to digest "its own conclusions". These may be more sensible than the "somnambulist certainties" of a dictator, but the time lapse in the democratic process is often fatal to efficient policy or negotiation.

In the sixth instance, the problem of imprecision is also mentioned (Nicolson, 1969: 50). Nicolson objects to the "vagueness and fluidity" of democratic policy and the uncertainty arising from "the irresponsible attitude of sovereign democracy towards its own obligations". There is also a tendency of all democracies to prefer a vague and comforting formula to what should be a binding definition. Nicolson argues that the effectiveness of diplomacy is dependent upon the conviction it inspires, yet if policy is non-committal, diplomacy will be vague.

Finally, Nicolson (1969: 50) also protests the fact that for diplomatic policy to appeal to the ordinary person, the emotional, dramatic or moral aspects of a situation are emphasised to suppress the practical. He argues that this could actually lead the diplomat into hypocrisy, as when, in defending vital national interests, he pretends to be defending some abstract idea.

Nicolson (1969: 50–52) also addresses the problems relating to diplomatic practice. As a career diplomat, Nicolson, objects to the tendency of democratic countries to allow their politicians to take a personal part in negotiation. Granting that there was

place for heads of state, government and ministers to attend important conferences, it should not be encouraged. This aroused public expectation, lead to misunderstandings and create confusion. The time available at such visits is not sufficient to allow for patient and calm deliberation. Negotiation is far better left to the professional diplomat. He touches on the relationship with the media (specifically the press) as the sovereign democracy needs to be informed. He also argues that a satisfactory adjustment between the needs and rights of a popular press and the requirements of discretion has yet to be found. However, the advantages of a free press are immeasurably greater than its disadvantages, that it is little more than a minor inconvenience (Nicholson 1969: 50-52).

*The Guardian* (25/9/2012) argues that the media's role in ensuring a free flow of information, ideas and opinions remains a critical element in maintaining a healthy, fully functioning democracy, even as rapid technological and social developments are changing how the media reach the masses around the world. As the industry evolves beyond traditional newspapers, radio and television outlets, and now includes an array of social networks accessed electronically by an assortment of desktop and mobile electronic devices, one thing remains constant – the role of the news media as a “watchdog” has not changed. A democracy is not possible without journalists to question the actions of government officials, confirm the truth of what officials tell the public and gather facts needed by citizens to make informed decisions.

Risse (undated) contends that decision-makers in democratic polities, socialised in the norms governing liberal states, are likely to communicate through diplomacy their intentions in the international realm by referring to these very norms. When they encounter fellow democrats, a collective understanding of these norms can be easily established, providing a common basis for further communication of peaceful intentions.

Leaders of democratic states communicating their peaceful intentions to each other can always validate their claims by pointing to the peaceful resolution of conflicts inherent in their domestic structures. In other words, the validity claims of peacefulness are substantiated by one's own domestic structure. As a result, the

spiral model of the security dilemma is reversed and uncertainty reduced. This forms the basis for the democratic peace theory. Risse, (undated) also asserts that democracies to a large extent create their enemies and friends by inferring their aggression from their domestic structures. Enmity and friendship in the international system is thus socially constructed.

## **5. Types of diplomacy**

Depending on the approach taken to a particular diplomatic matter, different types of diplomacy can be identified (USIP, 2011). One approach is to consider the different tracks of diplomacy. Track 1-diplomacy refers to formal discussions typically involving high-level political and military leaders and focusing on cease-fires, peace talks, treaties and other agreements. Third-party interveners are almost always official – a government or international organisation.

Track 2-diplomacy refers to unofficial dialogue and problem-solving activities aimed at building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the formal process (USIP, 2011). Track 2-activities typically involve influential academic, religious, NGO and other civil society actors who can interact more freely than high-ranking officials. The range of unofficial interveners is similarly broad – religious institutions, academics, former government officials, NGOs and think tanks.

Track 3-diplomacy refers to people-to-people diplomacy undertaken by individuals and private groups to encourage interaction and understanding between hostile communities and involving awareness-raising and empowerment within these communities (USIP, 2011). Normally focused at the grassroots level, this type of diplomacy often involves organising meetings and conferences, generating media exposure and political and legal advocacy for marginalised people and communities.

Finally, multi-track diplomacy is a term for operating on several tracks simultaneously, including official and unofficial conflict-resolution efforts, citizen and scientific exchanges, international business negotiations, international cultural and athletic activities and other cooperative efforts (USIP, 2011). These efforts could be



led by governments, professional organisations, businesses, churches, media, private citizens, training and educational institutes, activists and funders.

The contemporary diplomatic milieu of world politics is characterised by a mounting diversity of actors, which poses a more complex image of international interactions than the traditional intergovernmental perspective (Acuto, 2011). Breaking with the traditional notion of diplomacy, the present global governance landscape is characterised by ever-growing multi-stakeholder involvement that constructs the texture of world politics and organises multilateralism.

Government officials, either voluntarily or forcefully, partake in global policy networks put in place through various 'hybrid' modes of diplomacy. The contemporary response to the realist model can be found in "network diplomacy" as a broader engagement with various actors across the globe. Diplomats who choose this path have to embrace alternative views of world politics, as they are set to become "diplomatic entrepreneurs" – building multiple connections, upholding moral norms, such as human rights regimes, and seeking trans-national relationships.

## **6. Practice of diplomacy**

One of the main goals of diplomacy is to execute foreign policy and achieve its strategic objectives through tact. Four of the most important features of diplomacy are representation, communication, negotiation and diplomatic privilege and immunity (Dayang, 2011).

An important feature of diplomatic activity is state representation through the dispatch of missions and diplomatic agents overseas (Dayang, 2011). The sending of emissaries and establishing embassies have long been the backbone of diplomacy. Ministries of foreign affairs manage foreign policy and embassies and consular posts are established by states in countries where they have diplomatic and consular relations. Permanent missions to international organisations such as the UN, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the European Union (EU) also represent states in multilateral diplomacy. The role of diplomatic representation is not limited to

state actors. Diplomats also interact with non-state actors such as the media, religious groups, universities and NGOs.

Diplomacy is the primary means by which states intermingle and communicate with each other (Dayang, 2011). Communication is an important feature and an essential aspect of diplomatic activity. Some of the usual forms of diplomatic communication include face-to-face meetings, pull-aside meetings and the writing of *note verbales*, *aide memoirs* and joint statements. Usually, diplomats communicate with their home office and counterparts in ministries of foreign affairs, who may also act as gatekeepers. However, global issues and the participation of non-state actors in international affairs have expanded the role of ministries of foreign affairs.

Diplomats have become regular channels of communication not only between and among state agents, but also as communication channels of other government agencies in the area of trade, migration, environment, culture and human rights. A key role of diplomats is gathering information on the situation in receiving states. They assess and analyse information for its strategic significance and report on it to their home ministries of foreign affairs or to the relevant functional government agencies. This aspect of reporting is crucial and necessary in crisis situations, particularly during volatile events. Diplomats are not only expected to report information, but also to take care of their citizens' welfare and communicate with the family members of those affected by the crisis (Dayang, 2011).

Corollary to communication is diplomatic negotiation. Through negotiation, states can communicate, interact and promote their strategic interests. Some examples are bilateral agreements in trade and investment, extradition treaties and multilateral agreements. A diplomatic negotiator's role is to promote national interests and the welfare of his country's citizens in the receiving state. A diplomat negotiating a bilateral or multilateral trade agreement needs to know which sectors he must protect; which markets to open and to muster good judgment on; and which position to compromise when necessary. Through negotiations, states can benefit from mutually binding treaties. Such bilateral or multilateral agreements which are mutually beneficial may not be possible without diplomacy (Dayang, 2011).

Another important feature of diplomatic activity is the diplomatic privilege and immunity enjoyed by diplomatic agents. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) provides for the legal basis of privilege and immunity. Two aspects of diplomatic privileges and immunities include:

- certain inviolabilities to diplomatic staff and their family members, and to diplomatic premises and private residence (Article 37); and
- Immunity from criminal jurisdiction, as well as civil and administrative jurisdiction of the receiving state (Article 31).

The unique and special treatment accorded to diplomats is justified, if such measures are essential for the effective execution of the functions of diplomats in promoting the sending state's objectives in the receiving state and if it is for the purpose of ensuring the personal safety of diplomats in conducting their activities. The principle of reciprocity is also upheld by receiving and sending states (Dayang, 2011).

Landsberg (2004: 10-11) describes diplomacy as the management of international relations and politics through negotiations. It is mainly silent – or quiet – in nature, but could be vociferous or of the megaphone variety. It seeks to mediate differences and resolve and settle disputes, but also to persuade and compel through communicating promises, threats, codes and symbols. Most official attempts by governments to exert influence abroad are through formal diplomatic channels or communication between heads of government and ministers of foreign affairs.

Governments can resort to diplomatic recognition or extension of denial of recognition of new states and governments as ways of exercising political influence. Classic bilateral diplomacy has been supplemented by multilateral conference diplomacy as in the UN. Diplomacy is especially associated with bargaining between governments, and this in turn, is often associated with a problem-solving negotiating process. Diplomacy is seen an essential part of international politics and provides the norms, protocols and practices to assist with the reconciliation of differences between states.

Diplomacy is also described as a peaceful means of implementing national strategy through win-win approaches (Voskopoulos, undated). Since we live in an anarchic international environment, each state focuses its policy on sustaining its status quo or improving its position in a clearly hierarchical system. This system has the form of a pyramid. The closer a state is to the top, the better its chances to achieve its goals. Consequently, diplomacy is more probable to bear fruit when a country is independent, autonomous and developed.

Constructivism is concerned with the impact of norms on international relations. Norms are inter-subjective in that they are beliefs rooted in and reproduced through social practice. The practice of diplomacy enacts and reproduces accepted international beliefs. Norms constitute actors and meaningful action by situating both in social roles (Farrell, 2002).

## **7. Public diplomacy as a type of diplomacy**

Coined in the mid-1960s by former US diplomat Edmund Gullion, public diplomacy was developed partly to distance overseas governmental information activities from the term propaganda, which had acquired derogatory connotations (CPD, 2011). According to Tuch (1990: 3), public diplomacy is official government efforts to shape the communications environment overseas in which the own state's foreign policy is played out, in order to reduce the degree to which misperceptions and misunderstandings complicate relations with other nations. Public diplomacy can also be defined as seeking to promote the national interest of the own state through understanding, informing and influencing foreign audiences (PDAA, 2008).

Public diplomacy is further seen as the transparent means by which a sovereign country communicates with publics in other countries, aimed at informing and influencing audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and advancing its foreign policy goals (CPD, 2011). In this traditional view, public diplomacy is considered an integral part of state-to-state diplomacy. In this sense, public diplomacy includes activities such as educational exchange programmes for scholars and students; visitor programmes; language training; cultural events and

exchanges; and radio and television broadcasting. Such activities usually focus on improving the “sending” country’s image or reputation as a way to shape the wider policy environment in the “receiving” country (CPD, 2011).

Distinct from the “narrow” traditional, state-based conception of public diplomacy described above, recent scholars have offered a “broader” conception of the field’s scope by developing the concept of the new public diplomacy; it defines public diplomacy more expansively than as an activity unique to sovereign states (CPD, 2011). This view aims to capture the emerging trends in international relations, where a range of non-state actors with some standing in world politics (supranational organisations, sub-national actors, NGOs and even private companies), communicate and engage meaningfully with foreign publics and thereby develop and promote public diplomacy policies and practices of their own.

Supporters of the new public diplomacy (Nye: 2010, Melissen: 2005, Hocking: 2005) point to the democratisation of information through new media and communication technology as a new force that has greatly empowered non-state actors and elevated their role and legitimacy in international politics. As a result, a new public diplomacy is seen as taking place in a system of mutually beneficial relations that is no longer state-centric; it is composed of multiple actors and networks, operating in a fluid global environment of new issues and contexts (CPD, 2011).

Public diplomacy has developed a different meaning from public affairs, which refers to a government’s activities and programmes designed to communicate policy messages to its own domestic audiences (CPD, 2011). Public affairs is the provision of information to the public, press and other institutions concerning the goals, policies and activities of the own state (PDAA, 2008). Therefore, public affairs seek to foster understanding of these goals through dialogue with individual citizens and other groups and institutions, as well as domestic and international media. The thrust of public affairs is to inform the domestic audience.

Research supporting a constructivist perspective suggests that ideas are potent forces and influence behaviour significantly (Lord, 2005). Constructivist scholarship supports the following three propositions:

- Human interaction is shaped primarily by ideas, not just material interests.
- The most important ideas are widely shared beliefs that transcend the beliefs of individuals.
- Shared beliefs influence the interests and identities of individuals, groups and even nations.

Ideas matter, in other words, they are an important source of power. Public diplomacy can help to remind people of enduring ideas, spread new ideas, or counter bad ones. Even if policies are disliked, public diplomacy can influence the climate in which policies are viewed and remind people that they share values that are larger and ultimately more important than a particular policy (Lord, 2005).

The local media plays a critical role in managing the perception and reputation of a country in the eyes of a foreign public; and the local aspect is not only significant in studying public diplomacy and the media, but also relevant to public diplomacy strategies and tactics abroad (Wang & Chang, 2004). Although the content of most television, radio and print media is still created with a national or local audience in mind, their networks of foreign correspondents will ensure that messages do get transferred from one region to another.

The domestic outreach of public affairs (which is the main focus of this study) more often involves responding to requests for information about foreign policy from the news media and others (Fitzpatrick, 2010). The role of public affairs is seen as enabling the right of a people of a democratic nation to be kept informed about the actions and motives of their government.

In this study, where the government's refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama will be tracked, following media coverage of the event through the Independent News & Media, public affairs will be relevant more than public diplomacy. The South African Government's explanation of its policy to its domestic audience is more relevant in this case study.

## 7.1. Elements of public diplomacy

Public diplomacy can be explained by contrasting its principal characteristics with those of “official diplomacy”. Firstly, public diplomacy is transparent and widely disseminated, whereas official diplomacy is opaque and its dissemination narrowly confined. Secondly, public diplomacy is transmitted by governments to wider, or in some cases selected, “publics”, whereas official diplomacy is transmitted by governments to other governments. Finally, the themes and issues with which official diplomacy is concerned, relate to the behaviour and policies of governments, whereas the themes and issues with which public diplomacy is concerned, relate to the attitudes and behaviours of publics (Rosen & Wolf, 2005).

While traditional official diplomacy focuses on relationships between the representatives of states or international actors (Saddiki, 2006), public diplomacy is directed at foreign publics in foreign societies as a principal target, in order to influence their attitudes. In general, public diplomacy remains a key instrument of official foreign policy, to support its objectives, or at least, to reduce hostility to the country (Saddiki, 2006).

The essential functions performed through public diplomacy are:

- press and public affairs activities of governmental officials (president, ministries, diplomats and government officials);
- informational and cultural activities organised by diplomatic missions abroad;
- educational and cultural exchanges;
- international exchange of people’s programmes;
- international television and radio; and
- government-sponsored activities of NGOs (Saddiki, 2006).

The task of public diplomacy involves, among other functions, engaging the media to put a country's policies in the correct perspective and to dispel any wrong impression about its policies (Gilboa, undated). The “media diplomacy” aspect of public diplomacy has become a major instrument of foreign policy and journalists are more

frequently and more intensively engaged in diplomatic events and processes. The media serves both as an independent actor and as a tool in the hands of policy-makers. An important element of public diplomacy is media liaison, where journalists are frequently engaged in diplomatic events and processes. The media functions both as an independent actor and as a tool in the hands of policy makers.

Active government public diplomacy can be understood as a set of foreign affairs ministry functions that includes promotion, outreach, feedback, management and servicing (Rasmussen, 2013). Government-initiated public diplomacy goes even beyond these 'passive', technocratic functions to active engagement of a foreign public with the goal of advancing the state's ideals, interests and narrative as the words promotion and outreach fail to do justice to the centrality of the diplomatic task: the projection of one's state into the host nation. Public diplomacy can thus be seen as a constructivist function aimed at the 'construction' of a state's international image.

## **7.2. Public diplomacy and power**

It is important to distinguish between public diplomacy and some related terms such as propaganda and "soft power". Nye (in Belfer Centre, 2003) defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goal". It differs from hard power, "the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will".

The concept of soft power has become a core concept in public diplomacy studies. Soft power is also described as the degree to which a political actor's cultural assets, political ideals and policies inspire respect or affinity on the part of others and has come to be seen as a resource, with public diplomacy being a mechanism that seeks to leverage soft power resources (CPD, 2009).

Dayang (2011) maintains that public diplomacy is not a form of marketing for an international audience. He sees public diplomacy as the conduct of relations of sovereign states through agents. As an aspect of diplomacy, public diplomacy is generally concerned with the influence of public opinion on the formulation and



implementation of foreign policy. The objective of influencing public opinion has long been one of the aims of foreign policy even before the introduction of the term “public diplomacy”. To be effective, public opinion must be engaged in a dialogue with foreign publics. It is not a one-way or top-down communication activity, but a two-way communication activity, which gives importance to listening as much as to conveying its message and influencing public opinion. Cultural understanding is a key to communication, because information is filtered through the cultural perceptions of the listener (Dayang, 2011).

As explained before, soft power moves people to act through cooperation rather than coercion (Gilboa, 2011). Public diplomacy is presented as an official policy which translates soft-power resources into action. Power is usually conceived in terms of dispositions and capacities, which suggest how things could be different (Berenskoetter, 2007). Constructivism tends to question the inevitability of the status quo, thus lending itself as the obvious framework for understanding public diplomacy and soft-power application.

The concept “soft power” defines attempts by powerful figures and countries to shape others’ perceptions of them (Cull, 2013). Contemporary soft power now underlies any fundamental understanding of international relations, a shift brought about by the key role of communication in our lives. Today, nations are perpetually in the glare of the media spotlight.

Global political discourse has become a battleground of rival stories online and on screen. This makes it all but impossible to wield the brute force of hard power without provoking a counter reaction. For countries concerned about how they are perceived by their friends and rivals, getting the media to focus on the right stories to project the right image has never been more important (Cull, 2013).

### **7.3. Public diplomacy and propaganda**

This section distinguishes between public diplomacy and propaganda; both are instruments of foreign policy, though few governments would admit to actually applying propaganda.

### **7.3.1. Definition of propaganda**

Propaganda in the most natural sense is to disseminate information or promote particular ideas (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006: 2-3). In Latin it means "to propagate" or "to sow" and was used by the Vatican in the sense of propagating the faith. However, the word lost its neutrality, and to identify a message as propaganda came to suggest something negative or dishonest, implying the use of lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control, psychological warfare and brainwashing.

Jowett and O'Donnell (2006: 1) describe propaganda as a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response "that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" whereas persuasion entails interactive attempts to satisfy the needs of both persuader and persuadee. Elements of informative and persuasive communication may be incorporated into propagandistic communication.

To study propaganda from a journalistic point of view is to understand how news management or 'spin' shapes information, emphasising positive features and downplaying negative ones, casting institutions in a favourable light. To examine it in view of political science is to analyse the ideologies of practitioners and the dissemination and impact of public opinion (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006: 3).

Terms implying propaganda that have gained popularity are 'spin' and 'news management', referring to a coordinated strategy to minimise the negative effects of information and present in a favourable light a story that could be damaging to self-interest (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006: 3).

Spin is often used with reference to the manipulation of political information. Besides being associated with unethical, harmful and unfair tactics, propaganda is also commonly defined as "organised persuasion". Persuasion differs from propaganda but is used to describe all suspicious rhetoric. Propaganda has been described as organised mass persuasion with covert intent and poor reasoning (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006: 3).

Ellul (1965: 52 & 276) contended that nearly all biased messages in society were propagandistic, even when the biases were unconscious. He maintained that truth did not separate propaganda from moral forms because propaganda used truth, half-truth and limited truth.

Doob (1935: 390) defined propaganda as the attempt to affect the personalities and control the behaviour of individuals towards ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a particular time. However, he felt that a clear-cut definition was neither possible, nor desirable, because of the complexity of the matter.

In many Western states propaganda may be translated as advertising or public relations, but usually the social meaning includes some element of deception (Clark, 2003). Propaganda as a function of a government is a "persuasive communicative act ... directed at a foreign audience" (Clark, 2003). Clark (2003) argues that the most money is not spent by propagandists on propaganda, but on "facilitative communication" which would constitute what many international radio stations engage in, including radio newscasts, press releases and artistic and cultural programmes.

From a constructivist perspective, states do not operate in isolation, but are part of a world system and have specific identities in that system (Clark, 2003). The way states use their government-funded communication is based on the state's identity and a state's relationship with other states. Governments would, however, never label this communication as propaganda, even if it were, because of the negative connotations associated with the word. Propaganda is an attempt by the government of one state to influence another to act or think in ways which are conducive to the interests of the source.

Looking at how the audience perceives messages, it may be concluded that if media audiences simply do not attend to the constructed nature of media accounts of politics, they are likely to label such accounts news (Clark, 2003). When they are more aware of their constructed nature, they are more likely to label such presentations editorials. When audiences understand media accounts of political

phenomena as constructed explicitly to serve political goals, particularly goals they do not share, they are more likely to label such presentations propaganda.

### **7.3.2. Forms of propaganda**

Though propaganda takes many forms, it is almost always in some form of activated ideology. It might be agitated, attempting to rouse an audience to certain ends and resulting in change; or it could be integrative to render an audience passive, accepting and non-challenging (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006: 16).

Propaganda is also described as white, black or grey in relationship to its source and accuracy of information. White propaganda comes from a source identified correctly and the information in the message tends to be accurate. It attempts to build credibility with the audience. In the case of black propaganda the source is concealed or credited to a false authority and spreads lies, fabrications and deceptions. Grey propaganda is somewhere between black and white. The source may not be correctly identified and the accuracy of the information is uncertain (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006:16-20).

If propaganda is defined as a deliberate attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist, the constructivist link is obvious (Sletteland, 2008). Government propaganda is a delicate issue in many countries. It is sometimes argued that public diplomacy can be white or grey propaganda, but never black. Black propaganda is known to be undermining in the long term, but propaganda-sensitive societies sometimes react negatively on white and grey propaganda as well.

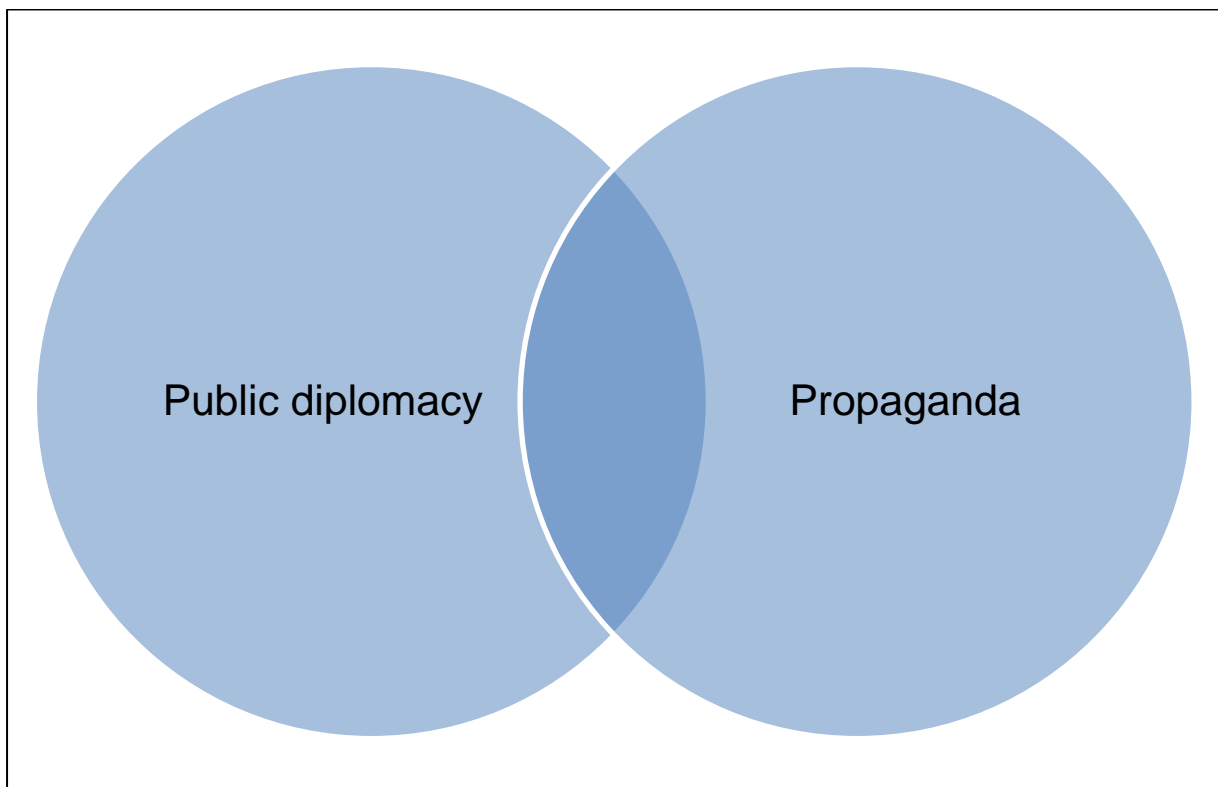
The association with propaganda is regarded as a problem for public diplomacy in general, because of its connotation to mind-control, deception and cultural imperialism (Sletteland, 2008). The new information environment is a central concern for public diplomats. It has become increasingly difficult to control and influence media and compete for attention. In this context, when regarded independently of its previous successes, public diplomacy can appear somewhat 'desperate'. Although public diplomats experience difficulties with getting media coverage, they engage in

a long-term relationship with journalists and editors and hence depend on credibility (Sletteland, 2008).

### 7.3.3. Difference between public diplomacy and propaganda

Public diplomacy cannot be equated with propaganda (Brown 2008). If the two ideas were represented by two circles, they would intersect, but neither circle would be within the other (See Figure 1).

**Figure 3: Public diplomacy and propaganda**



*Source: Brown 2008*

In distinguishing between the two entities, public diplomacy will be examined as at its best and propaganda at its worst (Brown, 2008). The better public diplomacy is and the worst propaganda is, the intersection of the two circles diminishes proportionally. The multitude of tools used by public diplomacy and propaganda, are often identical (such as the mass media). The intent of the practitioners of public diplomacy and propaganda may be the same. Neither is altruistic. When public diplomacy and

propaganda are used as state instruments, they serve a country's interests. At their best and at their worst, they do so in significantly different ways.

At its best, public diplomacy provides a truthful, factual exposition and explication of a nation's foreign policy and way of life to overseas audiences; it encourages international understanding; listens and engages in dialogue; and objectively displays national achievements overseas. At its worst, propaganda forces its messages on an audience, often by repetition and slogans; demonises elements of the outside world and claims the nation it glorifies can do no wrong; it simplifies complex issues, including history; and misrepresents the truth or deliberately lies (Brown, 2008).

Both public diplomacy and propaganda, at their best or their worst, can achieve credibility with their audiences (Brown, 2008). However, the best public diplomacy achieves credibility through careful presentation of fact and thoughtful argumentation, while the worst propaganda achieves credibility by falsification and sensationalism.

As a rule, public diplomacy at its best, which appeals to the intellect, is believed in the long run, while propaganda at its worst, which inflames atavistic emotions, is believed only for short periods. The best public diplomacy convinces audiences that its content and purpose mesh and that therefore, it is honest; the worst propaganda leads audiences to believe that its content does not reveal its true purpose and that therefore, it is dishonest (Brown, 2008).

Propaganda is source-based, cause-oriented, emotion-laden content that utilises mass persuasion media to cultivate the mass mind in service to the source's goals (Snow, 2012). At its best, propaganda involves pro-social causes that do not stray too far from the truth. At its worst, propaganda serves a strictly pro-source function that uses whatever means necessary to fulfil its goals.

Public diplomacy puts human interaction front and centre in far less manipulative ways than propaganda (Snow, 2012). Public diplomacy is based on indirect behavioural influences such as culture, values and ideology that direct nations

toward interdependence over confrontation. Ideally, the target audience is more like a 'prosumer' (proactive consumer) consuming messages from the sender, but also proactively responding and persuading back in a two-way exchange of ideas.

The belief that reality is socially constructed leads constructivists to place a greater role on norm development, identity and ideational power than the other major theoretical paradigms. Indeed, norms, identity and ideas are key factors in constructivist theory (Cristol, 2013). Propaganda and public diplomacy are all about 'selling' ideas, very often about changing identities or at the very least changing perceptions about other identities. Distinguishing between these is a normative judgement.

#### **7.4. Practice of public diplomacy**

The method of modern public diplomacy is different from marketing. Public diplomacy methods can be divided into listening; advocacy; cultural diplomacy; exchange diplomacy; and international broadcasting (Dayang, 2011). Whereas in the past, communication was one-way and non-interactive, current practice uses various forms of media and new technologies in conveying messages and receiving feedback from audiences. Listening has become an essential feature of public diplomacy (Dayang, 2011).

On-line social networks such as Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)) and Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) have added a new dimension to public diplomacy the same way the "CNN Effect" made an impact on public diplomacy delivery, by emphasising immediate response to crisis situations and sound bites (Dayang, 2011).

An important contribution of the internet is the localisation or domestication of international affairs. Social networks have played a role in rallying young people to fight against tyranny, which had a domino-effect. This has been clearly illustrated in the events associated with the so-called Arab Spring which erupted in 2011. From being an obscure domestic issue, "people power" in, for example, Tunisia was seen on You Tube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) and incited replication from other countries in the Middle East (Dayang, 2011).

In terms of advocacy, public diplomacy promotes its national culture and ideas. Public diplomacy can have various applications. For some countries, the distinction of public diplomacy and public affairs is blurred. For example, for the Philippines and India, which have large diaspora communities overseas, its public diplomacy efforts are not only aimed at influencing foreign audiences, but also at influencing the opinion of its citizens overseas (Dayang, 2011). In the age of information technology, a state's public diplomacy initiative is easily accessible to a wider foreign audience, as well as to the domestic audience and foreign citizens abroad. Thus, diplomats are required to be ever responsive to the needs of its citizens overseas, because not doing so would put the government and the diplomats in a bad light (Dayang, 2011).

Public diplomacy will not displace traditional state-to-state diplomacy as practiced by foreign ministries, but will have an impact on the way they do business (CPD, 2011). Foreign ministries and diplomats will need to go beyond bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and construct and conduct relations with new global actors. Public diplomacy, as an aspect of diplomacy, is not a form of international marketing. Public diplomacy is not a sales pitch and it is not concerned with selling a product for profit. Its aim is to pursue national interest by informing and influencing public attitudes to support its political and strategic intentions (Dayang, 2011).

Public diplomacy operates through actions, relationships, images and words in three time frames: 24/7 news streams; medium range campaigns on high-value policies; and long-term engagement. Its tools range from electronic media; to cultural diplomacy; to personal communication (Gregory, 2008). States practice public diplomacy due primarily to rational interests, not ideals of democracy or openness. However, there is a general social trend, as predicted by normative expansion understood by sociological, constructivist theories, towards the practice of public diplomacy (Rasmussen 2009: 20). The growing number of states practicing public diplomacy points to an emerging standard that goes further than a rational, interest-based computation. Idealistic incentives for performing public diplomacy are restricted notwithstanding the original notion of "credible diplomacy" as truth over propaganda (Rasmussen 2009: 1) There is an overpowering impulsion for countries



to amplify their public diplomacy efforts. It is becoming an increasingly imperative advantage in a globalised world (Rasmussen 2009: 20).

It has thus been established that whereas there may be a close link between diplomacy and public diplomacy in that both can be seen as instruments to further the own state's image or interest *vis-à-vis* other states, public diplomacy messages are aimed at consumption by a larger more public audience.

## **8. Visa diplomacy as a particular type of diplomacy**

Most commonly visa diplomacy is a phenomenon where a visa is used as a diplomatic tool to communicate government discontent or displeasure at other states and a coercive instrument to change or bend another state's position on a particular issue (Stringer, 2004:13-15). The use of visa denials or the introduction of a visa regime is done in pursuit of legitimate national interests.

Visa diplomacy is a form of retortion, which is the commission of an unfriendly, but legal act, usually undertaken in response to a prior, equally unfriendly act, by the other party (Stringer, 2004: 13-15). Visa diplomacy could be placed in the same realm as sanctions, but is less controversial. Visa diplomacy fits into the same category as "targeted" or "smart" sanctions, since they do not only avoid the possibility of humanitarian impact of broader travel restrictions, but deny legitimacy to political leaders.

Visas provide states with a simple, low-cost vehicle of diplomatic communication to express both subtle and less subtle shifts in policy or emotions (Stringer, 2004: 27). They allow regimes to make policy statements that cannot be expressed by other means. It appears to be a successful approach when used for recognition purposes and to convey publicly a move towards greater cooperation. It seems to be more problematic as an instrument of coercion in the spectrum of interstate conflict below the level of warfare, as it is rather a weak form of retortion if not used in conjunction with other instruments and merely useful as a way to posturing.

## 9. Conclusion

Diplomacy is thus a tool of a government's foreign policy used to reach agreements within a framework of policy. Communication is crucial in diplomatic activity. Diplomatic negotiation is important here. A vital aspect of diplomatic activity is state representation through missions abroad, where diplomatic privilege and immunity is paramount.

Public diplomacy is a form of transparent diplomacy promoting the national interest of the state through understanding, informing and influencing foreign audiences. Public diplomacy activities can be distinguished from public affairs, which refer to a government's programmes to communicate with its own domestic audiences. Public diplomacy can also be distinguished from propaganda, which is a form of persuasion usually associated with lies, distortion, deceit and manipulation. Though public diplomacy cannot be equated with propaganda, the two ideas do share some similarities in the persuasive element they both possess.

Public diplomacy, like constructivism, understands the normative or ideational structures underpinning audience influence (Byrne, 2012). Public diplomacy bridges the breach with some public audiences as a result of the normative or ideational structures from within which they operate. Public diplomacy practitioners are instinctively and intentionally occupied in understanding the identities, value positions and norms both applicable to their own and others' ideational structures to successfully engage and influence publics and achieve policy objectives. By dealing in the currencies of constructivism, public diplomacy operationalises constructivist approaches.

The next chapter discusses the South African media landscape, investigating the South African public, private and independent media, including print, news agencies, broadcast, internet and telecommunications.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE

#### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain interests, norms and identity as part of the media; and to outline the South African public, private and independent media landscape, including the print media, broadcasting, internet and telecommunications.

A democratic political culture requires a vibrant civil-society sector and an independent media to ensure that citizens are well informed about the actions and performance of government institutions and officials, and that citizens have the means to freely influence public policies (USAID, 2013). In recent years, more than 90 governments have sought to pass restrictive laws and regulations, hampering the ability of civil society organisations to register, operate freely or receive foreign funding. In 2012, only 14, 5 per cent of the world's inhabitants lived in countries with a completely free press (USAID, 2013).

There is a close connection between journalism and democracy. Citizens can exercise their democratic rights only if they are fully informed (Krüger, 2004: 3-4). According to the 2002 Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa: "Respect for freedom of expression, as well as the right to access to information held by public bodies and companies, will lead to greater public transparency and accountability, as well as good governance and the strengthening of democracy" (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, 2002).

As journalism is practised on behalf of the public, the media claim freedom not for themselves, but for the citizenry in general (Krüger, 2004: 3-4). Japan's Canon of Journalism states that: "The public's right to know ... cannot be ensured without the existence of media, operating with the guarantee of freedom of speech and expression" (Pressnet, 2012). These lofty ideals easily lay a basis for ethics, bridged by credibility.

*Sunday Times* editor Jovial Rantao states that:

Credibility is the lifeblood of our profession as journalists ... Without it not one person will believe a single word that we write. One of the basic tenets of our profession is to ensure that the credibility of the information that we gather on a daily basis is unquestionable (cited in Krüger, 2004: 4).

There is also the question as to whether values and principles encapsulated in media ethics need to be adapted for local circumstances (Krüger 2004: 9-10). Zambian academic Francis Kasoma (1994: 34) argues that generally accepted standards are based in European morality and that African journalists should look to their own moral heritage as African values would be kinder: "There is too much of the cold Euro-American brand of news reporting in Africa."

European journalism ethics are seen as based on deontology, that decisions are taken asking the question: "what is the duty of a moral person?" African ethics are seen as situational, taking account of the consequences for the community. According to Kasoma (1994: 34), "development journalism" is practised to further national development goals, but this should not mean simply following a government agenda:

The basic problem is determining who decides whether news is, or is not, in the national interest. Such power should belong to journalists and not to politicians.

In the 1980s, there was a thriving 'alternative' press sector including journals, magazines and newspapers in South Africa (OSISA, 2010: 21). As these survived largely through foreign funding, the majority of such publications closed down during the early 1990s, as donor funding focus shifted. There are a few smaller but significant media groups (notably *Mail & Guardian* newspapers and *UmAfrika*) and according to reports, over 200 non-profit and community newspapers. Some of the alternative journals have survived (such as the *Agenda* feminist journal and the *Labour Bulletin*) and recently a number of other left-wing publications have emerged (such as *New Agenda* and *Amandla*).

## **2. Interests, norms and identity as part of the media**

Mass media have a strong impact in constructing social reality, by framing images of reality in a predictable and patterned way (Scheufele, 1999). Media effects are limited by the discourse between mass media and recipients. Media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists develop and crystallise meaning in public discourse. In political communication, framing has to be defined and operationalised on the basis of this social constructivism.

Mass media actively set the frames of reference that receivers use to interpret and discuss public events (Scheufele, 1999). At the same time, the receivers are influenced by pre-existing meaning structures. Active processing refers to a receiver seeking out additional sources based on the assumption that mass-mediated information in general is incomplete, slanted or in other ways 'coloured' by the intentions of the communicator. Reflective integrators would ponder the information received or talk to others to fully understand what they have learned. Selective scanners use the mass media to only find information relative to them.

### **2.1.1. Interests**

The formation of frames could be explained by an interaction of journalists' practices and the influence of interest groups (Scheufele, 1999). These groups marshal support and opposition to their interests. They use mass media to construct opinion and reality and their societal influence to establish certain frames of reference.

Herman and Chomsky's (1988) "propaganda model" of the media postulates a set of five filters that act to screen the news and other material disseminated by the media (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: xi). These filters result in a media that reflects elite viewpoints and interests and mobilises support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity. These filters are:

- the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
- advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
- the reliance of the media on information provided by Government, business, and experts funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
- 'flak' (negative responses to a media report) as a means of disciplining the media; and
- (at that stage on the media agenda) "Anti-communism" as a national religion and control mechanism (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: xi).

The raw material of news must pass through successive filters leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print, they maintain. The filters fix the premises of discourse and interpretation and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: xi).

Frames suggested by interest groups or political actors as sound bites are adopted by journalists and incorporated in their coverage of an event or issue (Scheufele, 1999). This serves to explain how news is constructed and how societal interests impact on the process.

### **2.1.2. Norms**

The formation of frames could also be explained by journalists' norms (Scheufele, 1999). Regarding norms, media everywhere subscribe to a code of conduct of some kind. The South African Press Council (SAPC) subscribes to a particular code (SAPC, 2011).<sup>17</sup> The mechanism is based on two pillars: a commitment to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press; and a commitment to excellence in journalistic practice and ethics.

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<sup>17</sup> The South African Press Council, the Ombudsman and the Appeals Panel form an independent co-regulatory mechanism set up by the print media to provide impartial, expeditious and cost-effective adjudication to settle disputes between newspapers and magazines, on the one hand, and members of the public, on the other, over the editorial content of publications (SAPC, 2011).

The Council has adopted the South African Press Code to guide journalists in their daily practice of gathering and distributing news and opinion, and to guide the Ombudsman and the Appeals Panel to reach decisions on complaints from the public (SAPC, 2011). More than 640 publications subscribe to the Code. The Council is the custodian of this Code and may amend it from time to time, depending on needs.

The industry believes in independent co-regulation involving exclusively representatives of the press and representatives of the public as the only way to guarantee the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of the press and other media guaranteed in the Constitution (SAPC, 2011). Any other form of regulation would threaten the independence of the press and freedom of expression.

According to the Press Code, the press exists to serve society. Its freedom provides for independent scrutiny of the forces that shape society and is essential to realising the promise of democracy (SAPC, 2011). It enables citizens to make informed judgments on the issues of the time. Their work is guided at all times by the public interest, understood to describe information of legitimate interest or importance to citizens. As journalists, they commit themselves to the highest standards of excellence, to maintain credibility and keep the trust of their readers. This means striving for the maximum truth, avoiding unnecessary harm and acting independently.

Although codes of conduct go a long way to setting out the dos and don'ts of the profession (journalism and the media) applying them to real-life situations is often not straight forward - for instance, the public's right to know tugs against an individual's right to privacy (Krüger, 2004: x-1). According to the Press Code of Professional Practice in South Africa:

The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve society by informing citizens and enabling them to make informed judgments on the issues of the time. The freedom of the press to bring an independent scrutiny is a freedom exercised on behalf of the public (My Pressporta, 2012).

Ethics is about right and wrong (Krüger, 2004: x-1). It is clearly distinct from the law. Where ethics set the highest standards of ideal behaviour, the law is concerned with the minimum or “the bottom line below we should not fall.” On the other hand the law carries sanctions of a more vigorous kind than any ethical code, whereas ethics appeals to the journalist’s responsibility and conscience.

Krüger (2004: 12-13) offers a set of guiding principles for ethics in journalism:

- Truth-telling: Seek truth and report it as fully as possible. This speaks to the fundamental truth-telling function of journalism and has two sub-themes: accuracy and fairness. The need for accuracy is obvious; and bias and unfairness can badly undermine the truthfulness of a report;
- Independence: This arises as credibility is affected by any perceived or real conflicts of interest. Audiences will discount any reporting seen as influenced by considerations outside of journalism, such as personal, commercial or political motives. Journalists need to be vociferous in their defence of media freedom;
- Minimising harm: While truth-telling is a driving force, this consideration puts on the brakes. People can be hurt by journalism; it can deepen a trauma suffered; reputations can be damaged; people can be subjected to ridicule, recriminations and even physical danger; and public sensitivities can be offended. These cannot always be avoided, but should be minimised; and
- Accountability: Journalists should be prepared to answer for their work through published corrections and cooperation with the system of self-regulation. This is different from state regulation, which would undermine media freedom.

Considering the profound influence of mass media like television on cultural perceptions and attitudes, it is important for the creators of media content to grapple with ethical issues (Lule, 2012). Most democratic constitutions would guarantee the freedom of the press as an important ingredient in upholding democratic principles. Freedom from government censorship allows the news media to keep citizens



informed about the state of their society. However, the press can take this freedom from censorship and restriction too far. Constitutions also usually guarantee individuals certain rights to privacy and most journalists undertake in their codes of ethical journalism to protect these rights.

### **2.1.3 Identity**

Regarding media identity, Nicholas and Price (1998: 20-21) note that media owners argue that ultimately it is the consumers who determine the nature of media products. However, they contend that the news organisation's origins should be taken into account to understand its identity. Some were set up by individuals seeking political influence. A local media organisation has to identify with its region very strongly, while a national media organisation can upset the odd local community or two and still survive. A media organisation's critical independence can be affected by its relationship with other organisations which need publicity.

Hard economic facts may be difficult to determine, as they are often sensitive, but they have a very strong influence on identity through advertisement and other financing. Understanding how a media organisation is structured (who has the real power and how it is exercised) will offer insight into the pressures, motivations, fears and hopes which affect the way media products are presented to the public (Nicholas & Price, 1998: 20-21).

On the other hand, the media also generate, corroborate and accelerate identity formation, just as they diminish, overshadow or negate it (Hadland et al., 2008:3). Since 1994, South Africa has experienced a significant change in its political and media landscapes (Hadland et al., 2008:9). These transformations impacted on both individual and collective identities of South Africans. Those that had emerged and grown under apartheid were destabilised; while the reconfiguration of the social-political and media landscape created the conditions for, and promoted the emergence of, new individual and collective identities. The South African identity, as shaped by media influence, remains a work in progress (Hadland et al., 2008:12).

### **3. The South African public, private and independent media landscape**

The media in South Africa is well-established and sophisticated. It comprises print media (newspapers and magazines), broadcast media (radio and television) and electronic media (Internet). Though South Africa has a wide range of media, there are many people in remote rural areas who still do not have access to a diverse range of information. Radio has the greatest reach of any media in South Africa (OSISA, 2010: 19).

Key issues facing this industry include, among others, the role of the press in a fledgling democracy, illiteracy and the attraction and retention of advertising revenue. In order to contextualise the media landscape in South Africa, this section outlines the main media actors in the country which are relevant to the study.

#### **3.1. Print media**

As indicated before, four major companies dominate the South African newspaper and magazine industry, namely Independent Newspapers, Naspers, Caxton and Avusa, as well as a number of large publishers. There are several daily and weekly newspapers and a magazine market comprising hundreds of consumer, business and professional titles.

##### **3.1.1. Avusa Limited**

Avusa Limited (hereafter Avusa) leads the weekly newspaper and financial publications market through the *Sunday Times* (with 3,3 million readers the biggest paper in the country) and the *Sunday World*. It also shares in daily influential newspaper the *Business Day* and the weekly *Financial Mail* magazine (OSISA, 2010: 20). In addition, Avusa also owns the daily *Sowetan* newspaper (aimed at black readers), major newspapers in the Eastern Cape and a range of free-sheet newspapers. Avusa also has interests in book publishing, the music industry and other entertainment entities, including movies. In mid-2008, major black economic

empowerment (BEE) investment company Mvelaphanda Holdings finalised the acquisition of a 25, 5 per cent stake in Avusa (OSISA, 2010: 20).<sup>18</sup>

### **3.1.2. CTP Property Limited**

Caxton and CTP Publishers and Printers Limited (hereafter Caxton) publishes knock-and-drop local papers, as well as the national daily newspaper *The Citizen*. The newspaper division of the company owns or co-owns 88 titles (including free and for sale newspapers). The magazine unit has 15 titles and Caxton owns one of the largest commercial printers in South Africa. Avusa has an indirect 38 per cent stake in Caxton, although its shareholders had approved the splitting off of these assets into a separately listed company, named ElementOne (OSISA, 2010: 20).

### **3.1.3. Independent News & Media**

Independent Newspapers, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Irish Independent News & Media (South Africa) Limited, is soon to be run by local players after the group's Irish parent company agreed to sell the company to a Sekunjalo-led consortium (*Business Day*, 17/6/2013). It publishes 14 daily and weekly newspapers in South Africa's major metropolitan areas including *The Star* (Johannesburg), the *Cape Argus* (Cape Town), the *Isolezwe* (IsiZulu newspaper, Durban), the *Cape Times* (Cape Town), *The Mercury* (Durban) and the *Pretoria News*. Weekend newspapers include the *Independent on Saturday*, the *Sunday Independent* and the *Sunday Tribune* (OSISA, 2010: 20-21).

### **3.1.4. Nasionale Pers**

Nasionale Pers (hereafter Naspers) owns Media 24, which in turn controls 60 per cent of South Africa's magazine market (OSISA, 2010: 21). Naspers (2010) defines itself as a "multinational media company with principal operations in electronic media" (including pay-television, internet and instant-messaging subscriber platforms and the provision of related technologies) and print media (including the publishing,

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<sup>18</sup> Avusa was formerly known as Johnnic Communications.

distribution and printing of magazines, newspapers and books, and the provision of private education services).

It publishes 50 newspaper titles including Afrikaans newspapers *Die Burger* (Western and Northern Cape), the *Beeld* (Gauteng), the *Volksblad* (Free State) and the national weekly the *Rapport*, the tabloid *Daily Sun*, as well as the Sunday newspaper *City Press*. In South Africa, Naspers controls Internet service provider M-Web, as well as Multi-Choice, which owns subscription broadcasters Digital Satellite Television (DStv) and M-Net (OSISA, 2010: 21).

Newspapers and magazines (apart from “knock-and-drop” newspapers) are not readily affordable for the majority of South Africans, as many cost more than, for example, a loaf of bread. This in part accounts for the high readership per copy of popular newspapers (OSISA, 2010: 19). The development of the South African press since the end of apartheid has shown two significant trends: the stagnation and decline of the traditional mainstream newspapers, and the phenomenal growth of papers with a black, working-class readership (BrandSA, 2011a).

The stagnation of South Africa's mainstream press, which traditionally had a wealthy white readership, mirrors the trend in established newspapers in developed countries across the world. This is generally attributed to the growth of the Internet, with more and more who have access to choosing to find their news online instead of on the printed page (BrandSA, 2011a).

The opposite trend, the remarkable growth of newspaper readership in the lower end of the market, is a phenomenon seen in developing countries such as India and China (BrandSA, 2011a). This is due to the vast improvement in the living standards in South Africa's poorest communities, the major beneficiaries of change in the country. Their living conditions and general standard of living changed with access to housing, electricity, running water, job opportunities and minimum wages.

In this vast new readership one paper stands out: The *Daily Sun*. Launched in 2002 to fill the enormous gap in the newspaper market, this tabloid has seen its circulation rise from 78 000 in its first year to 513 291 in the first quarter of 2009 – in copies

sold. Its readership has increased from under half a million to 5,2 million. It now has a market penetration of 51,8 percent – a single newspaper with the majority market share (BrandSA, 2011a).

The *Daily Sun's* success has led to an increasing "tabloidisation" of South Africa's newspaper industry, with a number of new tabloids being launched (BrandSA, 2011a). These include the Afrikaans-language *Son* and the English-language *Daily Voice*, both targeting working class so-called coloured and, to a lesser extent, white readers in the Western Cape.

The number of newspaper and magazine titles measured by the South African Audience Research Foundation (SAARF)<sup>19</sup> All Media Products Survey (AMPS)<sup>20</sup> has grown since 1998 (See Table 1). Penetration of print media inevitably is highest amongst wealthier communities. SAARF reports, for example, that while only six per cent of the population in Living Standard Measurement (LSM) 1 reads a newspaper, there is 75 per cent penetration in LSM 10 (OSISA, 2010: 19).

**Table 1: South African magazines and newspapers (1998-2008)**

<b>Number of magazines published</b>						
	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Weekly</b>	15	13	15	13	16	14
<b>Fortnightly</b>	5	5	3	2	1	2
<b>Monthly</b>	43	59	61	66	88	93
<b>Number of newspapers</b>						
	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>

<sup>19</sup> SAARF publishes media audience and brand research, providing data for target marketing and a common currency for buying and selling media space and time. It measures the audiences of all traditional media (SAARF, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> SAARF's AMPS collects information on the readership of newspapers and magazines, television viewing, radio listening, cinema-going and on the acquisition, possession or use of selection or products and services together with extensive demographic data (SADA, 1995).

<b>Daily</b>	17	17	16	18	20	22
<b>Weekly</b>	27	26	22	24	27	28
<b>Any</b>	44	43	40	43	50	51

Source: Marketing Mix, 2010

Most of the mass media publishes in English or Afrikaans. Smaller media groups face huge challenges, as major distribution networks and big media players control printing presses. Newspapers are primarily distributed in metropolitan areas and are not always easily accessible in poor rural areas. The costs of purchasing newspapers for poor people are thus prohibitive, if one considers transport costs (OSISA, 2010: 21).

The largest newspapers in terms of readership and penetration according to SAARF AMPS are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2: Daily newspaper readership / penetration (2005-2009)**

<b>Daily newspaper</b>	<b>Frequency/Type</b>	<b>Area published</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>2005 readership (% penetration of adult population)</b>	<b>2009 readership (% penetration of adult population)</b>
<i>Daily Sun</i>	Daily tabloid	Gauteng, Free State, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal	English	9,8	14
<i>Sowetan</i>	Daily tabloid	Gauteng	English	5	4,7
<i>The Star</i>	Daily broadsheet	Gauteng	English	1,8	2,5
<i>Isolezwe</i>	Daily broadsheet	KwaZulu-Natal	IsiZulu	1,6	2,4

Source: Marketing Mix 2010

More recent figures show that total sales for daily newspapers dropped from 1,68 million to 1,53 million (daily average) from 2009 to 2013 (Harber, 2013). Most of the newspapers belonging to The Independent Newspaper group fell by about 20 per cent. These figures include digital subscriptions. Afrikaans newspapers also continued their downward slide. Even those newspapers that had been bucking the general trend did not do so this time. IsiZulu newspapers had mixed results, breaking their pattern of consistent growth. The shining star was *Isolezwe*. The *Daily Sun* continued its downward trend from its peak of near 500 000, now down to 322 324.

To understand the long-term trends, total daily newspaper sales in 2009 were 1,96 million and they are now 1,53 million (Harber, 2013). Between 2002 and 2009, the figures were boosted largely by the new tabloids, which found a new market and grew quickly over about five years. The older newspapers were generally staying in the same place or dropping. Since the tabloids joined the downward trend from 2011, this brought total newspaper sales tumbling down. The three isiZulu newspapers bucked the trend, as did some of the weeklies, but this seems to have come to an end.

The weekly *Mail & Guardian* has a penetration of 1, 6 per cent. The *Mail & Guardian* is 87,5 per cent owned by Newtrust Company Botswana Limited, which is owned by Zimbabwean publisher and entrepreneur, Trevor Ncube (OSISA, 2010: 23). The London-based Guardian Newspapers Limited holds 10 per cent of the company and minority shareholders make up the rest (*Mail & Guardian*, undated). Table 3 outlines the largest weekly newspapers in terms of readership.

**Table 3: Newspaper readership/penetration (2005-2009)**

<b>Weekly newspapers</b>	<b>Type/frequency</b>	<b>Area published/distributed</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>2005 ( % penetration of adult population)</b>	<b>2009 ( % penetration of adult population)</b>

<i>Sunday Times</i>	Sunday newspaper	National	English	10,7	12,6
<i>Sunday Sun</i>	Sunday tabloid	National	English	6,2	8,3
<i>City Press</i>	Sunday newspaper	National	English	6,4	6,5
<i>Soccer Laduma</i>	National soccer focused newspaper	National	English	5,7	8,7
<i>Sunday World</i>	Sunday tabloid	National	English	5,1	5,9
<i>Rapport</i>	Sunday newspaper	National	Afrikaans	5,1	4,5

Source: Marketing Mix, 2010

Recent figures for weeklies show that total sales went up slightly from 652 000 to 666 000 (weekly average), but only because the *Soccer Laduma* went up, while all others slipped (Harber, 2013). For weekend papers, the total fell from 2,42 million to 2,27 million (weekly average).

### 3.2. News agencies

There is one national news agency – the South African Press Agency (SAPA) – which is jointly controlled by the major newspaper groups (OSISA, 2010: 23). In May 2008 the SABC launched a news agency to provide raw or packaged audio and visual content, mostly to the media.

A number of smaller news agencies have been established including *African Eye* (Mpumalanga), *Health-e* (focusing on health news) and the *Eastern Cape News Agency* (Grahamstown). Government established a government news service *BuaNews* to distribute government information and news to media. This agency was re-launched as the South African Government News Agency or *SAnews* (OSISA, 2010: 23).



### **3.3. Broadcasting**

Over the past few years the SABC has been experiencing a number of crises (OSISA, 2010: xiii). These developments resulted in public debate on the public broadcaster and created the chance for a thorough review of public broadcasting legislation, as well as the organisational structures of the SABC. Civil society organisations, in particular the broad-based Save Our SABC (SOS) Coalition took up the challenge and started developing concrete policy papers for broadcasting reform from 2008.<sup>21</sup>

In October 2009, the Department of Communications, for its part, gazetted what was received as a controversial Public Broadcasting Services Bill. If passed into law, this would fundamentally change the legal and regulatory environment for broadcasting in the country and, critics argue, allow government to exert more rather than less control over the sector (OSISA, 2010: xiii).

#### **3.3.1. Radio**

South Africa has one of the largest radio networks in Africa, with private, public and community broadcasting (OSISA, 2010: 23). Apart from the public broadcaster, the SABC, there are also a number of private radio stations and numerous community radio stations. Radio has the greatest reach of any media in South Africa with the public broadcaster's stations accessible to nearly all South Africans (OSISA, 2010: 23).

Radio is one of the most affordable mediums, as radio sets are relatively inexpensive and stations broadcast free-to-air. According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA 2008), 76,6 per cent of South African households (766 of every 1 000) owned working radio sets in 2007 (compared with 73 per cent in 2001). Radio listenership has been steadily increasing and 93,3 per cent (933 of every 1000) of South Africans

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<sup>21</sup> SOS (Save Our SABC) Coalition was renamed SOS Support Public Broadcasting.

listen to radio (OSISA, 2010: 23). The SABC and all the commercial stations also stream content over the Internet.

As of March 2009, 96 community and three low-power radio stations, as well as 13 commercial and 18 SABC radio stations were licensed (OSISA, 2010: 23). The public broadcaster has stations in each of the official languages, as well as a station broadcasting in two Khoi San languages - !Xu and Khwe. Commercial radio stations are centred in the major metropolitan areas (Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Polokwane, Nelspruit and Mafikeng) and broadcast primarily in English. Community radio stations are targeting both geographic communities and/or special interest groups (e.g. Muslims, Chinese speakers, "Boere Afrikaners" etc). They broadcast in a range of official and other local languages.

### **3.3.2. Television**

Television has been available in the country since 1976, with satellite television being available from the mid 1990s (OSISA, 2010: 24). There are currently four television broadcasters, namely the SABC (a public broadcaster), DStv, TopTV (encoded subscription television) and e.tv (a commercial free-to-air channel).

Ownership of television sets has increased rapidly since 1994 (linked in part to the extension of the electricity grid). According to Statistics South Africa's (Stats SA) 2007 Community Survey, 65,6 per cent of households (656 of 1000) in 2007 owned a working television set (compared to 53,8 per cent in 2001) (Stats SA, 2007: 36). 12 television operators are licensed in South Africa:

- three national public television channels
- one national private free-to-air channel (e.tv)
- one terrestrial subscription service (M-Net, owned by Naspers)
- two satellite subscription services (DStv, also owned by Naspers and TopTV)
- three one-year community television licences (Soweto TV in Johannesburg, Cape Community TV in Cape Town and *Bay TV* in Richards Bay). Other

community television services have operated from time to time on 30-day special event licences (OSISA, 2010: 24).

### **3.4. Internet**

According to Stats SA's Community Survey 2007, computer ownership in the home almost doubled between 2001 and 2007. Around 8,6 per cent of households owned computers in 2001, increasing to 15,7 per cent of households (157 of 1000) in 2007. Internet usage was not measured in 2001 and therefore no comparative data is available (Stats SA, 2007: 36). The statistics however show that 7,3 per cent of households (73 of 1000) had access to Internet at home in 2007 (Stats SA, 2007: 36). The most used media site is *News24* (part of the Naspers/Media 24 stable). Bizcommunity.com (2007) indicates that connected South Africans spend 27 per cent of their online time on websites created by 24.com, *Media24's* digital publishing arm.<sup>22</sup> This equates to slightly more than one in every four minutes online – at least 16 per cent more than any other local digital publisher.

### **3.5. Telecommunications**

The percentage of households with a landline telephone has decreased from 24,4 per cent in 2001 to 18,6 percent in 2007 (186 in 1000) (OSISA, 2010: 24, 52 & 74). At the same time there has been a significant increase in cellular telephone ownership from 32,3 per cent of households in 2001 to 72,9 per cent in 2007 (729 in 1 000). The Learning Information Networking and Knowledge Centre (LINK) published the Telecommunications Sector Performance Review (LINK, 2006: 41-42) stating that mobile operators cover over 90 per cent of the country, though subscribers are predominantly in major urban centres.<sup>23</sup> The study attributes this partly to costs, and points out that South Africa's mobile costs are higher for both high- and low-end users than those in, for example, Botswana.

The report furthermore notes that there is an "access shortfall" in relation to broadband. In terms of GDP *per capita*, South Africa is broadly comparable to

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<sup>22</sup> Bizcommunity ([www.bizcommunity.com](http://www.bizcommunity.com)) is a media and marketing electronic newsletter.

<sup>23</sup> The Telecommunications Sector Performance Review measures and assesses ICT market developments against national policy objectives. It is concerned with such data as indicators of delivery on national objectives (LINK, 2006).

Turkey, Mexico, Poland, Hungary and the Slovak Republic. Broadband penetration per 100 inhabitants, on the other hand, is on average two-thirds less in South Africa than in any of these five other countries (LINK, 2006: 41-42). The authors of the above-mentioned study attribute this to both lack of supply and high prices (LINK, 2006: 41-42). Many researchers have emphasised that access to telecommunications still reflects apartheid disparities in South Africa, and thus while richer households (which are still predominantly white) have access to a range of services, poorer (predominantly black) households have limited access.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Democracies require vibrant civil societies and independent media to guarantee that citizens are knowledgeable about the activities and performance of government institutions and officials, and that those citizens can unreservedly influence policies.

South Africa is a media-knowledgeable nation, inundated with print, broadcast and online offerings. In spite of this, many people in rural areas still do not have access to a varied range of information. Radio has the greatest reach of any media in South Africa with the SABC's stations accessible to nearly all South Africans. It is one of the most affordable mediums, as radio sets are relatively inexpensive and stations broadcast free-to-air. Computer ownership in the home almost doubled between 2001 and 2007. Government has been trying to construct a new media landscape with interventions through the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA).

The media landscape in South Africa is changing, in ownership particularly. This is happening in the midst of declining newspaper sales. Most newspaper sales have been in quite severe decline for the past two years, reversing a trend of previous years. There are just a couple of exceptions, mainly the Zulu-language newspapers. The problem is that with advertising revenue falling, it has not been matched by growth in the new media internet sector. It has been predicted that more and more online news will go behind a paywall (Harber, 2013). Readers will have to pay for it, because advertising has not produced the kind of revenue needed to sustain online news media.

The media reflects elite viewpoints and interests and mobilises support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity. Regarding norms, media everywhere subscribe to a code of conduct of some kind. Considering the profound influence mass media have on cultural perceptions and attitudes, the creators of media content have to grapple with ethical issues. Concerning media identity, ultimately consumers might determine the nature of media products. However, the news organisation's origins should be taken into account to understand its identity. The media also generate, corroborate and accelerate identity formation, just as they diminish, overshadow or negate it.

The next chapter addresses the legislative, regulatory and institutional environment of the media in South Africa to explain the relationship between government and the media.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT OF THE MEDIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the legislative, regulatory and institutional environment of the media in South Africa in order to explain the government's role in regulating the media. Legislation governing the media is discussed, including the controversial PSIB and the public discourse around it. The chapter further considers the governmental institutions involved in regulating the media. The self-regulatory institutions governing the media are also discussed.

Broadcasting and print media are regulated differently in South Africa. South Africa does not have a national press/media law (Bussiek et al., 2010: 41-42). The Imprint Act (Act 43 of 1993) requires only that the name and address of the printer appear on any printed matter intended for public sale or distribution. Thus, media and journalists are not subject to special regulations but, as any other citizen having to comply with general laws.

Print media regulate themselves through the Press Council/Press Ombudsman established and funded by the Newspaper Association of South Africa, which represents the major newspaper groups (Bussiek et al., 2010: 41-42). Broadcasters have the option of: either adhering to a code developed by the regulator (the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa ICASA) and adjudicated by the Complaints and Compliance Committee (CCC) of ICASA; or of abiding by their own code administered by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA).

The ruling party has questioned the principle of self-regulation of the press (ANC, 2007). At its 52<sup>nd</sup> National Conference in December 2007, the ANC resolved to investigate the establishment of a MAT:

With particular reference to the print media, the ANC notes that the current form of self regulation ... is not adequate to sufficiently protect the rights of the individual citizens, community and society as a whole (ANC, 2007).

## **2. South African media legislation**

The media in South Africa operates within the ambit of a wide range of legislative measures. The following can be regarded as the most important.

### **2.1. The Constitution**

Section 16 of the Bill of Rights contained in Chapter Two of the South African Constitution deals with freedom of expression and makes provision for freedom of the press and other media; and freedom to receive or impart information or ideas (South Africa, 1996).

### **2.2. The Broadcasting Act**

As fundamental principles and objects the Broadcasting Act (Act 4 of 1999) identifies freedom of expression and the journalistic, creative and programming independence of broadcasters and independence of regulation as guaranteed by the Constitution. The object of the Act is to:

- establish and develop broadcasting policy in South Africa in the public interest and for that purpose to contribute to democracy, development of society, gender equality, nation building, provision of education and strengthening the spiritual and moral fibre of society;
- safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of South Africa;
- encourage ownership and control of broadcasting services through participation by persons from historically disadvantaged groups; and
- Ensure plurality of news, views and information and provide a wide range of entertainment and education programmes (South Africa, 1999).

### **2.3. The Electronic Communications Act**

The Electronic Communications Act (Act 35, 2005) aims to make new provision for the regulation of electronic communications services, electronic communications network services and broadcasting services; and provide for the granting of new licences and new social obligations (South Africa, 2005). The Act was amended in 2007 to explicitly provide for the facilitation of strategic interventions by government in the electronic communications sector to reduce the cost of access to information, communication and technology (South Africa, 2007).

### **2.4. The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa Act**

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) Act (Act 13, 2000) provides for the establishment of ICASA. The Act recognises that technological and other developments in the fields of broadcasting and telecommunications are causing a rapid convergence of these fields and acknowledges that the establishment of an independent body to regulate broadcasting and telecommunications is required (South Africa, 2000).

## **3. Proposed legislation affecting government relations with the media**

For the purpose of this study, examples of proposed media legislation relevant to this study are discussed here as this legislation has implications for the country's foreign policy. The Constitution, in Chapter 2, Section 16, safeguards freedom of the media, as it stipulates that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes "freedom of the press and other media" (South Africa, 1996). However, the proposed PIB, now the PSIB, and plans for a MAT have severely damaged the relationship between the government and the media.

### **3.1. Protection of Information Bill**

This section outlines the PIB, public debate on it and its implications for the theme of this study. As proposed in 2010 the PIB, Bill 6 of 2010, aimed to provide for the



protection of certain information from destruction, loss or unlawful disclosure; and to regulate the manner in which information may be protected (South Africa, 2010). The PIB further recognised the importance of information to the national security, territorial integrity and well-being of the Republic; acknowledged the harm of excessive secrecy; affirmed the constitutional framework for the protection and regulation of access to information; desired to put the protection of information within a transparent and sustainable legislative framework; and aimed to promote the free flow of information within an open and democratic society without compromising the security of the Republic (South Africa, 2010).

In addition to this, the PIB would ensure a coherent approach to protection of state information and the classification and declassification of state information and would create a legislative framework for the state to respond to espionage and other associated hostile activities (South Africa, 2010). The PIB also set out procedures on how classified documents were to be handled during court proceedings and required courts to prevent public disclosure of classified documents that form part of court records. The PIB also sought to:

- create a statutory framework for the protection of State information;
- set out criteria and processes in terms of which State information may be protected from destruction or from unlawful disclosure;
- set out criteria and processes in terms of which information protected from disclosure and which is classified, may be declassified;
- create offences and proposed sentences for unlawful disclosure of information, including the crime of espionage;
- make it an offence for an individual to knowingly supply false information to the national intelligence structures;
- establish guidelines for the treatment by courts of classified documents;
- provide for the Minister of State Security to issue regulations on information security across government; and
- Repeal the existing Protection of Information Act, 84 of 1982. (South Africa, 2010).

Initial concerns about the Bill centred around the application of the Bill to cover all organs of state, the overly broad definition of the concept of “national interest” which could be used as ground for classification of information, the inclusion of commercial information as a category of information that could be classified, the criminalisation of disclosure of classified information even if in the public interest and the absence of an independent review mechanism on classification decisions (ODAC, 2012).

### **3.1.1. Media and public reaction to proposed media legislation**

Public opinion and the participation of civil society are two of the main elements of a democracy, where the media plays a vital role. Therefore, the debate about the PIB has been in the public space since it was first tabled and resurfaced when an amended version was reintroduced to Parliament in 2010. The *Business Day* (2/6/2010) reported that the PIB had returned to Parliament with much of its “draconian provisions” intact and with clauses that would criminalise “information peddling”.

By November 2010, the Open Democracy Advice Centre of South Africa (ODAC) estimated that Avaaz, an advocacy group, had collected over 40 000 signatures for a petition against the Bill, The Right-To-Know campaign (R2K) had support of over 9 000 individuals and 350 institutions and the DA had delivered a petition supported by close to 30 000 South Africans (ODAC, 2010).<sup>24</sup> ODAC also argued that at stake were constitutionally enshrined principles of transparency of the public service, accountability and open democracy, seen to be under threat from the provisions of what has come to be referred to by critics as the “Secrecy Bill”.

Initially, the government seemed unmoved amid such widespread criticism and even called in senior government legal advisors to state before Parliament that the Bill in its original form would pass constitutional muster (ODAC, 2010). This set the scene for mobilisation around local media by civil society, business and even foreign media in opposition of government’s legislative intentions. The already somewhat turbulent

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<sup>24</sup> ODAC’s mission is to promote open and transparent democracy; foster a culture of corporate and government accountability; and assist people in South Africa to be able to realise their human rights (ODAC, 2010).

relationship between government and the media was further plunged into turmoil by the heavy-handed arrest of the *Sunday Times* journalist Mzilikazi wa Afrika. The media reacted with outrage and linked the incident to the proposed legislation, seen as an attempt to 'muzzle' them. According to the *Mail & Guardian* (4/8/2010) Mzilikazi wa Afrika was "marched out of his offices" at the Avusa building in Johannesburg, just as editors emerged from a meeting about media freedom.

A front page editorial in *The Citizen* (5/8/2010) commented:

A campaign against the media, orchestrated by ANC cadres who do not like their dealings being aired, has taken an ugly, physical turn ... The chilling message ... is clear: Write about us and we will get you.

The media went as far as linking these measures to apartheid legislation. A *Sowetan* editorial on 5/8/2010 critiqued: "While purporting to be on the side of those who will give their life for a free press, the ANC is actually hell-bent on taking the country back into the dark days of apartheid legislation." The leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) and Western Cape Premier, Helen Zille, agreed (*Pretoria News* 5/8/2010) that the arrest of wa Afrika could not be viewed "in isolation from the disturbing trends to stifle media freedom". She saw it as "a sinister forewarning" of how media freedom would be infringed upon by the proposed Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) and the Protection of Information Bill (PIB).

Thirty-six South African editors subsequently signed the Auckland Park Declaration in protest against the PIB expressing concern about attempts to curtail freedom of expression and the free flow of information in the country. They said they "vigorously oppose" the restrictive clauses in the PIB and the proposed MAT and appealed to the government and the ruling ANC to abide by the founding principles of the South African democracy and abandon these proposed measures (*Times Live*, 8/8/2010).

A *Beeld* editorial (10/8/2010) noted that the ANC was concerned about the things the media did right "exposing of squandering, poor governance and corruption" and concluded that the Auckland Park Declaration stated correctly that the ANC planned to "hit at the roots of democracy".

The government also faced dissent from its own ranks and the ranks of the ruling alliance, as the *Business Day* (23/8/2010) quoted Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi as saying the proposed PIB was a "mockery" and assuring journalists the PIB would not be passed as it was. As the resistance built against the measures, former intelligence minister Ronnie Kasrils also called for a rethink on the legislation, calling it "too broad and unfocused" and the penalties proposed "harsh" (*Daily News*, 16/6/2011).

Civil society also joined the resistance to the perceived clampdown on the media. It was reported in the *Sunday Independent* (22/8/2010) that South Africa's most prominent writers started a petition, joining the media in protest against the PIB as well as the ANC's proposed MAT. Among the signatories of the letter sent to President Zuma were many whose works were banned under apartheid.

The *Business Day* (19/8/2010) quoted the General Council of the Bar saying that the PIB was "unnecessary, unconstitutional and undesirable," adding its voice to the widely held view that it would not pass constitutional muster.

The debate also migrated to the foreign media. The *Rapport* (15/8/2010) indicated that "the proposed MAT and laws to limit especially the print media in South Africa were making headlines in newspapers worldwide." The *Sunday Tribune* (22/8/2010) reported that Gavin O'Reilly, the president of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers, sent a letter to South Africa's President, Jacob Zuma, on behalf of the association and the World Editors' Forum, presented formally at the UN, UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) and the Council of Europe. It called on the President to ensure that the PIB and the MAT proposals were either amended in line with constitutional safeguards for freedom of the press, or withdrawn altogether.

Local media noted government concerns about foreign coverage of the debate on media freedom in South Africa. The *Business Day* (20/8/2010) quoted government spokesperson Themba Maseko as saying that "negative international coverage of South Africa's perceived intention to restrict the freedom of the press and expression

was increasingly concerning the government". He acknowledged that the negative stories had 'migrated' to international pages and that government was "obviously concerned about that". The *Sunday Times* (19/9/2010) noted that the Minister of State Security, Siyabonga Cwele, appealed for calm in the debate about the government's proposed PIB, saying the "loud opposition" to it was undermining South Africa's international reputation.

*The Citizen* (20/9/2010) objected to Minister Cwele's analysis of the situation asking: "Does he really lack the insight to see that it is the onerous provisions of the PIB, rather than the widespread protests, that are causing damage to South Africa's image abroad?"

The *Business Day* (19/8/2010) quoted South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) Chairman, Mondli Makhanya, as saying that he was very encouraged by the interest the international community had taken "in this worrying development".<sup>25</sup> He remarked that "those people driving these processes" had to realise that South Africa was not "some small island in the Pacific" and what happened in this country was "being very closely watched by the world."

Government eventually relented and returning to Parliament in October 2010 its new position included improvements to the Bill:

- the removal of the concept of protection of information in the national interest;
- the removal of the section related to the classification of commercial information; and
- The public interest override for review of classification decisions. Even though the government agreed to a public interest override for requests for information or review of classification decisions, there was no agreement on a public interest defence for people that disclose or publish or distribute classified information (ODAC, 2010).

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<sup>25</sup> SANEF is a voluntary forum of senior journalists, editors and journalism educators from all areas of the media industry in South Africa (SANEF 2012).

Further concessions were later announced as the *Pretoria News Weekend* (25/6/2011) quoted ANC Member of Parliament (MP) Llewellyn Landers saying “a rethink came as a result of serious concern expressed by senior ANC members and civil society”. The key concessions were:

- narrowing the scope of the PIB to apply only to security and intelligence services, with a clause allowing other organs of state to apply for inclusion if necessary;
- allowing for a retired judge to review disputed classification of information; and
- Removing minimum jail sentences that apply without the option of a fine for the disclosure of classified information, except for the crime of espionage.

SANEF told MPs (*Daily News*, 27/6/2011) that while it appreciated important proposed amendments, such as narrower grounds for classification and the introduction of ‘balance’ between the needs for openness and transparency and preserving state secrets, it was still concerned about many remaining aspects of the PIB and their potential effects on “our democratic state”. The *Sowetan* (27/6/2011) also urged the ANC to go further to include the public interest defence clause, which would essentially decriminalise the release of information in the public interest.

*iol* (2/9/2011) reported that the absence of a public-interest defence clause in the PIB meant it was destined for a Constitutional Court challenge, where critics hoped it would be “thrown out”.<sup>26</sup> The ANC persisted in refusing to include such a clause, which would protect anyone – including journalists and whistleblowers – which released or published classified information in the public interest. Journalists would face stiff prison terms under the proposed law if they published classified information without first asking the government to declassify it.

Media lawyer Dario Milo said the absence of a public-interest defence was problematic, because it would have functioned as an important means for information of serious concern to citizens to be disclosed, regardless of the fact that the

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<sup>26</sup> The Constitutional Court is South Africa's highest court on constitutional matters. Its jurisdiction is restricted to constitutional matters and issues connected with decisions on constitutional matters (Constitutional Court, undated).

information was classified (*iol* 2/9/2011). The ANC told Parliament's special committee processing the PIB that it would not allow a public-interest defence to be written into the PIB, as this would place journalists in a class of their own. Arguing against the inclusion, the ANC's chief negotiator on the PIB, Luwellyn Landers, said the PIB merely made the media subject to the rule of law.

### **3.2. Protection of State Information Bill**

As Parliament was about to vote on what had by then become the revised PSIB, the National Press Club (NPC) declared 22 November 2011, "Black Tuesday", in protest.<sup>27</sup> The Press Club called on all South Africans to wear black on the day (LeadSA, 2011). "Black Wednesday" was synonymous with the apartheid government which banned two newspapers and 19 black consciousness movements on Wednesday 19 October 1977.

Press Club Chairman Yusuf Abramjee said the proposed legislation did not only affect the media, but that civil society at large also needed to raise its voice. Abramjee said South Africa was again facing a serious threat to freedom of speech, expression and of the media. ANC Chief Whip in Parliament, Mathole Motshekga, said the National Press Club's plans were a senseless distortion of facts and the only result "this unfortunate comparison" would achieve was to dilute the real history of Black Wednesday and insult the victims "of apartheid's barbaric laws" (*News24*, 21/11/2011).

Despite the outcry, the National Assembly voted in favour of the Bill. The PSIB intends to ensure a coherent approach to the protection of valuable information and the classification and declassification of state information. It will create a legislative framework for the state to respond to espionage and other associated hostile activities (Bill 6 of 2010). Therefore, the objectives of the PSIB are to:

- classify and declassify state information;

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<sup>27</sup> The NPC aims to promote the professional, social and other interests of the media fraternity and to raise the status of the journalistic profession as a whole (NPC, 2002).

- procedures to do so;
- establish a classification review panel to review and oversee status reviews;
- create a legislative framework for the state to respond to espionage and hostile activities and to provide for certain other offences and penalties; and
- repeal the Protection of Information Act, 1982 (Act 84 of 1982) (South Africa 2010b).

### 3.2.1. Media and public reaction

Dario Milo, Media Law associate professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, wrote about the PSIB, stating that the new draft was a significant improvement both on the first draft introduced in Parliament in 2008, and the draft introduced in 2010. The indefensibly vague notion of the “national interest”, which would have resulted in chronic over-classification, was removed. So was the original attempt to permit the classification of commercial information. Better thresholds for classifying information, based on demonstrable and not speculative harm to national security and a classification review committee, was also a step in the right direction (*Times Live*, 27/22/2011).

Despite these welcome developments, Milo considered the criminal sanctions the PSIB sought to impose as “very stiff”. The unjustifiably wide net of liability was rendered “constitutionally intolerable” by the fact that there was no general public interest defence to be invoked by a whistleblower to disclose information that had been classified and which the public had a genuine “right to know” (*Times Live*, 27/11/2011).

It was later reported that “after steadfastly refusing to include a public interest defence clause” in the PSIB, ANC delegates to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), the second house of the South African Parliament, *ad hoc* committee dealing with the PSIB appeared to open the door a fraction by proposing several significant changes to the PSIB (*io!*, 11/5/2012). Although the proposal did not, strictly speaking, amount to a public interest defence, it was the closest the ANC had come



to offering protection for those who revealed classified information in what could be deemed to have been in the “public interest”.

In another significant concession, the ANC proposed that minimum prison sentences be scrapped altogether (*iol*, 11/5/2012). ANC delegates proposed amendments to the draft that would protect anyone who disclosed information that was incorrectly classified by officials to hide “an unlawful act or omission, incompetence, inefficiency or administrative error” - or to avoid “embarrassment, scrutiny or criticism”.

The *Mail & Guardian* (14/6/2012) reported that as South Africa’s human rights record was scrutinised by a working group of the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) in Geneva, it found itself “on the receiving end of significant international condemnation” with regard to the PSIB. The intervention – described as the biggest collective stand yet taken by foreign governments on the issue – was welcomed by activists who opposed the PSIB.

In response, South Africa’s delegation insisted the PSIB was not aimed at the media (*Mail & Guardian*, 14/6/2012). The primary purpose was not to regulate or interfere in any way with the media or access to information, but sought to amend statutes not consistent with the Constitution. The government had also been very open and had engaged with the media and with civil society.

The DA said views expressed at the UN would boost efforts to amend the legislation and welcomed any influence brought to bear that would result in the PSIB being amended to make it more acceptable and constitutional (*Mail & Guardian*, 14/6/2012). Noting the government’s remarks that the PSIB was not intended to curb the media, the DA commented that whether or not it was the purpose of the PSIB was debatable. The fact remained that the PSIB posed a significant threat to human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution.

The Department of State Security rejected proposals by the ANC to give greater protection to whistleblowers, remove all minimum prison sentences from the PSIB and narrow the definition of national security (*Mail & Guardian*, 13/6/2012). Acting Director-General of State Security, Dennis Dlomo, dismissed a proposal by

opposition parties to delete a provision that the new classification law trump PAIA if the two came into conflict.

The gesture of the ANC's MPs to accommodate a call by rights groups to include a public interest defence for those charged with revealing state secrets, by proposing that people who revealed classified information to expose criminal wrongdoing be exempted from prosecution, was also rejected by the Department (*Mail & Guardian*, 13/6/2012). So was the ANC's stated readiness to remove clauses that would, according to legal experts, place an unacceptably heavy onus on those charged under the legislation. The Director of ODAC, Alison Tilley, said the department's attempt to prescribe to lawmakers was problematic, as it was an attempt from the executive to tell Parliament how to legislate. This demonstrated a clear misunderstanding of the doctrine of separation of powers.

The ANC suggested changes to the contentious PSIB again by proposing to reinsert a clause offering protection for those who revealed classified information to expose a crime (*iol*, 21/11/2012). The move was welcomed by the DA (*iol*, 21/11/2012). ANC lawmakers furthermore agreed to remove a clause which stated that the measure would trump PAIA, and to reword a preceding clause to state that in case of a clash between the new official secrets legislation and any other law, courts must prefer a reasonable interpretation that avoids a conflict "taking into consideration the need to protect and classify certain state information in terms of this act". They also made a proposal to give explicit permission to the Public Protector, the Auditor General and all other Chapter Nine institutions to be in possession of classified information (*iol*, 21/11/2012).<sup>28</sup>

'Jubilant' ANC MPs reportedly passed the PSIB, with proposed amendments, in the NCOP in November 2012 with 34 votes in favour and 16 against (*Pretoria News*, 30/11/2012). State Security Minister, Siyabonga Cwele, said those opposing the Bill had not told South Africans that it was more progressive than any other act anywhere else in the world that governed the protection of classified information. He said the government would not support a bill that undermined the Constitution and

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<sup>28</sup> Chapter Nine Institutions are the state institutions supporting constitutional democracy, named after their place in the Constitution (Polity, 2012).

did not strike a balance between secrecy and transparency (*Pretoria News*, 30/11/2012). Western Cape Social Development Member of the Executive Council (MEC) Albert Fritz, speaking on behalf of Premier Helen Zille, said that if he was a journalist, he would “fear for his life” (*Pretoria News*, 30/11/2012).

The DA vowed to continue to fight the PSIB all the way to the Constitutional Court, saying it was still inconsistent with the Constitution (*Weekend Pretoria News*, 1/12/2012). DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko said while the “tireless efforts” of opposition parties and civil society had led to some important changes to the Bill, they did not go far enough (*Weekend Pretoria News*, 1/12/2012). ANC parliamentary spokesperson Moloto Mothapo said it was ‘nonsense’ that the Bill would not pass constitutional muster. It was a “complete redraft” of what had been introduced to Parliament in 2008 (*Weekend Pretoria News*, 1/12/2012).

The PSIB was eventually adopted in the National Assembly on 25 April 2013 with 189 votes in favour, 74 against and one abstention (*Mail & Guardian*, 26/4/2013). State Security Minister Siyabonga Cwele told MPs the legislation had been significantly altered and the government was confident that it had addressed the concerns of the people.

The *Mail & Guardian* (25/4/2013) explained that Section 79 of the Constitution allowed the President to refer the Bill back to the National Assembly and the NCOP for reconsideration.<sup>29</sup> If he was still unsatisfied with it at the end of that process, he could refer it to the Constitutional Court. It was suggested that the Bill was probably heading for a Constitutional Court review regardless of the President's decision. If the court justices were to decide that the Bill was constitutional, the President would have to sign it; a decision civil society and opposition parties thought unlikely.

Despite wide-reaching reforms to the Bill, there is consensus among civil society and opposition parties that the reforms have not gone far enough to ensure the Bill's constitutionality (*Mail & Guardian*, 25/4/2013). Murray Hunter, national coordinator of

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<sup>29</sup> Section 79 reads: “The President must either assent to and sign a Bill passed in terms of this Chapter or, if the President has reservations about the constitutionality of the Bill, refer it back to the National Assembly for reconsideration” (South Africa, 1996).

the Right2Know (R2K campaign), said while there was no guarantee of a win in the courts, he felt the organisation had a "moral obligation" to try. Nic Dawes, SANEF's chairperson and editor of the *Mail & Guardian*, said the Bill affected the basic rights of South Africans and the country would only benefit from "rigorously ensuring the Bill complies with constitutional precepts" (*Mail & Guardian*, 25/4/2013).

R2K protesters picketed near the offices of the ANC in Johannesburg on 9 September 2013 pleading with President Jacob Zuma not to sign the PSIB into law. They cited a lack of protection for whistleblowers as a sticking point (*The New Age*, 10/9/13). On 13 September 2013, media reported that the President had "unexpectedly backtracked" by announcing that he had "serious reservations" about the constitutionality of the Bill and that he had referred it back to the National Assembly to be fixed. The President said sections 42 and 45 lacked meaning and coherence, consequently were irrational and, accordingly, were unconstitutional (*Business Day*, 13/9/13).

ODAC executive director Mukelani Dimba said they supported the conclusion of the President that the Bill did not pass constitutional muster, but added that ODAC believed that the unconstitutionality and inappropriateness of the Bill extended beyond sections 42 and 45 and instead went to the underlying rationality and foundation of the Bill (*Business Day*, 13/9/13).

SANEF chairman Mpumelelo Mkhabela also welcomed the President's decision saying although the President cited only a few problematic clauses, this was merely an example and Parliament now had an opportunity to reconsider other clauses which may be unconstitutional (*Sowetan*, 13/9/13). The DA said that the sending back of the PSIB based on two rather technical objections did not cover the unconstitutional sections of the Bill and therefore the party's objections to the Bill stood (*Beeld*, 14/9/13).

The *Cape Argus* (13/9/13) commented that putting the Bill back into political play was to be welcomed, but there might be cause for suspicion, considering the President's narrow focus. The *Sunday Independent* (15/9/13) also cautioned that the President's objections to the Bill were not necessarily the problematic sections that

could have a devastating effect on media freedom and citizens' right to know. The *Sunday Times* (15/9/13) suggested that if there was a way that MPs could use the President's limited referral to reopen a fundamental debate on the intentions of the Bill, they should seize it. *Beeld* (16/9/13) commented that the resistance to the unconstitutional attack on freedom of speech remained unchanged, despite the President's decision. *The Citizen* (16/9/13) insisted that the redrafted Bill should be challenged in the Constitutional Court.

### **3.3. Media Appeals Tribunal**

In most instances the matter of a MAT would be mentioned in one voice with the proposed legislation. A 2010 ANC discussion document explaining the idea of a MAT (ANC, 2010), argues in favour of "structured accountability" and having to give an account of one's action, either directly to the public or via public authorities. This will often feed into, but is not necessarily connected to, "checked accountability, which means to be accountable in a sense of being liable to sanction if found to have acted in breach of some requirement or expectation attaching to the exercise of power".

The view is held that the creation of a MAT would "strengthen, complement and support" the current self-regulatory institutions (Press Ombudsman/Press Council) in the public interest (ANC, 2010). It is suggested that Parliament be seized with this matter to consider the desirability of MAT being a statutory independent institution, established through an open, public and transparent process and be made accountable to Parliament. Parliament should consider the mandate of the MAT and its powers to adjudicate over matters or complaints expressed by citizens against print media, in terms of decisions and rulings made by the existing self-regulatory institutions, in the same way as with broadcasting.

#### **3.3.1. Public reaction**

The *Mail & Guardian* (28/1/2008) reported that the ANC's Polokwane conference<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The ANC held its 52<sup>nd</sup> National Conference at the University of Limpopo in Polokwane from 16 to 20 December 2007.

fleshed out its proposal for a MAT “to keep journalists in check”. An ANC policy conference in June 2007, first raised the idea in a brief reference calling for an investigation into media self-regulation and the desirability of establishing a MAT. The proposed body had been given a name, the MAT; it would be statutory; answerable to Parliament; and seemed intent on acting as a channel for appeals against decisions by the Press Ombudsman. The resolution made these proposals after affirmation of support for media freedom – but defined this in a very particular way: “The right to freedom of expression should not be elevated above other equally important rights such as the right to privacy and, more important, rights and values such as human dignity” (ANC Today, 2010).

The ANC insisted that it did not want to curtail press freedom with a proposed MAT, but warned that print media did not seem committed to transformation (*Sowetan*, 11/1/2010). ANC spokesperson Jackson Mthembu said the self-regulatory system of the press ombudsman did not allow for punitive measures against newspapers. He explained that a MAT would be similar to how broadcast media was regulated by ICASA (*Mail & Guardian*, 10/8/2010). He gave the assurance that the ANC was not prepared to limit the freedom the Constitution guaranteed the press. Mthembu said the ANC wanted an independent statutory body accountable to Parliament to deal with complaints against newspapers, instead of only using the press ombudsman who dealt with complaints.

The media also reflected government’s position on the matter as the *Beeld* (12/8/2010) quoted the President saying media houses had to be regulated, because they sometimes tended to “go too far”. In defence of the ANC’s proposed MAT he said that “the media said the MAT would limit them and that they were the public guard dog, but they were never elected” (to this position). He argued that they had to be controlled, because they sometimes went “overboard about rights”.

The President argued that the media could not be the only institution that understood rights: “The ANC understands the rights, because it fought for it.” The *Cape Argus* (4/8/2010) also quoted him as saying the media had put itself on a pedestal and asked who was “guarding the guardian?” He asked if a guardian could be a proper guardian when it did not reflect the society it claimed to protect and represent.

The *Argus Weekend* (15/8/2010) commented that President Zuma's critique of the media was remarkable, not only in its deception regarding ANC motives, but in its fundamental lack of comprehension of what free speech and a free press really meant. The paper noted that the President questioned whether the media truly mirrored South Africans' lives and emphasised that the value of a free media lied in precisely the opposite: a multiplicity of competing viewpoints and voices and the freedom of readers and viewers to choose for themselves.

Referring to the President's suggestion that the ANC could not want to cover up wrongdoing on the part of the powerful, since it was the ANC itself that had driven corruption-busting, the paper recalled issues such as the arms deal saga<sup>31</sup>, the "Selebi scandal"<sup>32</sup>, the Mbeki-era<sup>33</sup> "AIDS-denialism" and the "shabby demise of the Scorpions"<sup>34</sup> to incline to a "decidedly different viewpoint" (*Argus Weekend*, 15/8/2010). The paper suggested that in the absence of any commitment to strengthening the media and, instead, a single-minded focus on controlling it, the real motive for a MAT and the PIB could only be a desire to "tame the press".

The *Sowetan* (20/8/2010) quoted the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) saying they conceded that it was accepted that media freedom was not an absolute right, but one that should be exercised in a fair and responsible manner and that there was therefore a definite need for effective regulatory bodies to be in place to hold the media accountable where necessary.<sup>35</sup> It warned, however, that it was vital that such bodies be independent entities. The SAJBD was concerned about the

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<sup>31</sup> The Strategic Defence Acquisition involved the purchase of billions of rands of weaponry by the South African Government. It has been subject to repeated allegations of corruption.

<sup>32</sup> Jackie Selebi, the former national commissioner of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and a former President of Interpol was charged, found guilty of corruption and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in 2010. He was released on medical parole in 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Thabo Mbeki served as South African President from 1999 until September 2008. He made two statements based on research by so-called "dissident" HIV/AIDS scientists: that HIV does not necessarily cause AIDS; and that antiretrovirals (ARVs) are toxic. This would become the cornerstone of a much decried policy that denied important truths about HIV and AIDS.

<sup>34</sup> The government's decision to disband the Scorpions and to incorporate the unit into the SAPS was interpreted as a reaction to the fact that they dared to charge high-profile members of the ANC and to prevent further prosecutions.

<sup>35</sup> The SAJBD's mission is to work for the improvement of human relations between Jews and all other peoples of South Africa, based on mutual respect, understanding and goodwill and to protect the civil liberties of South African Jews (SAJBD, 2013).

proposed MAT, because they anticipated the creation of a regulatory body that was not independent, but “beholden to the government of the day”.

The SAPC announced a complete review of its constitution in the wake of criticism emerging in debate over the ANC’s planned MAT (*Mail & Guardian*, 23/8/2010). Commenting on the composition of the team to undertake the review, Press Ombudsman Joe Thloloe said they were dealing with a system of self-regulation, not regulation from outside. He explained that if any outside institution told editors what to put into the papers or not, it would be contrary to Section 16 of the Constitution and interfere with the freedom of the press.<sup>36</sup> The team would review the SAPC’s constitution, the South African Press Code and complaints procedures. The constitution of the SAPC outlined its powers, its jurisdiction, its aims and objectives, and its membership.

During a debate on the matter divergent opinions were expressed:

- ANC spokesperson Jackson Mthembu said the proposed MAT was receiving “overwhelming support” as the self-regulation of the media industry left “much to be desired”.
- Press ombudsman Joe Thloloe said the media was not against an inquiry into the possibility of a statutory MAT, but they were against the fact that some members of the ANC had already implied it was “a done deal”.
- SANEF media freedom committee chairperson Thabo Leshilo insisted there was overwhelming opposition to the MAT and more support for free speech.
- The Head of the Wits School of Journalism Anton Harber said the media should be accountable to its peers, readers, public, the law and courts, but journalists could not be accountable to politicians.
- CEO of the MDDA Lumko Mtimde said South Africans should be allowed to discuss the MAT and decide on it (*Mail & Guardian*, 24/8/2010).

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<sup>36</sup> Section 16 of the Constitution reads: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes (a) freedom of the press and other media; (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; (e) freedom of artistic creativity; and (d) academic freedom and freedom of scientific research. (South Africa, 1996).



The *Sunday Tribune* (22/8/2010) reported that the US-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) wrote a letter to President Zuma urging him to use his influence as head of state to prevent the establishment of the MAT in its present form. Four of the world's largest news agencies added their voices to the opposition against the proposed MAT and PIB (*Daily Maverick*, 6/9/2010). *Agence France Presse* (AFP), *Associate Press* (AP), *Bloomberg* and *Reuters* wrote to President Zuma, expressing their concerns that a proposal for a MAT and the PIB could restrict their work and the work of other journalists. A MAT would undermine the media's independence if it were to answer to Parliament or any arm of the government and it may not be in line with the freedom of expression enshrined in the Constitution.

In Parliament, President Jacob Zuma said the proposed MAT was intended to "strengthen, complement and support" self-regulatory institutions (*News24*, 8/9/2010). The President noted that the debate had resulted in a decision by the SAPC to review its constitution with a view to strengthening its self-regulatory mechanisms. Mario Oriani-Ambrosini, IFP MP, said the debate on press freedom should not even be opened, as the solution lay in the law against defamation.

The ANC turned down an invitation to attend a "Big Media Debate" on media freedom hosted by the University of South Africa (Unisa) (*News24*, 12/10/2010). The ANC national spokesperson Jackson Mthembu said that the ANC would not participate in the debate until after Parliament had debated the MAT.

The DA's Lindiwe Mazibuko, said there were currently many areas where relief could be sought from bad journalism; Dr Pieter Mulder, leader of the Freedom Front Plus (FF+), described the proposed MAT as a "red light" for the country's democracy (*News24*, 12/10/2010). A MAT could never be independent, because it would be appointed by the government.

Speaking after a meeting between government and SANEF, South Africa's Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe<sup>37</sup>, said the review of the media's self-regulatory mechanism, the Press Ombudsman, would influence whether there was a need for a

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<sup>37</sup> Kgalema Motlanthe served as South Africa's third post-apartheid President from September 2008 until April 2009. Since 2009, he has been South Africa's Deputy President.

MAT: “If the process of reviewing the self-regulatory mechanisms produces mechanisms that can address the concerns about its shortcomings, we see no difficulty in accepting that right product.” (*iol*, 16/10/2010).

*iol* (16/10/2010) quoted press ombudsman Joe Thloloe telling a University of Pretoria (UP) debate on media freedom that the ANC had got the print media in its sights, because it was the one section of the media not under its control.

Regarding the MAT issue, the *Beeld* (10/1/2011) quoted a member of the ANC’s Communication Committee as saying that the ANC was encouraged by the transformation in the office of the Press Ombudsman, though this did not mean that the party would let go of its plans to refer the MAT to Parliament for investigation. It was speculated that referral to Parliament may be an honourable way to make the MAT disappear, quoting an “informed” ANC member saying: “Then we can say we followed the constitutional route and it did not work, without being embarrassed.”

The *Mail & Guardian* (31/12/2012) also reported on submissions made to the Press Freedom Commission. The ANC still believed “independent regulation” was the way to go when it came to the continuing debate over press regulation, arguing that self-regulatory efforts were undermined by vested interests (*Mail & Guardian*, 31/1/2012). However, on the second day of the Press Freedom Commission hearings, newspaper editors sounded a strong warning about the consequences of being seen to regulate the press (*Mail & Guardian*, 1/2/2012).

#### **4. Institutional framework**

There are a number of institutions dealing with government communications and the South African brand. These include GCIS, the IMC and DIRCO.

##### **4.1 Government Communication and Information System**

The purpose of GCIS is government communication that informs citizens to participate in democracy and to lead government communication through submitting a National Communication Strategy (NSC) to Cabinet ensuring coherent messages,

as well as open and extended channels of communication between government and the people, towards a shared vision. GCIS provides communication and information services to the domestic and foreign media to improve their knowledge of government-related issues (GCIS, 2010).

## **4.2 International Marketing Council**

The IMC (2010) was established in August 2002 to help create a positive and compelling brand image for South Africa. At that time, the world was unsure about what to think of South Africa, with many different messages being sent out by various sources. This did very little to build the country's brand and it was evident that to attract tourism and investment, there was a need to co-ordinate marketing initiatives to make them more effective.

This led to the creation of the IMC, whose main objective is the marketing of South Africa through the BrandSA campaign. There are many benefits to having a consolidated brand image, with the most important being that a consistent BrandSA message creates strategic advantages in terms of trade and tourism for the country in an increasingly competitive marketplace (IMC, 2010). The primary objective of the IMC is to develop and implement a pro-active marketing and communication strategy for South Africa and to promote South Africa. The original BrandSA slogan "Alive with Possibility!" was replaced with "Inspiring new ways!" (BrandSA, 2011b).

Regarding international relations, the GCIS MTSF (GCIS, 2009) states that it leads the international marketing of the country and provides overall guidance, ensuring that the country is marketed abroad through the IMC. It guides the IMC in the development of the country brand in line with government's vision, and builds consensus among key stakeholders in support of the country's marketing initiative. The NSC, which would probably encompass GCIS' media policy, is a classified document.

#### **4.3. Department of Foreign Affairs/Department of International Relations and Cooperation relations with the media**

Regarding South Africa's foreign policy and the media, the DFA's 2008 Discussion Document both recognises a role for the media, but also puts limits to this:

South Africa is a democratic country and the formulation of foreign policy should be an open and transparent process. However, South African actions must be in keeping with international practice, including the need for appropriate confidentiality. Diplomacy is by its very nature 'quiet diplomacy' and not diplomacy through the media (DFA, 2008).

The document also quotes an observation by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alfred Nzo<sup>38</sup>, in Parliament on 8 August 1994:

Without international interaction such as trade, scientific and technological exchange and cultural exchange, South Africans and South Africa would be much the poorer. In this regard the DFA, universities, institutes and the media have a particular responsibility to stimulate a debate on our international relations, to inform the public and involve the people of South Africa in the promotion of our international relations (DFA, 1994).

A subdivision of DIRCO, the Public Diplomacy Unit (PDU), later upgraded to a full branch, focuses specifically on developing South Africa's reputation both at home and internationally (DFA, 2008). Effective media relations and management represent an integral part of any public diplomacy programme and South Africa has embraced the media as a platform for dialogue and the projection of a positive national image. To this end, a number of agencies are employed, serving as subdivisions of the PDU, whose mandate is specifically tailored to deal with media-related issues and opportunities.

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<sup>38</sup> Alfred Nzo served as South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1994 until 1999.

The CPD (2010) discusses South Africa's public diplomacy programme, noting that effective media relations and management represent an integral part of any such programme. It is noted that South Africa has embraced the media as a platform for dialogue and the projection of a positive national image.

A 24-hour operations centre gathers international news reports around the clock (CPD, 2010), serving both as an early warning system for major international crises or developments and as a constant gauge of South Africa's standing in the world. Supplementing the 24-hour Operations Centre, the International News Scan regularly provides updates on political, diplomatic and economic developments, monitors the opinions of world leaders and tracks developments in major International Organisations such as the UN, the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Particular attention is paid to coverage of South Africa's DIRCO as a broad measure of local and foreign public opinion (DFA, 2006). The information compiled by these news-analysis units is ultimately communicated to top-level South African officials around the world so that they will be prepared to deliver timely and appropriate responses to international developments as they occur.

In addition to news gathering and analysis, the PDU also provides speechwriting services, assisting officials to present a positive image at media events (DFA, 2006). The department's Media Liaison Unit also organises frequent press conferences and media briefings to inform the nation and the world at large about South Africa's endeavours internationally, and to enhance the country's stature internationally. The PDU furthermore emphasises the use of non-traditional media, specifically by intensifying the application of the Internet as a public diplomacy tool.

## **5. Regulatory framework**

The South African media operates in a particular regulatory framework governed by legislation and self-regulation; it is subject to certain standards and protocols, and owing to its membership of certain bodies, acts according to the guidelines set by these. This regulatory framework includes the Constitution, which guarantees media

freedom, and more specific legislation which all have a bearing on the activities of the different media.

## **5.1. Statutory bodies**

The media in South Africa also operate within the scope of a number of statutory bodies that influence their activities.

### **5.1.1. The Media Development and Diversity Agency**

The MDDA was established in 2003 as an independent, statutory body whose functions are to redresses the exclusion and marginalisation of disadvantaged people from access to the media and the media industry; and to promote media development and diversity by providing funding and other support to community, as well as to small commercial media (MDDA, 2012).

### **5.1.2. Independent Communications Authority of South Africa**

ICASA was established as a merger of the telecommunications regulator, the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). ICASA is responsible for regulating the telecommunications, broadcasting and postal industries in the public interest, and ensuring affordable services of a high quality for all South Africans (ICASA, 2012).

ICASA also issues licenses to telecommunications and broadcasting service providers, enforces compliance with rules and regulations, protects consumers from unfair business practices and poor quality services, hears and decides on disputes and complaints brought against licensees, and controls and manages the effective use of the radio frequency spectrum. ICASA is a Chapter 9 institution in terms of the South African Constitution and is a portfolio organisation of the Department of Communications (ICASA, 2012).

## **5.2. Self-regulatory bodies in the media**

The following institutions fulfill “self-regulatory” functions within the media environment in South Africa.

### **5.2.1. The Press Council, Press Ombudsmen and Appeal Panel**

The SAPC, the Ombudsman and the Appeals Panel are self-regulatory mechanisms set up by the print media to provide what they call “impartial, expeditious and cost-effective adjudication” to settle disputes between newspapers and magazines, on the one hand, and members of the public, on the other, over the editorial content of publications. The mechanism is based on two pillars, namely freedom of expression, including freedom of the press; and excellence in journalistic practice and ethics (SAPC, 2012).

The Council has adopted the South African Press Code to guide journalists in their daily practice of gathering and distributing news and opinion, and to guide the Ombudsman and the Appeals Panel to reach decisions on complaints from the public. More than 640 publications, mainly members of Print Media South Africa, subscribe to the Code (SAPC, 2012).

### **5.2.2. Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa**

In order to promote freedom of speech, the free flow of information and the maintenance of high standards of broadcasting in South Africa, the National Association of Broadcasters of South and Southern Africa (NAB) established a Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) in 1993.

The BCCSA was recognised by the Independent Broadcasting Authority in 1995. The objects of the BCCSA are to ensure adherence to high standards in broadcasting and to achieve a speedy and cost-effective settlement of complaints against full members of NAB who have submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of the BCCSA and its Code of Conduct (BCCSA, undated).

### **5.3. International standards**

South Africa is one of the founding members of the United Nations (UN). The Preamble to the UN Declaration of Human Rights indicates that the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear and want, has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people. Article 19 states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (UN, undated).

### **5.4. Independent media organisations/structures**

There are a number of independent organised media structures operating in South Africa.

#### **5.4.1. The South African National Editors' Forum**

SANEF is a non-profit organisation whose members are editors, senior journalists and journalism trainers from all areas of the South African media. They played an active role in promoting a climate of free expression and transparency in a democratic South Africa and subscribe to the constitutional principles of freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

SANEF's chief aim is to be a representative and credible voice of journalism in society, to facilitate diversity in newsrooms and reporting, enable a culture of real debate and promote free and independent journalism of the highest standard. SANEF also defends media freedom and campaigns for the elimination of legislation and commercial pressures that restrict media. SANEF's vision is to promote the quality and ethics of journalism, to reflect the diversity of South Africa, and to champion freedom of expression (SANEF, 2012).



#### **5.4.2. Print and Digital Media South Africa**

The purpose of Print Media South Africa (PMSA) was to represent, promote, express, interact and intervene in all matters concerning the collective industry and matters of common interest to members. Representing over 700 newspaper and magazine titles in South Africa, PMSA was organised into three specific, focused operating bodies which addresses the specific needs of the respective industry sectors, including newspapers, magazines and publishers (PMSA, 2012).

Print and Digital Media South Africa (PDMDA) is an umbrella body incorporating print and digital media. The PDMSA is a natural progression from the long-established PMSA and illustrates a commitment as an interactive organisation to keeping pace with the fast-changing media world. An evolving and vibrant association, its express purpose is to represent and promote all aspects concerning the industry and its members (PDMSA, 2013).

#### **5.4.3. National Association of Broadcasters**

The formation of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) coincided with South Africa's democratisation and the "freeing of the airwaves", which entailed the restructuring of the state monopoly in broadcasting into a broadcasting dispensation offering choice in services, content and ownership (NAB, 2012). The NAB is a non-profit organisation funded entirely by its members.

Over 80 organisations belong to the NAB and hundreds of individuals working in broadcasting and associated industries involve themselves in their activities. They exist to represent the interests of South African broadcasting and work to promote a broadcasting system that provides choice and diversity for audiences; a favourable climate for broadcasters to operate within; and a broadcasting industry grounded in the principles of democracy, diversity and freedom of expression (NAB, 2012).

#### **5.4.4. Freedom of Expression Institute**

The Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) was established in 1994 to protect and foster the rights to freedom of expression and access to information, and to oppose censorship (FXI, 2012). The FXI undertakes a wide range of activities in support of these objectives, including lobbying, education, monitoring, research, publicity and litigation and the funding of legal cases that advance these rights.

The FXI is voluntary, non-governmental and a member of the International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX), which monitors freedom of the media and freedom of expression on a global scale. Through the IFEX Action Alert system, FXI publicises freedom of expression violations in South Africa and draws in other organisations to support its campaigns (FXI, 2012).

#### **5.5. Organisations representing community media**

The National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) was formed in 1993 to lobby for the diversification of the airwaves in South Africa and to foster a dynamic broadcasting environment through the establishment of community radio stations (NCRF, 2012). The NCRF has about 120 community radio station projects in its membership, with about 75 of the stations on air and others waiting to be licensed by ICASA. Community radio collectively is now the third largest broadcaster nationally with almost five million listeners in the deepest rural areas of the country, covering all provinces.

The NCRF identified as a key objective, the forging of greater unity of purpose among South Africa's community radio stations, as well as strengthening the sectors' natural partnership with civil society in deepening democracy. The mission of the NCRF is to build a vibrant and sustainable community media sector in Southern Africa. Its vision is to advocate and lobby on behalf of their members various stakeholders to advance participatory democracy towards sustainable social development in communities (NCRF, 2012).

## 6. Conclusion

There are a number of institutions dealing with government communications and promoting the South African brand. The GCIS provides guidance to government with regard to communication. Regarding South Africa's international image, the IMC helps to create a positive and compelling brand for South Africa. The Public Diplomacy Branch focuses on developing South Africa's reputation both at home and internationally. South Africa has embraced the media as a platform for dialogue and the projection of a positive national image.

The South African media operates in a particular regulatory framework governed by legislation and self-regulation; it is subject to certain standards and protocols, and due to its membership of certain bodies, acts according to the guidelines set by these. This regulatory framework includes the Constitution, which guarantees media freedom and more specific legislation which all have a bearing on the activities of the different media.

The media in South Africa also operate within the scope of a number of statutory bodies that have an influence on their activities. A number of institutions also fulfill "self-regulatory" functions within the media environment in South Africa.

The proposed PSIB and plans for a MAT have severely dented the relationship between the government and the media. Civil society, business and even foreign media mobilised around the local media in opposition to government's legislative intentions. The prevailing consensus seemed to be that government was intent on using the proposed legislation to prevent the media from exposing corruption and poor governance in its ranks.

Government eventually relented and a number of successive changes to the proposed legislation followed. However, the matter of the absence of a public interest defence clause, which would protect anyone who released or published classified information in the public interest, meant the legislation seemed destined for a Constitutional Court challenge, where critics hoped it would be "thrown out".

The proposed statutory MAT further complicated the relationship between government and the media. In the wake of the debate about it the SAPC announced a complete review of its constitution. The objection to the MAT was that if any outside institution told editors what to publish or not, it would interfere with the freedom of the press. Though the Deputy President said the review of the Press Ombudsman would influence whether there was a need for a MAT, the ANC insisted “independent regulation” was the way to go, arguing that self-regulatory efforts were undermined by vested interests.

It is clear that external and internal media regulation can be distinguished regarding media policy (Fourie, 2008: xxii). External regulation refers to the laws and regulations applied to the media and communications sector and are legally enforced by statutory regulatory institutions such as ICASA. The purpose is to formally direct media ownership and to protect society against possible harmful influences.

Internal regulation includes the rule and codes of conduct formulated by the media and communications industry itself, for itself and applied to itself by organisations such as the Press Ombudsman. The purpose is to achieve and maintain a high level of professionalism and ethical conduct, and to adhere to the rules of external regulation.

The next chapter considers South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy and diplomacy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SOUTH AFRICA'S POST-APARTHEID FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMACY

#### 1. Introduction

Since 1994, the conduct of South African diplomacy changed. Whereas it was previously a case study of "pariah diplomacy", it has now become more conventional (Muller, 1998). South Africa is still adapting to an ever-changing regional, continental and global environment, against the background of the historic situation and of the evolution of diplomacy world-wide.

There is a particularly sharp contrast between pre-political transition and post-political transition in South African diplomacy. Firstly, the 'old' South African diplomacy had been secret and low-key, whereas the 'new' is characterised by summitry and a powerful role for the head of state (Muller, 1998).

Secondly, the 'old' had particular difficulties in Africa and Southern Africa and interaction with the region was often characterised by the use of force, whereas the 'new' has a strong regional focus. In the third instance, the 'old' was primarily bilateral, whereas the 'new' has a very strong emphasis on the multilateral (Muller, 1998).

Finally, the 'new' South African diplomacy was heralded by a rapid extension of formal relations and representation abroad for a country which had formerly been the most isolated in modern times (Muller, 1998).

The aim of this chapter is to analyse South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy principles, priorities, actors and pillars. It also studies South Africa's diplomatic institutions and practice. In addition, South Africa's public diplomacy institutions and activities are investigated, including nation branding.

## 2. South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy principles

During September 1995, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfred Nzo spelt out South Africa's foreign policy principles at a Heads of Mission Conference in Pretoria (DFA, 2008).<sup>39</sup> He stated that the underlying principles which serve as guidelines in the conduct of South Africa's relations, include a commitment to the promotion of human rights; the promotion of democracy; justice and international law in the conduct of relations between nations; international peace and internationally agreed-upon mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts; the interests of Africa in world affairs; and economic development through regional and international cooperation in an interdependent world (DFA, 2008).

Holsti (1977: 144-151) distinguishes between "categories" of foreign policy objectives, such as core values and interests, to which all governments and nations commit their very existence; middle-range goals, which normally impose demands on other states; and universal long-range goals. These are:

- Core values and interests are those goals for which most people are willing to make ultimate sacrifices. They are stated in the form of basic principles of foreign policy and are more frequently related to the self-preservation of the state. They are short-range objectives, as other goals cannot be achieved unless the states pursuing them maintain their own existence.
- Middle-range objectives are divided into three further types: The first include attempts of governments to meet economic betterment demands through international action; the second is to increase a state's prestige in the system through diplomatic ceremonial and military capability displays; and the third include forms of self-extension to seek access that cannot be achieved through diplomacy or trade.
- Long-range goals are the plans concerning the ultimate political or ideological organisation of the international system.

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<sup>39</sup> The DFA and DIRCO distinguish between principles, objectives and elements of foreign policy without defining these concepts.

According to DIRCO (2011b), its strategic objectives are to, through bilateral and multilateral interactions, protect and promote South African national interests and values; conduct and coordinate South Africa's international relations and promote its international relations policy objectives; monitor international developments and advise government on international relations policy and related domestic matters; protect South Africa's sovereignty and territorial integrity; contribute to the formulation of international law, and enhance respect for the provisions thereof; promote multilateralism to secure a rules-based international system; maintain a modern, effective and excellence driven department; provide consular services to South African nationals abroad; and provide a world-class and uniquely South African state protocol service.

These objectives are pursued in support of these foreign policy principles, namely the promotion of human rights; the promotion of democracy; justice and international law in the conduct of relations between nations; international peace and internationally agreed-upon mechanisms for conflict resolution; the interests of Africa in world affairs; and economic development through regional and international cooperation in an interdependent world (DFA, 2005).

DIRCO has a "vision" of a prosperous, peaceful, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and united African continent which contributes to a just and equitable world (DIRCO, 2011b). Its mission statement commits the department to promoting South Africa's national interests and values, as well as the African renaissance and the creation of a better world for all.

### **3. Elements of South Africa's foreign policy**

In the above-mentioned 2008 Discussion Document of the DFA (2008b), the characteristics and crucial elements of South Africa's foreign policy and international relations were summarised as:

- South Africa must consistently endeavour to pursue a coherent foreign policy, which includes economic, security and political components.

- The approach should be preventive diplomacy and pro-active initiatives, rather than reaction to events. A monitoring network with African partners is essential.
- South Africa should assume a leadership role in Africa in all those areas where a constructive contribution could be made without politically antagonising the country's African partners.
- Government should continue to pursue a non-aligned approach, with due regard for the SADC, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)<sup>40</sup>, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)<sup>41</sup> and other membership commitments.
- Diplomacy of bridge-building between the "North" and the "South" should be pursued.
- In multilateral forums, South Africa should strive to promote its interests regarding the major global issues, such as respect for human rights, democracy, global peace, security and the protection of the environment.
- South Africa should constantly endeavour to positively influence and change the direction of events and developments internationally, to the extent that they affect South Africa.
- Diplomatic relations and all related aspects should be a means to an end, namely to promote the well-being of the country and its citizens.

In addition to the principles discussed before, more practical issues are emphasised, such as reactive diplomacy; a leadership role in Africa; a continued non-aligned approach; bridge-building between the "North" and the "South"; and diplomatic relations promoting the well-being of the country and its citizens (DFA, 2008b).

#### **4. South Africa's foreign policy priorities**

In its Budgetary Review for 2010, DIRCO (2010) noted that the following had been identified as areas where a change of emphasis was envisaged in policy priorities:

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<sup>40</sup> The OAU was established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa, on signature of the OAU Charter by representatives of 32 governments. A further 21 states have joined gradually over the years, with South Africa becoming the 53rd member on 23 May 1994 (DAF, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> NAM is a movement of 115 members representing the interests and priorities of developing countries. The movement has its origin in the Asia-Africa Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 (NAM, 2001).



- How to adjust South Africa's expression of national interest;
- How to ensure that foreign policy is rooted in domestic priorities and that the South African public is brought on board in order to support the department in its work; and
- How to make sure that the private sector supports the objectives of South Africa's foreign policy.

The emphasis here is on the way forward and the focus seems to shift to get buy-in from the local audience. We find a mention of "the national interest", and how foreign policy is entrenched in domestic priorities.

## **5. South African foreign policy actors**

Foreign policy concerns the internal and external spheres of state interaction (Tjemolane 2011: 61-63). It involves domestic issues and institutions of the state directly or indirectly, as well as foreign matters on which decisions are based. South Africa's foreign policy, although formulated at national level, also emphasises the government's commitment to the region and the continent. Foreign policymaking is a complex process of interaction between many actors. Politicians are often the dominant decision-makers, thus overwhelming non-state actors such as civil society. Participating state-actors vary from state to state, with different roles and titles.

### **5.1. The President**

Most heads of government are involved in foreign policy formulation and implementation and spend a great deal of their time on it (Hill, 2003: 53). This is also true in South Africa, where the President is both the head of government and state (Tjomelane, 2011: 63). The Constitution explains the role and functions of the President. The President is the head of state and head of the national executive. He must uphold, defend and respect the Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic, and promote the unity of the nation and that which will advance the Republic.

Regarding his power and functions, he receives and recognises foreign diplomatic and consular representatives; and appoints ambassadors, plenipotentiaries and diplomatic and consular representatives in South Africa (South Africa, 1996). The President is the most powerful actor in foreign policymaking. Foreign policy powers are also vested in the hands of the Deputy President and a limited group of ministers or departments.

Former President Nelson Mandela, owing to his personality and international standing, was prominent in foreign policy issues (Tjomelane, 2011: 63-65). Nelson Mandela became the “brand-name” utilised to sell South Africa in the international sphere. However, his profile reached the extent where the international community’s expectations on South Africa could not be fulfilled.

Former President Mbeki had very good and influential diplomatic skills (Tjomelane, 2011: 65-66). His achievements include a reconfiguration of South Africa’s relations with the US, the EU and the South, especially the African continent. He was actively involved in the development of the concept of the African Renaissance and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).<sup>42</sup> He called for multilateralism in resolving regional conflicts and sent additional peacekeepers abroad. He also played a significant role in the NAM, the AU and the UN.

President Zuma has appointed special foreign policy advisers to assist in certain areas of intense South African involvement. In October 2010, he appointed his political adviser, Charles Nqakula, as his special envoy to the Sudan (GCIS, 2011: 314). South Africa is also playing an important mediation and facilitation role in Zimbabwe (GCIS, 2011: 307). Lindiwe Sisulu has been involved in the mediation process in Zimbabwe, but has also made pronouncements on the political situation in Swaziland.

Against the backdrop of the current South African system of governance, a president can have superior influence on foreign policy.

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<sup>42</sup> NEPAD is the planning and coordinating technical body of the AU, aimed at eradicating poverty and creating sustainable growth (NEPAD, 2012).

## 5.2. Department of International Relations and Cooperation

The international relations ministry is often the primary foreign policy planner (Tjomelane, 2011: 66). Unlike foreign policy that is somewhat “continuous”, foreign ministers change from government to government and from term to term. The international relations ministry does not exercise policymaking and execution separate from other government bodies. It is obliged to inform other cabinet members of foreign policy issues.

Any international relations ministry must perform the following basic functions:

- Routine information-gathering: The foreign ministry often relies on its diplomats who accumulate and analyse information about other countries. Diplomats perform information-gathering duties with intelligence services and, to a limited degree, the media.
- Policymaking: Although politicians are responsible for foreign policymaking with the assistance of political parties, they need professional help from experts in the foreign ministry. It may be a daunting task for the minister in DIRCO to scrutinise incoming data, interpret and forecast other states’ actions and participate in foreign policymaking, all outside the advice of experts.
- Memory: Within the foreign ministry, diplomats play a crucial role of record keeping. It is important to archive information on a state’s commitments and treaties into a system for future reference, especially for foreign policymaking (Hill, 2003: 77-78).

The new democratic department was confronted with multiple intra-departmental challenges, including:

- Racial composition: At the dawn of the post-1994 era, DIRCO was largely racially dominated by white staff. The fundamental challenge was to try to attain ethnic equilibrium in the department.
- Gender issues: Male personnel outnumbered their women counterparts. By 2009, DIRCO staff members stood at 1 083 males and 1 270 females, clearly

showing transformation, since women staff members now outnumber the male members.

- Ideological affiliation: The department was divided into two camps, namely neo-mercantilist “holdover” diplomats who had a firm belief in the significance of trade and self-interest versus internationalist former political activists who had returned from exile believing in solidarity with the collective problems of the developing world. The challenge was to do away with ideological differences in the department.
- Departmental leadership and policy coordination: Minister Alfred Nzo was accused of being unable to make firm decisions regarding policymaking and departmental transformation (Alden & Le Pere, 2004: 285). This resulted in poor policy coordination. There was some “hostility” between DIRCO and its portfolio committee, with the committee expressing dissatisfaction that it was shut out of foreign policy processes (Tjomelane, 2011: 68-69).

The DIRCO minister is supposed to be a principal figure in foreign policy decision-making, but primary decision-making powers are vested in the hands of the President (Tjomelane, 2011: 68-69).

Since the inception of the modern state system, international law (the law between states and between states and international organisations) has been one of the mechanisms with which states attempted to establish and keep international peace and order (DIRCO, undated).

Contemporary international challenges to governments like population flows and refugee problems (often resulting from gross human rights violations or conflicts and civil wars within the borders of states), fatal diseases, environmental threats and organised crime, can only be addressed by inter-governmental cooperation and regime creation, processes that need to be embedded in international law. These developments necessitate the involvement of a legal advisor trained in international law in the formulation and conduct of a state’s diplomacy (DIRCO, undated).

The State Law Advisors specialising in International Law are situated in the Office of the Chief State Law Advisor, located within the DIRCO (DIRCO, undated). The office consists of two components, namely the State Law Advisors and the South African Treaty Section that are at the disposal of clients.

The office provides legal advice and inputs to the South African Government as a whole on International Law to ensure that international agreements are not in conflict with International Law and South Africa's international obligations; legal advice and inputs to DIRCO and all missions abroad to ensure that within the domestic context, in particular in respect of departmental matters, including policy, DIRCO acts in conformity with South African law; and a Treaty and Information Service, the central record-keeping authority and custodian of all international agreements South Africa is a party to, and an effective information service specialising in domestic and International Law (DIRCO, undated).

Legal advice is provided in respect of all questions relating to International Law on request to clients; and on questions relating to South African law, particularly private law, including law of contract, labour law and administrative law (DIRCO, undated: 4).

### **5.3. Department of Trade and Industry**

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has been considered the "chief steward" of South Africa's bilateral and multilateral trade and investment relations (Tjomelane, 2011: 72-73). The difference between foreign and trade policy is small. Many trade policies concluded by the DTI inevitably affect South Africa's foreign policy in general.

Notable trade policy actors within the DTI include the International Trade and Economic Development Division (ITED) (primary negotiator); the International Trade Administration Commission (ITAC) (trade policy administrator); and Trade and Investment South Africa (export and investment promoter) (Tjomelane, 2011: 73).

These deal with matters related to South Africa's economic development, exports and diversification and industrialisation strategy.

The DTI succeeded in bargaining the free trade agreement with the EU (Tjomelane, 2011: 73). Consequently, it occupies an increasingly high profile in the WTO. The department envisions a "dynamic industrial, globally competitive South African economy, characterised by inclusive growth and development, decent employment and equity, built on the full potential of all citizens" (DTI, undated).

The DTI also plays a role in South Africa's foreign policy processes particularly on trade-related issues (Tjomelane, 2011: 73-74). South Africa's economic relations with African countries are "impressive". These partnerships are sustained through the countries' banking, hotel, mining, retail, telecommunications, tourist, production and services industries, all operating under the auspices of the DTI.

The DTI is also in the process of developing a free trade protocol in the SADC region and reforming the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).<sup>43</sup> South Africa has however been accused by its African trade partners of being a self-interested dominant economic actor and an aspiring hegemon due to an outrageous number of its businesses (such as Vodacom, MTN and Shoprite) invading African countries' markets and unbalanced trade patterns skewed in favour of South Africa (Tjomelane, 2011: 73-74).

#### **5.4. Department of Defence**

The Department of Defence (DOD) is a prominent role-player in South Africa's foreign policy (Tjomelane, 2011: 73-74). Although often linked with the aggressive employment of armed force in war zones, military instruments also incorporate warless military methods (military aid and assistance, military intervention, military deployment in peacekeeping missions and military threats) executed abroad. Under

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<sup>43</sup> SACU consists of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. The SACU Secretariat is located in Windhoek, Namibia. SACU was established in 1910, making it the world's oldest Customs Union (SACU, 2007).

the umbrella of the DOD there is also the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). It is a foreign policy instrument and participates more in foreign policy implementation than formulation.

Other departments that have variable impacts on foreign policy-making include the departments of Health; Home Affairs; Finance; Justice; and Sports and Recreation (Tjomelane, 2011: 77). African international actors such as the SADC, the AU and even individual countries also influence South Africa's foreign policy.

### **5.5. Parliament**

The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (PCIRCO) integrates Parliament into the foreign policy-making process (Tjomelane, 2011: 77-78). Where Parliament is inferior to a national constitution, concrete parliamentary participation in international issues, such as foreign policy implementation is usually not strong. Parliamentary and public contributions have had little influence on foreign policy execution.

In South Africa, regarding its role in foreign policy-making, Parliament has complained that its input is almost always marginalised. This has made it difficult for the portfolio committee to fulfil its purpose. Its role in foreign policy is mainly at the formulation stage in a form of debates among committee members (Tjomelane, 2011: 77-78).

### **5.6. Civil society**

In the context of influencing foreign policy, civil society refers to any non-state actor within a "society" including academia, businesses, labour unions, private media and voluntary organisations (Tjomelane, 2011: 79). Such actors include research institutions such as the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).

The print media such as *The Star* and the *Business Day*; and electronic media, such as SABC3 and the e-News Channel, also regularly carry articles and discussions on issues pertaining to South Africa's foreign policy or foreign policy context.

These actors can make substantial foreign policy inputs through research publications, seminars, and interaction with and reporting on relevant role-players (Tjomelane, 2011: 79-80). Although civil society does not decide on policies, it exerts influence on foreign policy formulators and implementers or endeavours to do so. Civil society often represents the views of and informs the masses, cooperates with or denounces government actions on policies embarked on.

Civil society is, however, largely placed on the periphery of foreign policy-making (Tjomelane, 2011: 80). Although many observers perceive that civil society "should" prominently be party to foreign policy-making, there has not been regular and consistent involvement of civil society in this regard. This is indicative of what has been seen as a lack of transparency and openness in South Africa's foreign policy, which is contrary to what the post-1994 democratic government pledged.

It is clear that within the context of the South African foreign policy process, a wide range of actors are involved. The president as the head of government is the primary figure that undertakes foreign-policy decisions and implementation. However, the president is not the only actor involved in the process, as other government departments also contribute to the process.

DIRCO plays a critical part in foreign policy formulation and implementation through diplomacy. Trade policies concluded by the DTI affect South Africa's foreign policy. The DOD is also involved in foreign policy decision-making, with the SANDF being more involved in foreign policy implementation than formulation. The PCIRCO supports DIRCO on foreign affairs issues in Parliament. Civil society's contribution to foreign policymaking is evident through actors such as academia and NGOs.

## **6. Pillars of South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy**

In October 2011, President Zuma explained that South Africa's foreign policy was



guided by four pillars, namely the African agenda; South-South cooperation; North-South dialogue; multilateral and economic diplomacy; and bilateral relations with individual countries (South Africa.info, 2011).

In reality, there will always be an overlap between these items (SAIIA, 2008). Consider in particular the relevance of a South-South consensus on participation in the global system of governance.

### **6.1. Consolidation of the African agenda**

In its Annual Report 2008-09, the then DFA (2009) reiterated that the consolidation of the so-called “African Agenda” remained the principal focus of South Africa’s foreign policy. By consolidating the African Agenda, policy makers intend to foster the process of peaceful and secure change in Africa to achieve wealth for the whole continent (Pretz, 2008: 8). This included an improved initiative for the AU; a deeper integration in Africa through SADC; SACU and NEPAD, for a peaceful and safe life for all.

Shaping the content and nature of public discourse on the African Agenda is a basic element in South Africa’s approach towards the continent (Fakir, 2007: 3). The notion of the African Agenda is fairly broad in its meaning and seems to entail a combination of themes and issues of concern to the political leadership of the continent. At one level it seems to signify general debates on processes to promote African democracy and governance and the challenges these face. At another level, it appears to represent South Africa’s own key challenges to shape a leading role and advance its own strategic interests on the continent.

Thus, South Africa’s African Agenda serves the role of setting out a continental agenda, as evidenced by the vigorous participation in and support of various collective activities and programmes on the continent (Fakir, 2007: 3). A less obvious, but potentially important role is to conceal the fact that the country seeks to promote its own long-term interests on the continent – among others the strengthening of the country’s position within the continent. It is important to understand this multiple role of the African Agenda to appreciate its strategic benefit.

One of the strategic goals of the African Agenda is the search for peace and security, as well as socio-political and economic stability in Africa (Fakir, 2007: 3). This rests on five key premises, namely peace, security and stability through the AU; development through NEPAD; effective governance through mechanisms such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM);<sup>44</sup> cooperation through international partnership pacts; and regional economic communities (RECs) - or sub-regional bodies - as the building blocks for a continental institutional order.

The partnership strategy is an integral part of South Africa's African Agenda and is especially critical in two ways. Firstly, it serves to construct a basis for enlisting the support of prospective foreign investors who could provide much-needed financial, technical and other assistance for the Agenda and its programmes of action. This assistance has the potential to serve as an incentive to African countries to pursue the necessary reforms and other programmes (Fakir, 2007: 4-5).

Secondly, the creation of partnerships with key states in various parts of the continent is vital in ensuring that South Africa wins geo-politically strategic allies and regional champions of the African Agenda that it can rely on in pursuing its vision of the future of the African continent. It also serves to create a basis on which these key states can generate a stake in the promotion of the African Agenda, thus potentially offsetting the risk of South Africa being seen to pursue its own Agenda exclusively and unilaterally (Fakir, 2007: 4-5).

Former Director-General in The Presidency, Frank Chikane, believes that the African agenda, once spearheaded by former President Thabo Mbeki, is losing momentum and the gains made are being reversed (*Times Live*, 20/3/2012).

The consolidation of the African Agenda is a main focus of South Africa's foreign policy. It involves a blend of subjects. It sets out a continental programme, but also supports South Africa's own national interest in Africa. This rests on the premises of

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<sup>44</sup> The APRM is a mutually agreed programme, voluntarily adopted by the member states of the African Union, to promote and re-enforce high standards of governance. The peer review mechanism is a self-monitoring mechanism (NEPAD, 2012).

peace, security and stability through the AU; development through NEPAD; effective governance through the APRM; cooperation through partnerships; and RECs.

## **6.2. South-South cooperation**

*Interpress News Service* (2009) reported that there was more to South-South cooperation than making the right noises at international gatherings. South-South collaboration between developing countries was described as a growing and dynamic phenomenon, an important process vital in confronting shared challenges. Led by what was depicted as “emerging giants” India, Brazil and South Africa through the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA), the South was seen as a tremendous source of tested solutions to development challenges, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).<sup>45</sup>

The following statement by former President Mbeki reflects the value attached by South African policy-makers to the building of strategic partnerships in the South: “For countries of the South to realise rapid development including fair trade, economic development, job creation and poverty eradication, these developing countries, should, first and foremost, form strong partnerships and strategic alliances that would unlock the vast resources and economic opportunities within and between their countries and regions” (DFA, 2006).

Promoting solidarity, cooperation and self-help among states of the South has been a key feature of the South-South discourse (SAIIA, 2008: 2). The emerging global economic and political clout of some of the bigger developing countries has the potential to reshape both South-South and traditional North-South engagement in a way that is much more responsive to the aspirations of the developing world than in the past. However, this does not signify any greater ease in achieving consensus among such a large grouping of countries that, albeit developing, have diverse interests.

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<sup>45</sup> In 2000, 189 states undertook to free people from extreme poverty and multiple deprivation. This pledge turned into the eight Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2013).

South-South cooperation supports three key themes important for South Africa, namely the transformation of the power configuration and global governance architecture reflected in North-South relations; the strengthening of self-help initiatives among developing countries through increasing intra-South trade and investment, cooperation in science and technology and capacity building based on similar circumstances and experiences; and support for NEPAD projects, especially where Southern partners have unique contributions to make (SAIIA, 2008: 3).

South Africa's programme for its South-South engagement with the arrival of democracy in 1994, was characterised by chairing various traditional South-South forums; leading and participating in the establishment of new formal and informal South-South forums; taking an active interest in global governance reforms; and expanding its relations with countries of the South (SAIIA, 2008: 5).

There are several South-South forums, some with long histories that aim to seek closer South-South cooperation (SAIIA, 2008: 10). The most prominent are NAM and the Group of 77 (G77)<sup>46</sup>, which have long attempted to find common ground among developing countries, the former on political and the latter on social, economic and technical issues.

South Africa joined NAM in 1994 and assumed the Chair of the movement when it hosted the XII NAM Summit of Heads of State or Government in Durban in 1998 (DIRCO, 2006). During the next four years, South Africa sought also to remain highly engaged in the Palestinian question and the evolving Iraq crisis, the challenges to multilateralism and the role of the UN.

The Zimbali Process at ministerial level initiated a review of the methodology and organisation of the NAM and the need for a revitalisation of the movement. A new relationship was also established with *inter alia* the Group of Eight (G8) and the EU and relations with the G77 were strengthened.<sup>47</sup> South Africa handed over the Chair to Malaysia at the XIII NAM Summit in Kuala Lumpur and remained a member of the

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<sup>46</sup> The G77 was established in 1964 by 77 developing countries at the end of the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva.

<sup>47</sup> Since 1975, heads of state or government of the major industrial democracies have met annually to deal with major economic and political issues (G8, 2012).

NAM Troika of past, present and future chairs until Cuba assumed the Chair in September 2006 (DIRCO, 2006).

In August 2004, South Africa hosted the XIV NAM Ministerial or mid-term review Conference in Durban on behalf of the Africa-group. This event was held back-to-back with the Asian-African Sub-Regional Organisations Conference (AASROC) II in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the Bandung Conference in 2005 (DIRCO, 2006).

The South African Government attempted to organise a group of major emerging economies of the South into a G8 of the South. In a letter addressed in 2000 by President Mbeki to the heads of state of Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Mexico, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, South Africa suggested that such a forum should be created to match its counterpart in the developed North (SAIIA, 2008: 14). There was little resonance from the countries approached and subsequently other initiatives, notably the IBSA and the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa grouping (BRICS) came to replace this idea.

Of all of the South-South forums IBSA is the smallest South-South cooperation body and seemingly the most dynamic (SAIIA, 2008: 14-15). IBSA is a trilateral, developmental initiative between India, Brazil and South Africa established in 2003 to promote South-South cooperation and exchange. The body consists of a self-selected group of three democratic countries that are significant economic and political powers in their respective continents/regions.

Members are not typically inwardly focused developing countries, but ones that have a broader world-view and represent credible and capable representatives from the South with the ability and clout to prove leadership and engage with other developing countries on creating a South-South consensus on a number of international issues (SAIIA, 2008: 14-15).

IBSA members represent substantial markets, generally exercise a stabilising influence globally and actively aspire to have a voice on international issues. The main objectives of IBSA are to promote South-South dialogue, cooperation and

common positions on issues of international importance; trade and investment opportunities between the three regions of which they are part; international poverty alleviation and social development; the trilateral exchange of information, international best practices, technologies and skills, as well as to complement each others' competitive strengths into collective synergies; and cooperation in a broad range of areas, namely agriculture, climate change, culture, defence, education, energy, health, information society, science and technology, social development, trade and investment, tourism and transport (IBSA, undated).

South Africa also joined Brazil, Russia, India and China (formerly known as the BRIC grouping) to form what is now referred to as the BRICS club (*The Guardian*, 19/4/2011). Sébastien Hervieu of *The Guardian* argued that in choosing to broaden their constituency, the BRICS states made a significant move. This was no longer an artificial body founded on comparable economic performance, but increasingly a political club representing the developing world, determined to counterbalance Western influence in major international forums.

The *China Daily* (15/9/2011) noted that South Africa's ascension into the BRICS club of emerging economies raised some eyebrows internationally, but argued that the country had the credentials to back its membership. The foremost advantage South Africa was seen to offer its BRIC partners was access to one billion consumers living in Africa, as well as the vast mineral and agricultural opportunities the continent offered. South Africa's new allies were calling for change, such as reform of the world's financial bodies and the UNSC. As a BRICS member, it would have to support these calls and add its own voice and diplomatic weight.

The BRICS countries shared several global forums: the UN, Group of 20 (G20) and IBSA.<sup>48</sup> It was said to be in the interest of Africa and South Africa to call for a restructuring of international economic and political institutions, a more equitable and sustainable trade dispensation and agreement on climate change. These are evidently issues on South Africa's agenda, as after the BRICS group had invited

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<sup>48</sup> The G20 brings together finance ministers and central bank governors from 19 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, as well as the European Union (G20, undated).

South Africa to join (*Daily Maverick*, 4/10/2011), South Africa's DIRCO minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, said South Africa agreed with BRIC's member states about the role of emerging economies in advancing the restructuring of the global political, economic and financial architecture into one that was more equitable, balanced and rested on the important pillar of multilateralism.

The global system is still stacked in favour of the more powerful (SAIIA, 2008: 38). Processes of decision-making in global forums are often obscure. However, the advocacy for reform has grown more strident, not only among Southern states, but also global social movements. The debate has shifted to one that emphasises the importance of a more balanced global system that promotes sustainable development.

South-South cooperation strategy is largely committed to solidarity and development (Landsberg, 2006: 9). The development dimension of South-South strategy promotes the goals of market access and trade and investment benefits for developing countries. South-South cooperation is mostly dedicated to solidarity and development. South Africa's agenda for South-South engagement is characterised by: chairing of different South-South forums; participating in the establishment of new South-South forums; taking an interest in global governance reforms; and expanding relations with countries of the South.

IBSA is the smallest of all of the South-South forums, but is ostensibly the most active, representing considerable markets, exercising a stabilising sway internationally and dynamically aspiring to have a say on international issues. Within the BRICS club, member states agree about the role of emerging economies in advancing the reorganisation of the global political, economic and financial design into one that is fairer, impartial and rests on multilateralism.

### **6.3. North-South dialogue**

In terms of North-South dialogue, foreign policy strategists long held the view that engagement with developed countries was premised on forging partnerships for peace, security and development. South African foreign policy came to stress a new

priority, fundamentally altering the relationship between Africa and the North, while strengthening the relationship between Africa and the South. South Africa sought to bring about a redistribution of power between North and South (Landsberg, 2006: 2; 7).

The Mandela government viewed South Africa as an international bridge-builder, seeking to cultivate strong ties with the industrialised North, while reaching out to and speaking on behalf of African and Southern states. The assessment of the Mbeki government was that the Republic needed to cultivate positive ties with both North and South, with the aim of burden sharing in the area of development and bringing about a redistribution of power between these global blocs (Landsberg, 2006: 2).

South Africa came to promote global governance by emphasising the centrality of the UN in global affairs (Landsberg, 2006: 7). It stressed the need for a strong disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation global regime and pushed for the restructuring of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The conception of a multi-lateralist posture strongly emerged in South Africa's foreign policy (Landsberg, 2006: 7).

In terms of North-South dialogue, the emphasis has been on efforts to bring about a strategic partnership between the industrialised North and the developing South. This partnership would be based on mutual responsibility and mutual accountability where both sides in the partnership would have rights and responsibilities. South Africa set out to engage with developed countries on the premise that partnerships should be forged with the aim of bringing about peace, security and development in the South (Landsberg, 2006: 2; 7).

South Africa chose to interact with countries from the North based on mutual accountability and responsibility. Key aims were to reverse "Afro-pessimism and "donor fatigue" and to secure sustained interest in the agendas of Africa and the South. South Africa systematically engaged leaders of the G8 with the aim of guaranteeing support for NEPAD. Its position on issues such as nuclear non-proliferation, political democratisation, "Third World" debt relief and market access



was aimed at bringing about international redress between North and South (Landsberg, 2006: 2; 7).

Building such a partnership would be complicated by the fact that whereas the primary concern of the developing countries were issues of poverty and underdevelopment, the developed world was concerned with *realpolitik* issues of peace and security, and of seeking an alteration in the global balance of power between North and South (Landsberg, 2006: 4).

South Africa expressed concern that the most powerful states in the world dominated the international agenda by asserting their interests and priorities over the concerns of the developing countries. South Africa believed this should be transformed into a new global order based on partnership, shared responsibility and mutual interests.

In terms of North-South dialogue South African foreign policy seeks to bring about a redeployment of influence between North and South. The emphasis has been on efforts to ensure a strategic partnership between the industrialised North and the developing South founded on joint responsibility and accountability. Partnerships should be forged with the aim of bringing about peace, security and development in the South.

The main objective was to overturn “Afro-pessimism” and “donor fatigue” and to achieve sustained interest in the programmes of Africa and the South. Constructing such cooperation would be complicated by the fact that the main concerns of developing countries were poverty and underdevelopment, whereas the developed world was concerned with issues of peace, security and searching for an adjustment in the global balance of power between North and South.

#### **6.4. Transformation of global institutions**

Global democracy is a key political issue, though it is not a goal shared by all, as some would prefer the status quo (Patomäki & Teivainen, 2004: 1). South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy reveals that transformational global governance considerations have enjoyed a high priority in all administrations (Landsberg, 2010:

23). All have aimed to transform the global order from its Western bias to become more sensitive to the needs of Africa and the global South, while also championing the idea of a rules-based international society.

The unilateralist tendencies of major powers have been opposed, while South Africa backed active participation in the multilateral domain. One goal was to transform structures and institutions of global governance, while another was to place developmental goals on the global agenda (Landsberg, 2010: 32).

South Africa backed an overhaul of the global political, financial and trade order (Landsberg, 2010: 32). It pursued a pro-multilateralist posture and stressed the need to transform global political, developmental and financial institutions so that transfers of wealth and power would affect Africa and the South. The aim was to ensure that the developing world would have a voice and a greater say and stake in world affairs.

Unlike other big developing states, South Africa emphasised that its positions were not only shaped by its own particular interests, but also by those of Africa at large (Kumar, 2011: 150). South Africa has thus taken upon itself a much larger responsibility than other big developing states, where the concerns of their regions are largely secondary to their own foreign-policy positions. This approach adds more legitimacy to South African perspectives in global forums. On the other hand, it requires South Africa to repeatedly seek affirmation of its role from the continent.

South Africa has typically used its international presence and diplomatic resourcefulness to push for greater sensitivity on the part of the West to the development needs of Africa and the South. The concern was to help craft a global pact balancing the traditionally hard security concerns of the West with the human security concerns of the developing world (Landsberg, 2010: 32-33).

South Africa could not realise its global developmental and transformational goals by defending the global status quo. These could only be attained using transformational tactics. This cause was supported by the fact that South Africa has become a

respected global player, is listened to by those who wield power globally and punches about its weight in global affairs (Landsberg, 2010: 32-33).

It is suggested that for South Africa to play the role it should in reforming global governance, it will have to overcome the need to overcompensate for its complex African identity (Kumar, 2011: 150). As the largest and most developed African economy on the poorest continent, South Africa's interests, global perspective and objectives often differ from those of most African states. South Africa will also have to build strategic partnerships with key African states.

Transformational global governance issues aim to transform the global order from its Western prejudice to become more responsive to the needs of Africa and the global South, while also championing the idea of a rules-based international society. The unilateralist tendencies of major powers are opposed, while South Africa backs active participation in the multilateral domain. One goal is to convert institutions of global governance, while another is to place developmental goals on the global agenda.

South Africa pursues a pro-multilateralist posture and emphasises the need to transform global political, developmental and financial institutions so that transfers of wealth and power would affect Africa and the South. The aim is to ensure that the developing world would have a voice and a greater say and stake in world affairs. South Africa emphasises that its positions are not only shaped by its own interests but also by those of Africa.

## **7. South Africa's diplomatic institutions and practice**

Landsberg (2004: 185) argues that South Africa's grand and elaborate foreign policy strategies have allowed it to punch above its weight. These go well beyond those expected from a middle ranking power in Africa. Its diplomatic approaches put it in a position to influence world affairs in ways usually reserved for much greater powers. Since 1994, South Africa has sought to play in the premier league of world affairs. Its diplomacy tried to influence what it saw as a divided world: the developing South and

the developed North, NAM and Africa. The Mbeki government advocated a rules-based global order and taking South-South cooperation seriously.

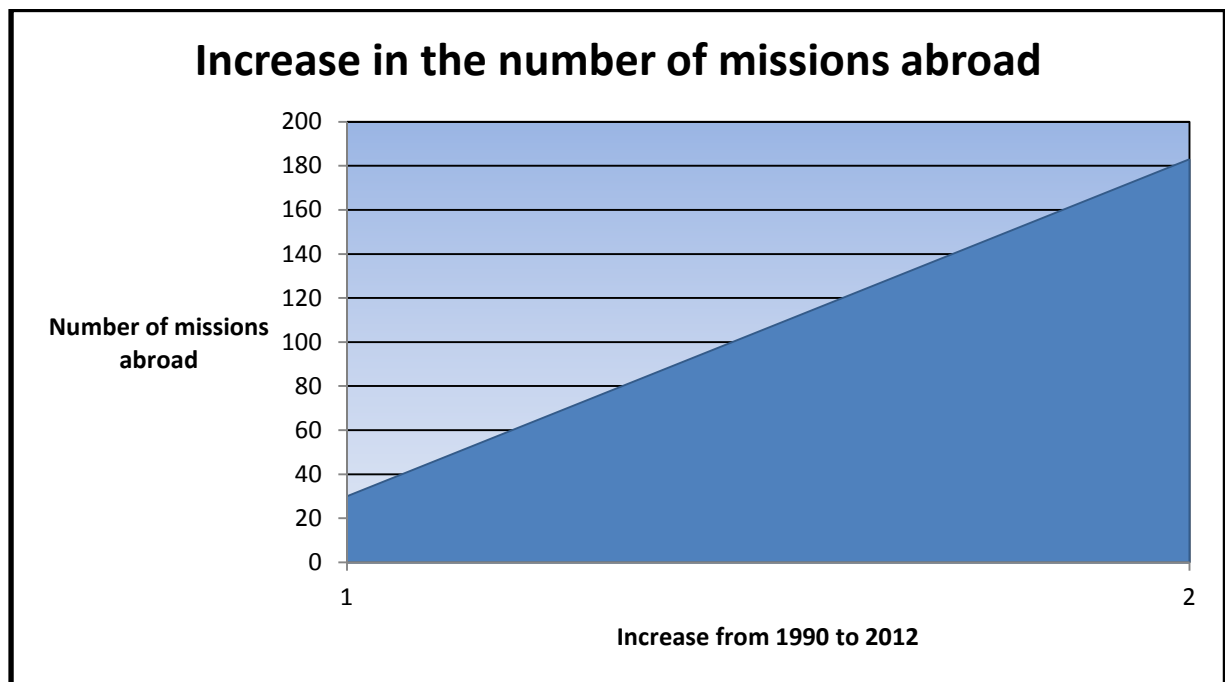
Foreign policy elites viewed South Africa as the spokesperson for Africa in world affairs and in the vanguard with China, India and Brazil in articulating the agenda for the South (Landsberg 2004: 185). When South Africa successfully campaigned to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament, it did so on an African platform, thus using “sports diplomacy” to help assert its African credentials. South Africa rejected unilateralism and promoted multilateralism in international relations, seeking to be in the forefront of constructing norms and values for Africa and promoting democracy, peace and security on the continent.

The post-1994 government brought about important philosophical shifts and many changes in emphasis and priorities (Muller, 1998). The old regime was philosophically right-wing oriented, uncompromisingly pro-Western, critical to the point of being hostile to the Third World and its causes, and sceptical about universal liberal ideals such as human rights and gender issues.

The shift in policy implied that priority would now be given to the African continent and in particular Southern Africa, to the Southern hemisphere, the NAM and to universal moral and humanitarian issues (Muller, 1998). This had a substantial impact on the frequency and nature of contacts between South African leaders and their counterparts in the areas of priority, and on South African involvement in international organisations, conferences and agreements. South African foreign policy also shaped diplomacy.

South Africa’s overseas missions grew quite spectacularly from 1990 onwards (see Figure 2). In 1990, South Africa had representation in only 30 states and by 2012 this had grown to 183 (DIRCO, 2012).

**Figure 4: Increase in the number of missions abroad**



*Source: DIRCO 2012*

This includes embassies, high commissions, honorary consulates/honorary consulates-general/honorary consular agencies/honorary vice-consulates and liaison offices. South African representation abroad is a good illustration of the country's "universal foreign policy" though it is clear that economic pragmatism weighs heavily in the allocation of missions abroad (Muller, 1998). The expansion process had been slowing and is all but over.

Financial considerations play an important role in this, though it is not necessarily the only consideration. South Africa is facing some new dilemmas, including the problem that there is not full reciprocity in the country's foreign representation: there are a number of countries maintaining a presence in South Africa despite the fact that South Africa has no representation in those countries, and there is also not full reciprocity as to the status of representation. In addition there is great disparity in residential and non-residential representation. Reciprocity is not an absolute rule in diplomacy, but too great a disparity could be cause for irritation in the long run.

Another development is the extensive use of summitry as a form of diplomacy in the new South Africa (Muller, 1998). This has been described as one of the main characteristics of the new South African diplomacy. Summitry has been used in the implementation of many aspects of South African foreign policy, but probably most noticeably to further South Africa's economic interests, to forge relations with countries in Africa and the rest of the Third World and in South Africa's role as regional agent for peace.

Summit conferences and state visits are not the only forms of *ad hoc* diplomacy employed by South Africa (Muller, 1998). Many visits, at many different levels, take place, both of South African officials abroad and by foreigners to South Africa. Some are bilateral in nature and others multilateral, involving more than two parties at the same meeting. In some cases ministers are accompanied the President.

International interactions continued to increase in frequency and intensity and foreign visits to and from South Africa increased under then President Thabo Mbeki. It reached such an extent that he was blamed for putting too much emphasis on international matters at the expense of local issues (Muller, 1998). The expectation was that this would change under President Jacob Zuma, who prior to his election, was depicted as "the people's President", but there is no indication of a decline. The opposite might even be true.

The Multilateral Branch of the DFA became very prominent and active largely as a result of the shifts in South African foreign policy and because South Africa was accepted in international society again and joined many international organisations (Muller, 1998). This is a reflection of the importance attached to membership of international organisations; the demands of effective participation in international conferences; the need for the conclusion of many new agreements in a globalising world; and the special importance the new government attached to certain issues (such as non-proliferation and disarmament).

South Africa concluded increasing numbers of international agreements, many of them multilateral, and was called to positions of leadership in some important international fora (Muller, 1998).

South Africa had been at pains not to be seen as hegemonic in political, diplomatic or military terms, but as a result of skewed trade relations it was still perceived as such, which greatly undermined its democratisation project in the region (Landsberg, 2004: 185). A strategy was adopted emphasising that South Africa was a genuine partner in Africa that would work closely with African states to achieve common solutions to common African problems. A great deal was invested in South African diplomacy to manage outside perceptions that it harboured ambitions of dominance in the region.

Landsberg (2004: 226 & 227) argues that South Africa adopted a strategy of “quiet” diplomacy with regard to many African conflict or crisis areas, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Comoros, and not only with regard to the situation in Zimbabwe. It had a general preference for behind-the-scenes engagement with belligerents in conflict situations, especially in Africa, even overstressing itself in peacemaking and peacekeeping to boost its image as peacemaker. These “quiet diplomatic intercessions” involved thankless negotiations coordinating peace efforts, mediating in conflict situations and trying to keep peace where there was little peace to keep.

The post-1994 foreign policy-makers pursued bridge-building tactics between the North and the South and South-South partnerships (Landsberg, 2004: 228). It was pre-occupied with reintegrating South Africa into the international community, and articulated a highly ethical foreign policy emphasising human rights promotion, democratisation, international law, conflict resolution and defending the interests of Africa in world affairs.

There was a focus on the need to reform and strengthen the UN and bring about international redress through a rules-orientated global order. It strove for a world where states from the developing South, especially African states, would come to respect the norms and principles of democratic governance, peace and human security; while the states from the industrialised North would live up to their historical obligations and commit to greater levels of foreign aid, open up their markets and

allow for fairer trade, address debt relief, help bolster Africa's peacekeeping capacity and relate to Africans as partners and not as recipients of aid handouts.

The post-1994 government brought about important idealistic shifts and changes in accent and priorities. Precedence was given to Africa, in particular Southern Africa, the Southern hemisphere, the NAM and universal ethical and humanitarian issues. This had an impact on the incidence and nature of interactions between South African leaders and their counterparts and on South African involvement in international organisations, conferences and agreements.

Post-1994 foreign policy-makers endeavoured for a world where states from the developing South would value the norms and principles of democratic governance, peace and human security; while the states from the industrialised North would live up to their historical obligations and commit to greater levels of foreign aid, open up their markets and allow for fairer trade, address debt relief, help bolster Africa's peacekeeping capacity and relate to Africans as partners and not as recipients of aid handouts.

## **8. South Africa's public diplomacy: institutions and practice**

South Africa's public diplomacy is examined by considering its professed practice by the DFA, or now DIRCO. The contribution of the IMC is also considered.

### **8.1. Public diplomacy institutions**

The PDU, later upgraded to a full departmental branch, focuses specifically on developing South Africa's and Africa's reputation both at home and internationally (DFA, 2007: 63). It addresses media liaison, engagement with national stakeholders and the promotion of South Africa's policies and programmes at international level. The PDU coordinates all Departmental efforts aimed at shaping the communication environment at home and abroad, where South Africa's foreign policy is played out. The PDU defines its responsibilities as promoting an understanding both domestically and internationally, of South Africa's role and position in international relations (DFA, 2003: 274). DIRCO (2011a: 66) describes the functions of its Public



Diplomacy Branch in its Annual Report 2009-10 saying it addresses communication engagements with national and international stakeholders, media liaison and the promotion of South Africa's image, policies and programmes at international level.

As the PDU focuses on developing South Africa's reputation both at home and internationally it is clear that DIRCO makes no real distinction between public diplomacy and public affairs in practice.

During the 2009-10 financial year the Branch undertook a business process review to restructure its units to have better capacity to provide a fully-fledged public diplomacy service, including community engagements, and to provide an improved communication engagement service abroad (DIRCO, 2011b: 66). Its core mandate is described as keeping "the public and Departmental stakeholders informed" (DIRCO, 2011b: 66) of its plans and activities. The focus seems to be more aimed at the home audience than the audience abroad. To have an understanding of the approach to public diplomacy by missions abroad, the purpose statement of the Public Diplomacy Section at the South African Embassy in the US can serve as a guideline. It is described as (South African Embassy Washington DC, undated) the effective presentation and promotion of South Africa's values, policies and image in the US through the Ambassador, the Embassy, partnerships and events that promote, protect and enhance South Africa's national interest. This is achieved through facilitating improved understanding of South Africa's foreign policy objectives and ensured through proactive media and public relations to maintain a prominent position in the US.

## **8.2. Public diplomacy activities**

In an overview of its activities of the previous year, it becomes clear what the Branch does. DIRCO continued with the production and distribution of publicity materials including the Annual Report 2008-09, Budget Vote Speech 2009 booklet, Desk Calendar 2010, *The Diplomat* (DIRCO's monthly newsletter), "Know your DIRCO", as well as promotional banners and posters for various conferences, summits and workshops (DIRCO, 2010: 66-132).

Marketing initiatives “at par with international standards” were undertaken with the objective of popularising “the Brand DIRCO” to various stakeholders nationally and internationally (DIRCO, 2010: 66-132). DIRCO also participated and assisted in conferences, shows and exhibitions with the aim of building and projecting a positive image of South Africa globally. A number of activities were conducted centred on the promotion of the 2010 FIFA World Cup and South Africa’s state of readiness to host the World Cup.

The main marketing and branding activities during the period included the Minister’s Dinner, the annual South Africa Tourism Indaba and facilitated and supported the Minister’s Outreach Campaigns such as participation in the G8/Africa Outreach Programme focusing on G8 commitments to Africa and programmes in reaching out to the public domain through constant engagement with academic institutions and stakeholders (DIRCO, 2010: 66-132). These activities were mainly done in partnerships with a number of companies within corporate South Africa.

DIRCO’s Operation Centre produced daily news bulletins informing all missions of relevant news in South Africa and produced regional reports to keep head office and missions informed about important events in various regions of the world (DIRCO, 2011b: 66). The department maintained a 24-hour Operations Centre which assisted The Presidency, the Ministry, DIRCO and the South African public and served as an early-warning centre for political principals, reporting on major incidents or crises and international events.

To ensure accurate historical recording, documentation and dissemination of South Africa’s international relations engagements, the department continued with both audiovisual and photographic coverage of engagements of the President, Deputy President and principals and distributed these to both local and international print and audiovisual media (DIRCO, 2011b: 66).

The Public Diplomacy Branch prepared thematic and topical speeches for strategic national, continental and international events for principals, including for the annual State of the Nation Address, the Budget Vote, Ministerial Public Outreach programmes and other high-level visits and conferences. The Branch continued with

the management of the department's official website - [www.dirco.gov.za](http://www.dirco.gov.za) - and intranet and integrating the Department's website, intranet and Foreign Mission websites and other information sources to form a highly interactive and informative web portal (DIRCO, 2011b: 66).

DIRCO is involved in an array of public diplomacy activities. Marketing projects are embarked on to popularise DIRCO to stakeholders locally and abroad (DIRCO, 2011b: 66). DIRCO also takes part in conferences, shows and exhibitions to build and project a positive image of South Africa globally. Marketing and branding activities such as DIRCO's outreach campaigns are customised to reach out to the public sphere through engagement with academic institutions and stakeholders.

DIRCO's Operation Centre keeps the department informed about important events in various regions around the world (DIRCO, 2011b: 66). The Public Diplomacy Branch prepares speeches for strategic events. The Branch also manages the Department's official website.

With regard to its media focus, DIRCO reports that to keep the public and departmental stakeholders informed, media engagements were undertaken during 2009/10 and ongoing media liaison and communication support to the ministry and department was provided (DIRCO, 2011b: 66). This was done through sectoral briefings led by Deputy Directors-General and pre-event media awareness campaigns (undertaken to generate publicity prior to events or visits).

In addition to assisting South African missions abroad with country promotional requests and publicity material needs, the Public Diplomacy Branch continued to provide media and communications support during Cabinet *lekgotlas* and when heads of missions to South Africa provided their letters of credence to the President (DIRCO, 2011b: 66).<sup>49</sup>

In the Annual Report 2006/07 of the DFA, it paid particular attention to the Public Diplomacy Branch's media liaison functions (DFA, 2008: 220). It is explained that

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<sup>49</sup> *Lekgotla* means a meeting called by government to discuss strategy planning. The term is a loan word from Sesotho, meaning "court".

South Africa's involvement and leadership in different continental and international fora demanded that it be placed at the centre of communications efforts by the department assisting the country to gain prominence, adding that it would ensure that the entire African continent continued to feature in a positive light in global affairs.

The Operations Centre produced the following, indicating its focus on the media to enable the department to react to what is reflected in media sources:

- *Daily News Highlight* reports were compiled from articles in the daily media and transmitted electronically to all head office staff;
- *Daily News Bulletin* reports were compiled through the assessment and selection of news stories covered in South African newspapers and websites and distributed to all end users, including missions abroad;
- *Weekend News Bulletin* reports were compiled by after-hours staff on weekends and public holidays through assessment and selection of news stories covered in South African newspapers and websites and distributed to principals after hours; and
- Regional media reports and reviews for Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia and Europe were compiled from international media news sources and distributed to the respective missions and Branches (DFA, 2008: 221).

The 24-hour Operations Centre also acted as an early-warning centre for principals reporting on major incidents or crises and international events (DFA, 2008: 222). This included the compilation of about two-hourly *International News Scans* by monitoring the media after hours. The *International News Scans* gave principals updates on political, diplomatic and economic developments around the world; major government changes or cabinet reshuffles abroad; and the opinions of world leaders and developments in the UN, AU, SADC and other multilateral organisations.

The Operations Centre also provided continuous logistical support to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs, especially on official visits abroad and attending international conferences and summits (DFA, 2008: 222).

The department undertook media research, analysis and speechwriting (DFA, 2008: 222). The Department, through its Media Liaison Unit provided ongoing media liaison and communication support services to principals during incoming and outgoing visits. These included arranging for media opportunities for the principals during the execution of their duties at home and abroad while accompanying them.

Information on official outgoing visits by The Presidency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were released to the media to inform the nation and world at large about South Africa's endeavours internationally and enhanced the country's stature internationally (DFA, 2008: 222). The department's Media Liaison Unit organised media briefings and press conferences, through the timeous dissemination of information to the media pro-actively and in real time.

Reports to the Government Communicators Forums; Ministerial Liaison Forums; pre-Cabinet meetings; Communication Co-ordinating Committee; and the International Cooperation, Trade and Security (ICTS) Cluster on activities of the department were submitted and discussed, and largely informed other departments of the department's strategic approach to issues of international importance (DFA, 2008: 222).

DIRCO's Public Diplomacy Branch concentrates explicitly on developing South Africa's and Africa's standing both nationally and internationally. It describes its function as attending communication commitments with national and international stakeholders, media liaison and the support of South Africa's image, policies and programmes internationally (DFA, 2008: 222). As it focuses on developing South Africa's reputation both at home and internationally, DIRCO does not distinguish between public diplomacy and public affairs. The IMC is the custodian of BrandSA, to help build a positive and forceful brand image for South Africa.

### **8.3. Nation branding**

Even states with well-established identities need to guarantee that the position they occupy stays attractive to a consumer public spoilt for choice (Freemantle, 2007: 7).

To be distinguished from the competition, vigorous marketing strategies need to be followed, which should result in an exclusive national brand identity which sets the country apart and gives it a competitive edge.

### **8.3.1. Place branding**

Place branding is the process by which commercial branding strategies are applied to the development and marketing of places, be it cities, regions, nations or continents (Freemantle, 2007:8). The intent would be to achieve one or more of the following objectives, namely to enhance the place's exports; protect its domestic business from foreign competition; attract or retain factors of development; and generally position it for advantage domestically and internationally in economic, political and social terms.

Sceptics to the idea of "nation branding" punt the superior dignity of a nation due to its substance and depth, suggesting that it is disrespectful to the historical and cultural identity of the state (Freemantle, 2007:8-9). Nation branding supporters assert that it is the poor practice of nation branding, rather than the concept itself that might be problematic. It is not a new trend as nations have long made resolute attempts to emphasise their relative strengths to gain greater regional and international status and credibility.

There are differences between marketing and branding: branding is the result of marketing consistency (Van der Westhuizen, 2003: 4). A successful brand encapsulates an expectation based on a record of characteristics that reflects one or more aspirational values. Whereas these characteristics may include beliefs and idiosyncrasies, these need to be expressed consistently. If branding is introverted, focusing on the nature of the brand, marketing is extroverted and is related to the way in which branding is achieved.

Marketing asks the 'how' question, while branding relates to the 'what' (the product) question. A brand represents the manifestation of a set of aspirational values that are the result of distinct marketing strategies. Marketing is geared towards generating greater profit from a product, but branding goes beyond this, seeking to

add an emotional dimension with which people can identify on a more personal level (Freemantle, 2007:9). This is particularly true of the internal goals of nation branding as the state seeks to enhance pride and association with its cultural identity. The goals of nation branding are also more diverse and can seek to encourage foreign direct investment, support exports or any enterprise a nation may undertake.

Nation branding is complex, because selling a country is subject to a multiplicity of unpredictable events, perceptions and events (Van der Westhuizen, 2003: 4). Country branding is inherently a political process, given the extent to which various stakeholders (civil society, business, labour and consumers) react to the marketing process, which may in turn reshape the process.

Analytical components that influence the construction of a country brand include:

- The impact of foreign policy in reinforcing or undermining marketing strategies: Although discrete foreign-policy decisions are likely to be ruled by higher priority considerations, and may overrule marketing considerations, successful branding would be inconceivable without overall foreign policy goals and strategies being consistent with marketing efforts;
- The role of culture as an expression of national identity: Culture is central to the development and acquisition of cognitive and emotional attachment to countries as brands. It is the embodiment of the national psyche and the projection of national image. Culture attracts because it sets apart. Culture provides an easily accessible base of 'value-add' to promote a country's "net asset value", although a rich cultural life does not necessarily translate into creative marketing strategies. Unless a state can build its culture to a powerful brand in the minds of its worldwide audience it faces a daunting and costly process of constantly re-establishing its right to be noticed and remembered.
- The first two components shape the next, which is marketing strategies: "Marketing power" refers to a dual process. Internally, it relates to attempts by the state and corporate elites to shore-up legitimacy, reinforce a sense of national identity, and placate constituencies adversely affected by internationalisation of domestic issues due to globalisation and the resulting

political tensions. Externally, it relates to the way in which the state seeks to heighten its global attraction by drawing on its distinctiveness.

- There also needs to be an awareness of a state's core competencies that can be flexibly deployed: Brand identities need to be aware of possible incongruence between brand projection and brand perception. The state needs to be positioned to ensure that perceived weaknesses are addressed while emphasising comparative advantages to respond strategically to new opportunities and threats (Van der Westhuizen, 2003: 4-5).

### **8.3.2. International Marketing Council**

The IMC of South Africa is the custodian of Brand South Africa (BrandSA), to help create a positive and compelling brand image for South Africa (DFA, 2008). The primary objective of BrandSA is to develop and implement a pro-active marketing and communication strategy for South Africa and to promote South Africa. BrandSA's role is to create a positive, unified image of South Africa; one that builds pride, promotes investment and tourism and helps new enterprises and job creation.

The organisation operates on four key platforms:

- raising awareness internationally of all that South Africa has to offer investors;
- operating missions abroad promoting investment and export industries;
- mobilising influential South Africans as well as members of the media abroad; and
- boosting local pride and patriotism through various campaigns (DFA, 2008).

### **8.4. Democracy and public diplomacy**

There has long been a debate about whether in a democratic state it is acceptable for foreign and defence policies to be delegated almost wholly to a small elite on the grounds that dealings with other states require secrecy, continuity, experience and personal contact (Hill, 2003: 42-43). Striking a balance between democracy and



efficiency is a lofty ideal, and few democracies have workable procedures for accountability in foreign policy that come near to those that apply in domestic areas.

Foreign policy may be “for the people” but is still largely made on their behalf by cognoscenti who complain about having their hands tied by public opinion, though there is little evidence of this in practice (Hill, 2003: 42-43). There is, however, an awakening interest in international relations and the interconnections between domestic and foreign affairs are more widely understood.

Domestic politics produces pressures for more democracy in foreign policy, but this does not mean that ‘efficiency’ is any less valued. However, even among the relatively small elites that follow foreign affairs, there are varying expectations of what a successful foreign policy should entail (Hill, 2003: 42-43).

Diplomacy describes the conduct of international relations through the interaction of official representatives of governments or groups. It encompasses a broad range of activities and approaches to exchanging information and negotiating agreements which vary widely according to the actors and situations involved (Collins, Packer & Bernadotteakademien, undated: 12).

Diplomacy is an important aspect of foreign policy and an effective means of attaining the objectives of foreign policy (Dahl, undated). The foreign policy of a state is the substance of foreign relations, and diplomacy is the process by which such a policy is carried out. Foreign policy is an ‘end’ and diplomacy is a ‘means’ for achieving the objectives laid down in the foreign policy. Diplomacy is therefore an instrument to implement foreign policy.

By its classic nature diplomacy is mainly quiet or silent (Landsberg. 2004: 10). It would not be “public”, much less “megaphone” diplomacy, nor is it “secret”, but rather defined by confidentiality and discretion (Collins Packer & Bernadotteakademien, undated: 12). In contrast to “public diplomacy”, ostensibly intended for domestic constituencies, and “megaphone diplomacy”, meant to call international attention (and presumably pressure) to address a given situation, the aim would be to create conditions in which parties feel comfortable to act, in particular allowing parties to

evaluate positions and interests, to weigh options and consider independent and impartial advice.

Public diplomacy on the other hand is a more transparent means by which a sovereign country communicates with publics in other countries to inform and influence audiences abroad with the intention of promoting the national interest and advancing foreign policy goals (USC, 2012). It is still an instrument of foreign policy implementation. In most instances this is done using the media. Parallel to this are public affairs, which refer to a government's activities and programs designed to communicate policy messages to its own domestic audiences (CPD, 2011).

Access to information is essential to the health of democracy. It ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. Information serves a "checking function" by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them (CDG, 1999: 3).

In some societies, an antagonistic relationship between the media and government represents a vital and healthy element of fully functioning democracies (CDG, 1999: 3). The role of the press to disseminate information as a way of mediating between the state and all facets of civil society is critical. A media sector supportive of democracy would be one that has a degree of editorial independence, is financially viable, has diverse and plural voices and serves the public interest. The public interest is defined as representing a plurality of voices, both through a greater number of outlets and through the diversity of views and voices reflected within one outlet.

The perception has taken hold since the introduction of the PIB, which became the PSIB, that the government is targeting the media with the proposed legislation to weaken its watchdog role. Squabbles between government and the ruling party on the one hand, and stakeholders and opposition parties on the other hand, eventually even led to a dispute between government and the ruling party, as government objected to amendments proposed by the ANC, in response to sustained criticism of the Bill and threats to take it on constitutional review (*Times Live*, 13/6/2012). The

Department of State Security rejected proposals by the ruling party to give greater protection to whistle-blowers, to remove all minimum prison sentences from the Bill and to narrow the definition of national security.

Criticising government's approach to public diplomacy, the DA (2010) said that public diplomacy also meant challenges and solutions did not come from states alone, but that non-state actors could also contribute. This was evolution – from a hard-power to a soft-power approach. It was the only way to close the gap between domestic and foreign policy. In the modern world order countries had become brands that should be marketable in a global competitive economy, hence the need to influence the private sector to instill investor confidence and nation building.

Political analyst Aubrey Matshiqi (Polity, 2011) observed that South African foreign policy as played out on the global stage, specifically in decisions made by the UNSC, lacked the institutional capacity to enforce directives. He said South Africa failed in its public diplomacy in that the general public was left wondering about certain policy issues advocated by the country in the UNSC. He cited DIRCO's communication infrastructure and processes as being particularly problematic.

In an argument with Eve Fairbanks of the Institute of Current World Affairs on her claim that South Africa's foreign policy lacked "sufficient moral content", Eusebius McKaiser of the University of the Witwatersrand Centre for Ethics insisted that "a dearth of morality" was not one of South Africa's foreign policy weaknesses, though it certainly had "massive foreign-policy weaknesses". He listed these as: poor public diplomacy, inconsistent and unpredictable moves on the world stage, and political and technical skills deficits within the international relations department (Foreign Policy, March/April 2012).

Commentators argue that non-state actors should also contribute to the solution of public diplomacy challenges (Foreign Policy, March/April 2012). This would mean evolution from a hard-power to a soft-power approach and close the gap between domestic and foreign policy. Countries had become brands that should be marketable in a global competitive economy, hence the need to influence the private sector to instill investor confidence and nation building. South Africa failed in its

public diplomacy in that the general public was left wondering about certain policy issues advocated by the country.

### **8.5. Examples of South African public diplomacy**

Whereas the Dalai Lama visa dispute might be described as “bad public diplomacy”, the use of sport diplomacy by South Africa can be described as good diplomacy. Sport under apartheid was conducted in accordance with the principle of “separate development”, giving rise to international organisations such as the UN and OAU agitating for an international sports boycott against South Africa. The loss of sporting links played a significant part in the pressure brought down on the apartheid government. The rebranding of the triumphant 1995 Springbok World Cup team, showing national unity in support of the team, can be said to have made for “good public diplomacy”. The images broadcast to the world during the Rugby World Cup formed the world’s idea of the new South Africa. This re-engaged the world in terms of commitment, not just on sporting levels, but political and economic too. The public diplomacy created by hosting the Rugby World Cup contributed to the return of foreign investment and reinforcement of trade and other economic links that had been ruined through the policies of apartheid and the ensuing boycotts and embargoes.

### **9. Identity interests and norms underlying South Africa’s foreign policy and public diplomacy**

The identity, interests and norms underlying South African foreign policy is assessed, as well as the use of public diplomacy as a supporting tool.

At one level of analysis public diplomacy is an instrument of statecraft distinguishable from other instruments (Gregory, 2005). At another level, it cuts across all political, economic and military instruments of statecraft and is essential to their use and success. Public diplomacy can be analysed for its relevance to policies and for its significance in moving from intent to action.

Van Wyk (2004: 105) writes about South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy, explains the constructivist approach (that state identities are constructed and not made) and quotes Friedrich Kratochwil contending that words often make the world. Constructivism focuses on the power of ideas in defining actions and interactions; the importance of identity in defining what actors want; the cyclical relationship between an actor's interests, identities and behaviour; and the social context in which the actor exists.

Wendt (1999: 1) refers to two basic tenets of Constructivism, namely that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas, rather than material forces; and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.

A 1996 Foreign Policy Discussion Document of the DFA identified problems such as the lack of a South African identity that is evident in foreign-policy decisions; uncertainty over the values that apply/should apply in South Africa's foreign policy; and the lack of clearly defined national interests (Henwood, 1997).

## **9.1. Identity**

Berg (2009: 9) gives an explanation of identity, quoting Wendt, who described it as relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations of self. Our understanding of identity rests on three premises. Firstly, identity is not essential but socially constructed in the process of describing and conceptualising it. Secondly, identity is rational in the sense that the self is defined through relationships to various "significant others". Finally, identity has a narrative discursive structure of which memory and history are essential ingredients.

Foreign policy, while serving the national interests in the international system, also aids in creating and re-constructing the national collective identity. This is true for all states. Telhami and Barnett (2002: 7) noted that identity appears at different places in the causal chain. It can be an ideological device to justify self-interested politics, it

can be part of the cultural terrain and thus conditions the possible and the actual, or it can provide a direct link to a discrete foreign policy preference or outcome.

The 2011 White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy states that in terms of South Africa's liberation history, its evolving international engagement is based on two central tenets, namely: Pan-Africanism and South-South solidarity (DIRCO, 2011b). South Africa recognises itself as an integral part of the African continent and therefore understands its national interest as being intrinsically linked to Africa's stability, unity and prosperity.

According to goals set out in the White Paper, South Africa should endeavour to shape and strengthen its national identity; cultivate its national pride and patriotism; address the injustices of its past, including those of race and gender; bridge the divides in society to ensure social cohesion and stability; and grow the economy for the development and upliftment of its people (DIRCO, 2011b).

The White Paper also describes South Africa as a multifaceted, multicultural and multiracial country that embraces the concept of *ubuntu* as a way of defining who we are and how we relate to others. The philosophy of *ubuntu* means "humanity" and is reflected in the idea that South Africans affirm their humanity when they affirm the humanity of others. It has played a major role in the forging of a South African national consciousness and in the process of its democratic transformation and nation-building (DIRCO, 2011b).

Since 1994, the international community has looked to South Africa to play a leading role in championing values of human rights, democracy, reconciliation and the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment (DIRCO, 2011a). South Africa's unique approach to global issues has found expression in the concept of *ubuntu*. These concepts inform South Africa's particular approach to diplomacy and shape its vision of a better world for all.

This philosophy translates into an approach to international relations that respects all nations, peoples and cultures. It recognises that it is in the national interest to promote and support the positive development of others. Similarly, national security

would therefore depend on the centrality of human security as a universal goal, based on the principle of *Batho Pele* (“putting people first”) (DIRCO, 2011a). In the modern world of globalisation, a constant element has to be our common humanity. South Africa therefore champions collaboration, cooperation and building partnerships over conflict. This recognition of our interconnectedness and interdependency and the infusion of *ubuntu* into the South African identity, shapes its foreign policy.

South Africa therefore accords central importance to the immediate African neighbourhood and continent; working with countries of the South to address shared challenges of underdevelopment; promoting global equity and social justice; cooperating with countries of the North to develop a true and effective partnership for a better world; and strengthen the multilateral system, including its transformation, to reflect the diversity of nations, and ensure its centrality in global governance (DIRCO, 2011a).

According to the White Paper on South Africa’s Foreign Policy, South Africa’s international relations work must inter alia endeavour to shape and strengthen its national identity, and the department and its diplomatic missions abroad should carry out its mandate by conducting public diplomacy (DIRCO, 2010: 3.9).

In the controversy about the government’s refusal of a visa to the Dalai, those supporting the Dalai Lama’s visit seem to have a different sense of South Africa’s identity to the South African government.

Civil society and the media expect the infusion of *ubuntu* into the South African identity to shape its foreign policy and to inform South Africa’s approach to diplomacy. They have an anticipation that this philosophy should translate into an approach to international relations that respects people – as professed by the government.

What the government holds up as policy and civil society expects appear to be in line. The problem, however, lies at the level of execution. Government does not seem to be convinced that it is in the best material interest of the country to follow

through on pursuing these lofty ideals at the risk of offending a powerful partner such as China, though it would publicly still claim its commitment to these principles. Civil society, on the other hand, sees this as weakness and a sign that government had abandoned these values.

## **9.2. National interest**

According to Holsti (1977: 138 – 139), the term “national interest” has been used (or abused) as a device for analysing a nation’s objectives. The vagueness of the concept is seen as its main shortcoming. Seabury (1963: 86) suggested that the idea of national interest may refer to some ideal set of purposes which a nation should seek to realise in the conduct of its foreign relations. This might be referred to as a normative civic concept of national interest. A second meaning might be called descriptive and in this sense the national interest may be regarded as the purposes the nation, through its leadership, appears to pursue persistently over time.

Davidson (2009: 128 - 129) concurs that the notion of national interest is deemed ‘problematic’. Realists want a foreign policy that accords with what is seen as a fact of human nature over the long run; that people act according to their interests and levels of power. Thus political leaders addressing foreign policy will act according to national interest regardless of ideology, religion or the nature of their government. This is because when rational, their behaviour is dictated by the structural nature of the essentially lawless international relations system. National leaders run into trouble when they confuse the desirable with the possible. Realists are also suspicious of the demand that universal moral principles be applied to the actions of states.

Regarding the issue of the national interest, many questions arise, not least the accusation that it is an old-fashioned concept used obsessively during the Cold War era to promote questionable ideologies, conceal poor policies or justify unethical behaviour (Van Nieuwkerk, 2004). Krasner (1978) uses the term to refer to the preferences of a nation’s leaders, or the goals sought by the state. Such preferences, or set of objectives, must be related to general societal goals, persist



over time and have a consistent ranking of importance in order to justify using the term.

The key insight from the constructivist paradigm concerns the role of identity and focuses attention on the relationship between the concepts “identity”, “interest” and “threat” (Van Nieuwkerk, 2004). Weldes (1999) argues that identity is constructed and reconstructed in relation to others. Threats are the insecurities faced by particular identities. Some threat perceptions are a direct function of identity - they follow from the nature of a particular identity. Other threat perceptions are a function of interpretation of actions or events made possible through the “security imaginary”.

Van Nieuwkerk (2004) continues explaining that interests - those “national interests” or ‘preferences’ articulated by decision makers - are also two-fold: they can be a logical function of the identity itself, or a function of specific threats constructed in relation to the identity. The three concepts are thus mutually constituted: it is in relation to identities, or identities and threat perceptions, that interests are identified.

Van Nieuwkerk (2004) argues that it appears that states tend to pursue two kinds of policy preferences to operationalise their perceived/constructed national interest: material (that is, economic well-being) or ideological. National security can mean the pursuit of freedom from threat. In South Africa, foreign policy and national interests could be debated much more vigorously, but in practice there is almost no debate on these issues.

Given the country’s economic profile, public policies focusing on the human security agenda (poverty eradication, job creation, economic growth, personal security) should constitute the core of South Africa’s national interest (Van Nieuwkerk, 2004). This poses the question whether it means that its foreign policy should, therefore, mostly be about trade and investment. What about the pursuit of other values?

The 2008 DFA Discussion Document suggests that South Africa should deal with African partners as equals “and avoid all hegemonic ambitions”, adding that “a narrow, short-term approach aimed at promoting self-interest must be avoided” (South African Government Information, 2008). It is further noted that South Africa is

guided by its own strategic national interest where relations with third countries are concerned, and this is done in a non-confrontational, non-ideological and rational manner.

Moeletsi Mbeki (2002) argues that there has been too little debate about what the broad national interest is and the ways and means to pursue it. He states that the overarching driver of much of South Africa's foreign engagement has been the fight against global inequity and African marginalisation. South Africa's global and continental engagement is built on the ideological premise that the West and particularly the US carries a huge burden of responsibility for the imbalances in the international system. Therefore, this should be countered wherever possible.

Mbeki (2002) is further of the opinion that when South Africa's often competing foreign policy objectives clash (for example, the promotion of good governance and democracy versus solidarity with the Global South or with African national-liberation leaders), its ideological commitment to reverse global power imbalances or to “cock a snook” at the West, seem to trump the rest. He suggests an alternative foreign policy, saying that in today's world of global interdependence, the national interest (to make a better life for all and to create more jobs, more prosperity and less poverty) is about the pursuit of economic interests at the regional and international level. This has to be achieved in a globalised competitive world. With that in mind, Mr Mbeki (2002) argues that South Africa's foreign policy should have the following elements:

- South Africa's global standing (as with all countries) has to be carefully nurtured;
- Government should encourage an open, ongoing dialogue and debate among various sectors of society on the nexus between foreign engagement and national imperatives, followed by a clear articulation to citizens of what this national interest is and how foreign relations are vehicles for achieving this;
- Foreign policy should be more focused on where it can have maximum impact and where national interests have the most at stake. The ability to prioritise is an essential component of any foreign policy engagement, even more so for a country of South Africa's size and limited resources;

- South Africa should build stronger bilateral partnerships (both with key Western countries and developing countries) that allow it to advance its agendas, not forsaking the ability to build bridges across opposing views; and
- It should also know when to “play hardball” - not only with the North, but also with the developing world - when its fundamental interests, core values and continental vision are being undermined.

An analysis of the principles and objectives of the foreign policy of the then Government of National Unity (GNU) leads to the conclusion that it reflects the foreign policy of any “normal” state (Henwood, 1997). It was also noticeable that these principles were contained in the basic foreign policy aims of most states and that it implied an emphasis on the national and security interests of the own state as fundamental policy principles. The focus on regional cooperation and peaceful co-existence was also “a normal part” of the foreign policy of any state.

Public diplomacy can be seen to support the most vital interests of nations (Melissen 2005: 9). Public diplomacy is even described as the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests of and extend the values of those being represented (Melissen, 2005: 11). Modern public diplomacy is a two-way street (Melissen, 2005: 18). Though the practising diplomat will always have his own country’s interests and foreign policy goals in mind, it will also listen to what people have to say. It is not one-way messaging.

Public diplomacy has been widely seen as the transparent means by which a sovereign country communicates with publics in other countries aimed at informing and influencing audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and advancing its foreign policy goals (CPD, 2012).

Considering a practical example from abroad, the mission of American public diplomacy is described as supporting the achievement of US foreign policy goals and objectives, advancing national interests, and enhancing national security by informing and influencing foreign publics, and by expanding and strengthening the

relationship between the people and government of the US and citizens of the rest of the world (US Department of State, 2012).

The Public Diplomacy Section of the South African Embassy in Washington (South Africa Embassy Washington DC, undated) again defines its purpose in terms of the promotion, protection and enhancement of South Africa's national interest.

### **9.3. Values**

A distinction can be made, according to Lucarelli (2006), between values, images of the world and principles. Values can be defined as notions laden with absolute (non-instrumental) positive significance for the overall order and meaning we try to give to our world. General examples of values are summarised in *The Charter for Fundamental Rights* and include dignity, liberty, equality, solidarity and justice. Values are not necessarily of a moral type and almost any notion can be claimed to be a value in a given community.

Images of the world or world views are based on experiences and cultural traditions of the relationships between the physical and social world (Lucarelli, 2006). Images of the world provide the cognitive framework within which values are defined and translated into principles and political action.

Principles are normative propositions that translate values into general “constitutional” standards for policy action (Lucarelli, 2006). In terms of the actions we are seeking to explain, our focus on principles allows us to encompass loosely constituted ideals and potentially instrumentalist policies.

Values are not automatically translated into principles or principles into policies. Henwood (1997) refers to the development of South Africa's foreign policy since April 1994, and notes the emphasis on democracy, justice and human rights, which brought a new dimension to the declared foreign policy, namely that of morality. This posed important challenges for South Africa, as it could lead to conflict between perceived interests and the “right” decision, and had implications for the allocation of resources for essential foreign-policy goals (national interests), as opposed to

morally justifiable objectives that may, in the long run, negatively influence the material position of the own state.

Rittberger (2001: 121) notes that norms can be invoked by actors within and outside states and be expressed by either of them as expressions of appropriate behaviour addressed to a state's foreign policy decision makers. Especially prominent norms, such as the protection of human rights or the promotion of free trade, are widely shared both within states and at the level of international society.

Discussing an example of interest versus norms, it is noted that the South African Government decided to develop diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, instead of maintaining such with the Republic of China (or Taiwan) (Henwood, 1997). The new diplomatic partner contravened all the principles underlying the foreign policy of South Africa. It is not democratic, had one of the worst human rights records in the world and had no significant investments in South Africa. The reasons for the decision to develop diplomatic relations in this instance could be found in the national interests of South Africa.

It is suggested that it is naive to imagine that South Africa can have a selfless foreign policy based solely on human rights (HSF, 1996). The promotion of national interest is the heart of every country's foreign policy – it could be argued that it is any government's moral duty to its citizens to promote that interest. So it would not be surprising if South Africa wished to modify a purist human rights stand to stay on side with states with whom its trade, investment or defence links are particularly strong.

According to Gregory (2005: 7), the well-established purpose of public diplomacy includes actions in support of values. Countries that are likely to be more attractive in international relations are those whose culture and ideas are closer to prevailing international norms and whose credibility abroad is reinforced by their values and policies (Nye, 2004: 61).

Khadiagala (2001: 177) argues that South Africa is suffering from an identity crisis in its external relations. It can carry on its communication on equal terms to articulate

the needs, concerns and fears of the developing world, while conversely interpreting the concerns and fears of the developed world. As this could be seen to be all things to all countries, the challenge is to formulate a coherent, defensible, principled foreign policy, though not with a dogmatic obsession with morality and at the expense of self-interest, but harmonising these.

Khadiagala (2001: 177) uses Zimbabwe as an example and says there should be a balance between quiet and public diplomacy; between recognising the legitimacy of the land issue and the real grievances of the opposition; between engagement and punitive distance. South Africa was expected to take a leading role in defence of democratic values, but “quiet diplomacy” underscored South Africa’s willingness to overtly challenge the norm of non-intervention in the internal affairs of SADC members and African states as a whole. Forsaking the issue of human rights and democracy in South Africa’s foreign policy amounted to a denial of the core elements of its national identity.

On the other hand, when South Africa does pursue an ethical foreign policy, its moral posture comes over preachy (Khadiagala, 2001: 177). It is argued that South Africa lacks the will and capacity to deploy economic and military instruments to induce states to conform to the strictures of the African Renaissance, leaving it to look like a well-intentioned missionary, instead of a regional power.

There is a continuing debate about the focus and direction of foreign policy that reflects a tension of interaction between pragmatists who wish to fix South Africa’s aspirations to the limitations of internal socio-economic conditions, and idealists who take a normative stance with concerns of justice, human rights and democracy at the centre of foreign policy debate (Khadiagala, 2001: 178). However, these need not be mutually exclusive and can be merged in South Africa’s foreign-policy objectives.

Human rights concerns in South Africa’s foreign policy should not only be considered ‘constitutional’ in the national sense (from South Africa’s Constitution), but also ‘international’ (from international human rights instruments) (Titus 2009: 8). When South Africa is engaging on human rights at international forums, it is not so much in

terms of its Constitution, but to what degree the country is giving effect to its international commitments (Titus 2009: 9).

Public concern over South Africa's approach to human rights in its foreign policy stemmed from the position the country assumed on the crisis in Zimbabwe and positions it took as a member of the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council (Titus 2009: 11). The decision to twice deny a visa to the Dalai Lama is consistent with this trend. Analysts suggested that human rights were no longer a prominent consideration for South Africa's foreign policy (Titus 2009: 11). However, as far as the South African government was concerned, the status quo on human rights and foreign policy was unmistakably established and human rights remained the accepted "light that guides our foreign affairs" (Titus 2009: 11-12). As with other claims of a shift in its human rights approach, the government through the ruling party insisted that the 2009 refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama did not mark the undermining of human rights. They thought this country was "more sensitive to human rights than many" (*Cape Argus*, 27/3/2009).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) expressed concern for the place occupied by human rights considerations in the country's foreign policy (Titus 2009: 12). It was noted that supporters of human rights watched in elation as apartheid ended in South Africa, but many were dismayed as the country's foreign policy later often aligned with global enemies of human rights. HRW also emphasised the swing of post-apartheid South Africa towards arguments in favour of the defence of sovereignty. This is favoured by violators of human rights, and is a central challenge to the institutionalisation of human rights in foreign policy (Titus 2009: 12).

Human rights do not focus on the promotion of a country's material interests (Titus 2009: 15). The promotion of human rights can even be in conflict with a country's material interests. Countries that wish to promote human rights in other countries therefore consistently find themselves balancing interests and determining priorities. (Titus 2009: 15). In the case of South Africa denying the Dalai Lama a visa, presumably under pressure from China, it is clearly in conflict with its own ideational interest, as its domestic constituency is clearly in favour of granting him a visa based on human rights considerations. The government, however, considers it to be in the

country's material interest not to grant the visa, as trade and other relations with China might be harmed.

However, the Helen Suzman Foundation (HSF) comes out in defence of interests over human rights in South Africa's foreign policy pursuits:

It is naive to imagine that South Africa can have a selfless foreign policy based solely on human rights. The promotion of national interest is the inevitable and entirely proper heart of every country's foreign policy – indeed ... it is any government's moral duty to its citizens to promote that interest. So it would not be surprising if South Africa wished to modify a purist human rights stand to stay on side with states with whom its trade, investment or defence links are particularly strong (HSF, 1996).

## **10. Conclusion**

Examining South African foreign policy, diplomacy and public diplomacy, particularly since 1994, it becomes apparent that with its transition to democracy, South Africa went through an extraordinary transformation. While there was a limited role for public diplomacy in the more secretive, low-key, mostly bilateral South African diplomacy before the political transition, there was a more significant place for it in the diplomacy of the post-political transition South Africa, which was more open.

South Africa's foreign relations are based on the following values: the promotion of human rights and democracy; justice and international law; internationally agreed-upon mechanisms for conflict resolution; African interests; and economic development through regional and international cooperation. Like all other states South Africa at times has to weigh adhering to these values against matters of national interest. South Africa's foreign policy is also guided by four pillars: the African agenda; South-South cooperation; North-South dialogue; multilateral and economic diplomacy; and bilateral relations with individual countries.

DIRCO's Public Diplomacy Branch focuses on developing the standing of South Africa and Africa at home and internationally. It promotes an understanding, both



domestically and internationally, of South Africa's role and position in international relations and supports South Africa's image, policies and programmes at international level.

There seems to be agreement that South Africa's foreign-policy strategies allowed it to "punch above its weight" as a middle-ranking power in Africa, influencing world affairs in ways typically associated with much greater powers.

The 1994 general election marked the end of decades of struggle – both domestically and internationally – leading to the end of apartheid. Since its founding in 1912, the ANC has been dedicated to a non-racial South Africa. When it came into power this was translated into a vision of South Africa where human rights were respected and this orientation was expanded to the international realm by incorporating human rights as a key driver of its foreign policy (Borer & Mills, 2009:3-5).

South Africa's identity and its perceptions of its interests were therefore domestically generated, based on its history and its new understanding of itself. There seemed to be a very strong constructivist account of South Africa's stated policies. However, despite pronouncements in favour of a human-rights-based foreign policy, South Africa has in fact pursued traditionally-defined interests, even at the expense of its declared principles.

Moving on, the focus shifts from foreign policy and diplomacy issues to the relationship between the South African Government and the media through a discussion of the refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama in 2009.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE REFUSAL OF A VISA TO THE DALAI LAMA IN 2009

#### 1. Introduction

There was wide media coverage, mostly critical, of the decision of the South African Government not to grant a visa to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to attend a peace conference linked to the 2010 FIFA World Cup scheduled to be held in Johannesburg in March 2009. The same was true of the government's handling of his later visa application to attend the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in Cape Town in 2011.

The purpose of this chapter is to track the media's coverage of these two decisions and the government's handling of the situation as reflected in media reportage of the issue. This chapter considers previous visits to South Africa by the Dalai Lama and concentrates on media coverage of the government's refusal of a visa in 2009. This includes the voices of the South African and Chinese governments, conference organisers, civil society, Tibetans, political parties and analysts as covered by the media.

#### 2. Previous visits to South Africa by the Dalai Lama and its significance

The Dalai Lama has visited South Africa on three previous occasions. In 1996, President Mandela, despite intense pressure from the Chinese, not only allowed the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa, but agreed to meet with him (Saks, 2011). Mandela's decision coincided with time when his government had to decide on whether it would maintain relations with Taiwan or establish new relations with China.

At the time, South Africa opted for a "Two China's" policy which, due to Chinese pressure was changed to favour China only. However, while allowing the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa, President Mbeki would not agree to a one-on-one meeting with him during visits in 1999 and 2004 (Phayl.com, 2004).

Guy Lieberman, a South African campaigner for Tibetan national rights, was involved in arranging the meeting between the Dalai Lama and President Mandela in 1996. The Dalai Lama's impressions of President Mandela reportedly went something like this:

In preparing to meet with Nelson Mandela, I considered that his reputation was in fact the largest in the world. There is no-one greater living on the planet at this time. And in only his case, did I find the person larger than the reputation (Saks, 2011).

In 1999, the Dalai Lama was allowed to attend the Parliament of the World's Religions (PWR) in Cape Town.<sup>50</sup> A row reportedly broke out after President Thabo Mbeki agreed to see the Dalai Lama separately again. The Chinese Government apparently protested and President Mbeki cancelled the meeting. President Mbeki's aide, Parks Mankahlana, said that the Dalai Lama was only one of a host of religious leaders who wanted to meet President Mbeki and that PWR organisers had agreed that a representative group, including the Dalai Lama, would meet the President (*iol*, 2/12/1999).

Brahma Das, executive director of the Council for World Tibet Day, told a session of the PWR that the publicity over President Mbeki's decision had, however, had the effect of making more South Africans aware of the Tibet issue (*iol* 2/12/1999). Brahma Das said the real reason was that President Mbeki had made a firm decision not to meet the Dalai Lama one-on-one. It was reported that there had been 'speculation' that President Mbeki had bowed to Chinese pressure not to meet the Tibetan, though this was denied by his office (*iol*, 2/12/1999).

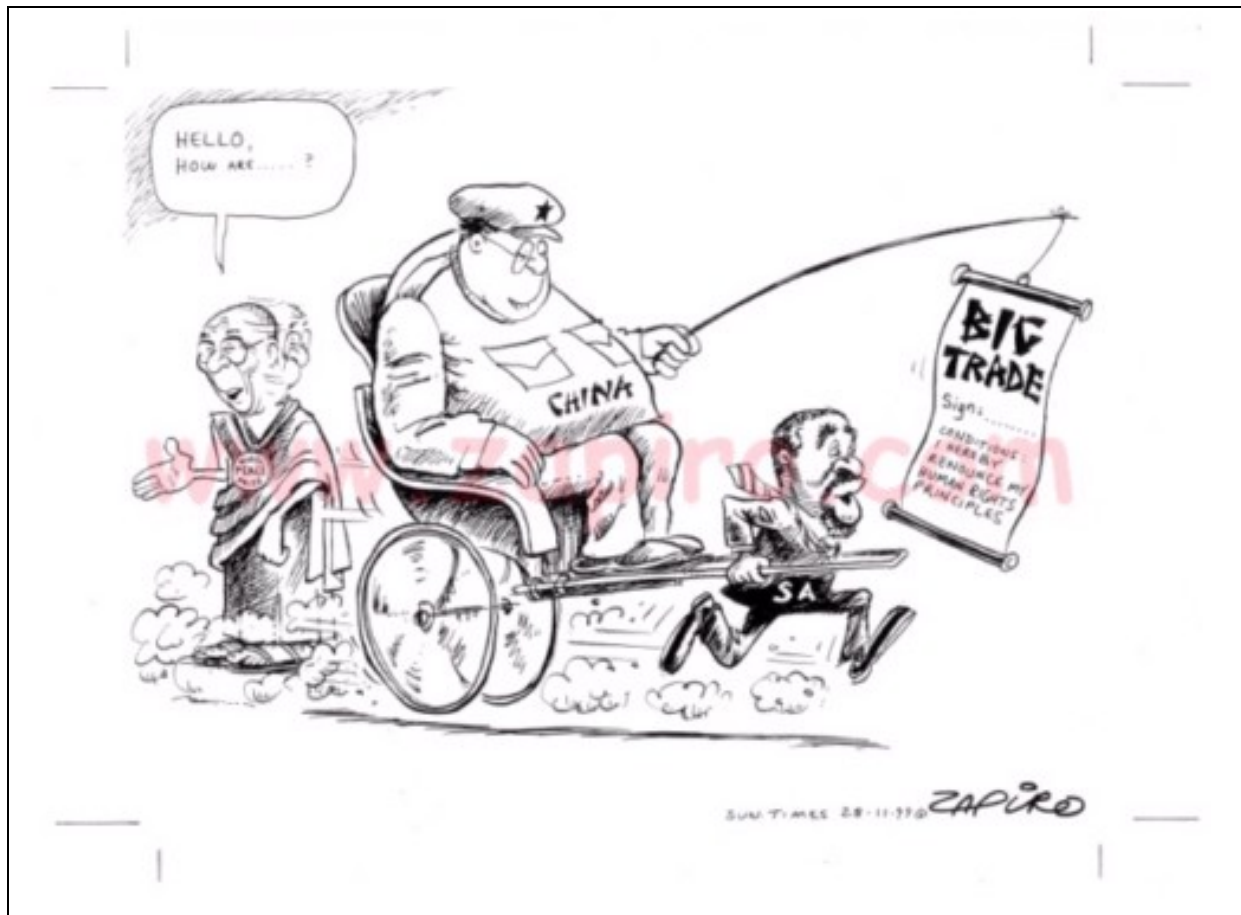
A cartoon (see Figure 3) by Zapiro published in the *Sunday Times* (28/11/1999) depicts former President Thabo Mbeki running with China behind him on a cart with a list of trade promises dangling like a carrot in front of him, leaving the Dalai Lama

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<sup>50</sup> The PWR was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities, and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world (PWR, 2013).

behind holding his hand out to greet the President. It is representative of media sentiment and like a bad omen of future visits in hind sight (Zapiro, 1999).<sup>51</sup>

**Figure 5: Dalai Lama and South Africa's Trade Relations with China**



*Source: Sunday Times, 28/11/1999*

The Dalai Lama did not meet President Thabo Mbeki on his visit to South Africa in 2004 at all (Phayul.com, 2004). The organisers of the visit, the African Cultural Heritage Trust, did not ask for a meeting, to avoid a repetition of the controversy when he visited in 1999. Despite this, the Dalai Lama met with Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini and IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Whereas the Dalai Lama was in South Africa on previous occasions during visits coordinated by activist for Tibetan freedom, Guy Lieberman, to attend the PWR and at the invitation of the African Cultural Heritage Trust, the invitation in 2009 was to

<sup>51</sup> Zapiro is the pseudonym of South African cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro.

speak at a 2010 World Cup-organised peace conference in Johannesburg. The Dalai Lama had been invited by his three fellow South African Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, former Presidents Nelson Mandela and FW De Klerk<sup>52</sup>, and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (*iol*, 24/3/2009). Former President Motlanthe had reportedly also written a letter to support the conference, used by the three South African Nobel Laureates to invite the Dalai Lama (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009). The line-up would also include the Nobel Peace Prize committee from Norway, the UN Peace Ambassador, actress Charlize Theron and actor Morgan Freeman, who was cast in the role of Mandela in *Invictus*, a film about the International Rugby Board's (IRB) World Cup in 1995, as co-hosts.

The opening preamble to a press release on the 2009 South Africa Peace Conference that was to be held at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, read: "From Robben Island and dusty township pitches to the Soccer World Cup in a Rainbow Nation" (*goal.com*, 2009). The conference, of which South African Premier Soccer League (PSL) Executive Chairman, Irvin Khoza, was to have been the Chief Patron, would focus on a number of issues relating to peace and harmony and the role soccer had played in achieving this.

Khoza said he hoped that the conference, could put a huge focus on the country, not only as a host of the 2010 World Cup, but also the role the event and soccer had played and could play in peace and harmony in the country, the continent of Africa and the entire world (*goal.com* 2009). *South Africa – the Good News* (*sagoodnews*, 2009) dubbed the event "the world's first Peace Conference" and reported that it would focus on racism, xenophobia and the power of soccer in generating peace and harmony.

It was reported that the decision to ban the Dalai Lama was made after intelligence reports indicated that he had planned to use the visit as a launching pad for his "return to Tibet" campaign (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009). This would have caused problems because he would have had to share a stage with President Motlanthe, who would have made the opening address at the 2010 peace

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<sup>52</sup> FW de Klerk served as South African President from 1989 until 1994.

conference. The government had feared that this would put it on a collision course with the Chinese, who had invested more than R60 billion in South Africa. However, organisations sympathetic to the spiritual leader denied planning to hijack the programme to highlight the Tibetan cause (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).

The anniversary of the 1959 uprising and establishment of a Tibetan government-in-exile in India, as well as anti-Chinese riots in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 2008, also heightened sensitivities about the issue of China's occupation of Tibet (*Vancouver Sun*, 25/3/2009). ANC president Jacob Zuma (in March 2009) backed the government's stance on denying the Dalai Lama a visa to visit South Africa, arguing that the government "must have considered a number of issues" in taking its decision (*praag.co.uk*, 2009).<sup>53</sup>

At that stage the ANC's presidential candidate, Zuma said governments took decisions which were informed "by the nature of their relations with other countries" (*praag.co.uk*, 2009). He continued explaining that the government was not saying that the Dalai Lama could not come to South Africa, but the month of March, was "a serious month between the Dalai Lama and China in a very specific way".<sup>54</sup> Zuma added that there were a number of countries who refused the Dalai Lama entry in March every year. South Africa was not the first country to take this kind of action. Problems arose between France and China because of the Dalai Lama and France eventually had to apologise.

The event to be attended by the Dalai Lama in 1999 was thus of a much higher magnitude than the previous events attended in South Africa by the Dalai Lama, both by the nature of the event itself and the timing in terms of relations between Tibet and China.

### **3. The 2009 invitation to the Dalai Lama**

The 2009 visit to South Africa would be the fourth to South Africa by the Dalai Lama.

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<sup>53</sup> Jacob Zuma has been ANC President since December 2007. He was inaugurated as South Africa's President in June 2009.

<sup>54</sup> March 2009 marked the 50th anniversary of a failed Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, which led to the Dalai Lama's flight into exile in India.

The invitation was extended by South African Nobel Peace Laureates to attend a peace conference linked to the 2010 FIFA World Cup Tournament (goal.com, 2009).

### **3.1. Invitation and purpose of the visit**

In 2008, a delegation from South Africa, led by Nelson Mandela's grandson, Chief Mandla Mandela, visited Oslo, Norway, to officially hand over an invitation to attend the peace conference to the Nobel Peace Committee (goal.com, 2009). The invitation was signed by President Kgalema Motlanthe and the three living South African Laureates, Archbishop Emeritus, Desmond Tutu, former Presidents FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela. The Nobel Committee accepted the invitation to the Peace Conference in what would be the Committee's first ever official visit to an event outside Norway.

Following three previous visits to South Africa, South Africa's surviving Nobel Peace Laureates, former Presidents Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, invited fellow Laureate, the Dalai Lama, to attend the conference to discuss ways of using football to fight racism and xenophobia ahead of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (*Mail & Guardian*, 27/9/2009). President Motlanthe had also written a letter to support the conference, used by the three South African Nobel laureates to invite the Dalai Lama (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).

The peace conference was an initiative of the 2010 Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the FIFA World Cup. Conference Chief Patron and LOC Chairman Irvin Khoza said soccer played a huge role in bringing unity to South Africa (sagoodnews, 2009). The conference was endorsed by the Norwegian Nobel Peace Committee and would see Nobel Laureates from each continent gather in South Africa for their first official visit to an event outside Norway.

It was indicated that confirmed participants included the Dalai Lama and Martti Ahtisaari (the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize winner), as well as South Africa's three Laureates. The conference gala dinner would be co-hosted by Charlize Theron and Morgan Freeman. Khoza said the LOC was "honoured and privileged to host an

event of this magnitude and calibre of people involved". Laureates attending the conference would conclude their visit by attending the Nelson Mandela Challenge match at the re-opening of the Royal Bafokeng Stadium in Rustenburg where Bafana Bafana, the South African national soccer team, would host Norway (sagoodnews, 2009).

It was also reported in the media that the Dalai Lama was invited to speak at the peace conference along with South Africa's (living) Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, former Presidents Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk, who won jointly in 1993, and Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who won in 1984 (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 21/3/2009). The conference focus on racism, xenophobia and the power of soccer in generating peace was mentioned too.

### **3.2. The decision to refuse a visa**

As judged from the perspective given in initial media coverage, there was confusion about whether the government had in fact strictly taken a decision not to grant the Dalai Lama a visa and if so, the reasons for the decision.

As the first news broke alleging a government "ban on a visit to South Africa by the Dalai Lama" it was noted that DFA spokesperson, Ronnie Mamoepa, had denied the government was blocking the invitation to the Dalai Lama, insisting that, "no invitation had been extended to the Dalai Lama" (*io!*, 22/3/2009). Asked if South Africa had withheld an invitation under pressure from China, he said that South Africa made "its own sovereign, independent decisions" based on what it deemed to be in the best interests of the country. The media indicated that the Dalai Lama was invited to speak at the conference, however, in a letter sent to the three South African Nobel Laureates, he apologised for not being able to attend, saying he had been "asked to postpone the trip".

Presidential spokesperson Thabo Masebe reportedly admitted South Africa had refused the Dalai Lama a visa to attend the international peace conference in Johannesburg, saying it was not in South Africa's interest for him to attend. He said if the Dalai Lama attended the conference, the focus would shift away from the 2010



World Cup (*CNN*, 2009). Cabinet spokesperson Themba Maseko reiterated this stance saying the government did not want sporting events, particularly 2010, to be used as a platform to advance political causes (*Sowetanlive*, 2009).

In what the *Sowetan* interpreted as “the clearest indication yet that South Africa bowed to pressure from China” to deny the Tibetan religious leader a visa, Maseko said that “a choice was made that our interests were better served if we don't jeopardise our bilateral relations with China (*Sowetanlive*, 2009).”

ANC president Jacob Zuma backed the government's stance on denying the Dalai Lama a visa to visit South Africa, arguing that the government "must have considered a number of issues" in taking its decision (*praag.co.uk*, 2009). He said governments took decisions which were informed "by the nature of their relations with other countries (*praag.co.uk*, 2009)". He made it clear that the government did not say that the Dalai Lama could not come to South Africa ever, but March, was “a serious month between the Dalai Lama and China”. (*praag.co.uk*, 2009).

Finance Minister Trevor Manuel said denying the Dalai Lama a visa to enter South Africa was "a matter of relations between states" (*Xinhau*, 2009). The Dalai Lama could not be allowed to raise global issues on South African soil that would affect the country's standing. He claimed that the reason why the Dalai Lama wanted to be in South Africa was to make a big global political statement about the 'secession' of Tibet from China. Manuel said he was sure the Dalai Lama would be welcome to come at any other time, but that he should not be allowed to raise global issues that would impact on the standing of South Africa.

Organisers initially said that the peace conference would go ahead with or without the Dalai Lama (*Cape Argus*, 23/3/2009). Other committee members of the Nobel Peace Committee planned to withdraw if the Dalai Lama was not granted a visa, the committee's Director, Geir Lundestad, said. Later, Altaaf Kazi, General Manager of Communications at the Premier Soccer League (PSL), confirmed that the conference had been postponed. Ian MacFarlane, of the South African Friends of

Tibet (SAFT)<sup>55</sup>, hailed the decision to postpone the conference as a “victory for *ubuntu* and democracy in South Africa and worldwide” (*Cape Argus*, 24/3/2009). He said that thousands of South Africans and others had expressed their outrage against the government’s decision to withhold a visa to the Dalai Lama, in an online petition run by his organisation (*Cape Argus*, 24/3/2009).

#### **4. Media coverage of explanations and responses to the South African Government’s 2009 refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama**

Not all media coverage of all statements by all stakeholders in the dispute about the refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama can possibly be considered for monitoring and analysis. A certain media set had to be decided upon for optimum assessment considering the purpose of the analysis and the time constraints. The media sources used are restricted to the Independent News & Media. The limited choice of media is done on the basis of “reducing rectangles” (see Figure 4). Of everything taking place at a given moment, only a certain portion is noticed. Of all that is noticed, only a certain segment is recorded by the media as a whole. Of all that is recorded by the media, only a certain fraction can be monitored. Of what is monitored, only a certain share can be analysed.

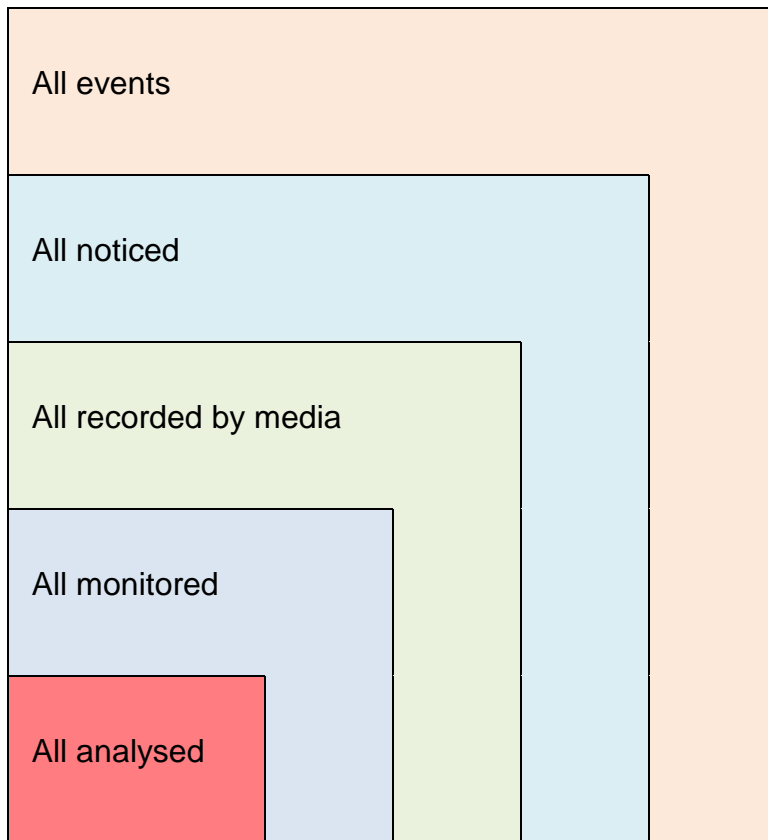
Independent Media was chosen as their flagship paper, *The Star*, is published in Gauteng. Gauteng is the most densely populated province in the country and hosts the seat of government. It is also the power-hub of the economy and is therefore the richest and most influential area in the country. Government itself would therefore pay most attention to these sources in considering its reaction to media reporting.

The Gauteng-published *The Star*, the *Pretoria News*, the *Sunday Independent* and *iol* are the main sources of information. The *Pretoria News* specifically regularly carries coverage on South African foreign relations and policy. Where possible and where a relevant differing or enriching view was found in any of the Independent publications from another province, these were also included in the study. Attention

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<sup>55</sup> The SAFT raises awareness of the Tibetan situation in South Africa and supports the Dalai Lama in his calls for international pressure on the People's Republic of China to engage in meaningful dialogue with his representatives to resolve the situation in Tibet (SAFT, 2013).

**Figure 6: Reducing rectangles in media analysis**



Source: Kariithi, 2010

was given to news reports and feature articles, as well as editorials. Media coverage on the course of the dispute about the refusal of the government to grant the Dalai Lama a visa to visit South Africa, is done on the basis of different voices to present the varying views displayed in the media.

#### **4.1. South African Government sources on the matter**

The media speculated from the outset that the South African Government seemed to have “bowed to pressure from China” not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa. This inference came from Archbishop Desmond Tutu (*Sunday Independent*, 22/3/2009), the Dalai Lama (*The Mercury*, 1/4/2009), the SAFT (*Cape Argus*,

2/4/2009), and the Tibet Society of South Africa (TSSA) (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).<sup>56</sup>

The Chinese Embassy in Pretoria admitted to appealing to the South African Government not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa. They warned that it would harm bilateral relations and explained that it was a particularly inopportune time for the Dalai Lama to be visiting South Africa. It was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what Tibetans regarded as “China’s military invasion of Tibet”, but which the Chinese Government described as its “liberation of Tibetans from feudal serfdom” (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 21/3/2009). It was also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dalai Lama’s flight from Tibet into exile in India and the first anniversary of serious political unrest in Tibet.

The Chinese Embassy in Pretoria further indicated that for South Africa to allow the Dalai Lama into the country at that time would greatly harm South African-Chinese relations (*The Star*, 23/3/2009). Despite South Africa’s denial that China influenced its decision to bar the Dalai Lama from entering South Africa, China also expressed appreciation for countries that “rejected” the Dalai Lama, saying all countries should respect China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and “oppose Tibetan independence” (*The Star*, 25/3/2009).

Ronnie Mamoepa, DFA spokesperson, insisted that “no invitation had been extended to the Dalai Lama” (*Sunday Independent*, 22/3/2009). When it was put to him that the Tibetan office in Pretoria had applied for a visa for the Dalai Lama on 4 March 2009, Mamoepa said: “Visas are issued by Home Affairs and not by us.” Asked if South Africa had withheld an invitation to the Dalai Lama under pressure from China, he said: “This place is called the Republic of South Africa and not China and thus makes its own sovereign independent decisions based on what it deems to be in the best interests of the country” (*Sunday Independent*, 22/3/2009).

Mamoepa said the government had decided it was not in South Africa’s interest to invite the Dalai Lama, but rejected suggestions that it had denied him entry under

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<sup>56</sup> The TSSA promotes awareness of Tibet, specifically focused on Tibetan culture, faith, environment and history (TSSA 2012).

pressure from China. He declined to elaborate, but the media claimed the decision had been linked to China's establishment of an office in Johannesburg to disburse a R50 billion Africa investment fund (*Pretoria News*, 23/3/2009). Mamoepa said he had "not been advised of any intention to review" the Dalai Lama's visa application (*Cape Argus*, 23/3/2009). He dismissed suggestions that the decision not to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama was taken by "his boss" (Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma): "It was a decision taken by Government" (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).

Mamoepa refused to deny the existence of intelligence reports on the issue and said the government was aware that the spiritual leader would have addressed other functions had he been allowed entry: "The conference was about how football could be used (to advance) peace and conflict resolution. The Dalai Lama would divert the attention of the country and the world (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009)." Mamoepa said he was welcome to visit South Africa, but 'not now' (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009). Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma also defended the government's position (*The Star*, 27/3/2009).

Thabo Masebe, President Kgalema Motlanthe's spokesperson, said the President did not want the Dalai Lama in the country because the Tibetan spiritual leader would "divert attention" from the country's 2010 FIFA World Cup celebrations. He said the decision was not personal (*Pretoria News*, 24/3/2009):

The South African Government has nothing against the Dalai Lama. We have in fact on a few previous occasions hosted him in the country.

Masebe added that Pretoria had not been pressured by the Chinese Government: "We do have excellent relations with China and these relations have produced increased trade and investment, but this did not influence our decision (*Pretoria News*, 24/3/2009)." Asked why The Presidency became embroiled in a decision to grant visas, which was normally an administrative call by Home Affairs, he cited protocol issues (*Pretoria News*, 24/3/2009):

When the Dalai Lama travels to South Africa, our government affords him the status above that of an ordinary visitor. So, his entry in South Africa is normally facilitated through diplomatic channels.

Masebe reiterated the government's stance that the Dalai Lama's visit to the country was not in the best interests of the country: "Obviously, you cannot remove Tibet from him." Asked if South Africa had consulted China before making the decision, he said: "This was a decision taken by the South African Government alone" (*Pretoria News*, 25/3/2009). Masebe also stated that the visit was "not in the interests of South Africa at this stage". He said the conference to which the Dalai Lama was invited had been cancelled: "So the issue of the Dalai Lama, therefore, is no longer relevant" (*Daily News*, 26/3/2009).

Government spokesperson, Themba Maseko, said South Africa did not want the 2010 FIFA World Cup or the peace conference to be used to advance the causes of various political organisations, as this would divert attention from these events (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009). Maseko added that the government was also faced with the choice between allowing the Dalai Lama access and damaging relations with China: "We believe that if you have to compare the interests of a peace conference as opposed to our economic concerns and our bilateral relations, our interests will be better served by making sure we do not jeopardise our relations with China (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009)".

Finance Minister Trevor Manuel said the Dalai Lama could not be allowed to raise global issues on South African soil that would affect the country's standing. He said not allowing the Dalai Lama into South Africa was "a matter of relations between states":

To say anything against the Dalai Lama is, in some quarters, equivalent to trying to shoot Bambi ... Let us put our cards on the table. Who is the Dalai Lama? ... Is he just the spiritual leader of the Buddhists in Tibet, or is he the one who, on March 28, 1969 established a government-in-exile, in the same way as Taiwan was established, to counter the reality of a single China? (*Cape Argus*, 27/3/2009)

Manuel also said Tibet's history had to be looked at, because the Lamas had been "feudal overlords" in that country:

The reason why the Dalai Lama wants to be here ... is to make a big global political statement about the secession of Tibet from China and he wants to make it on the free soil of South Africa. I am sure he is welcome to come at any other time, but we should not allow him to raise global issues that will impact on the standing of South Africa (*Cape Argus*, 27/3/2009).

A unnamed diplomatic official "who understands the government decision-making process" said that it was Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's decision, although one "based on a well-established Government foreign policy agreed a long time ago by Cabinet" (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).

It was also reported that the decision to ban the Dalai Lama was made after intelligence reports indicated that he had planned to use the visit as a launching pad for his "return to Tibet" campaign (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009). According to Government sources, the Dalai Lama's supporters had planned to stage protests against the Chinese Government – causing a diplomatic headache for South Africa with the Chinese (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).

The Dalai Lama would apparently have used the platform to highlight the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a failed Tibetan uprising against China. This would have caused problems because he would have had to share a stage with President Motlanthe, who would have made the opening address at the 2010 peace conference. The official said that the situation was further complicated by the fact that President Motlanthe had written a letter to support the conference, used by the three South African Nobel Laureates to invite the Dalai Lama (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).

The government had feared that this would put it on a collision course with the Chinese, who had invested more than R60 billion in South Africa. However, organisations sympathetic to the spiritual leader denied planning to hijack the programme to highlight the Tibetan cause (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).

With allegations immediately being flaunted that the Government was “bowing to pressure” from China and the Chinese embassy in Pretoria admitting to warning the South African Government that it would harm bilateral relations if they allowed the Dalai Lama into South Africa, the South African Government was instantly on the defence in its response, saying South Africa made its own sovereign independent decisions based on what it deemed to be in the best interests of the country. These interests were defined in terms of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, arguing that the Dalai Lama would divert the attention of the country and the world.

Government repeatedly denied it had been pressured by the Chinese Government, but conceded that faced with the choice between allowing the Dalai Lama access and damaging relations with China, interests would be better served by making sure relations with China were not jeopardised. Government’s bias in favour of China surfaced in the angry speech by Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, questioning the Dalai Lama’s *bona fides* in wanting to visit South Africa. This was supported by newspapers quoting intelligence reports indicating that he had planned to use the visit as a launching pad for his “return to Tibet” campaign.

#### **4.2. Statements by conference organisers**

Qunu Chief (traditional leader in the Eastern Cape) Mandla Mandela said that his grandfather had been “excited” to know there would be someone of the calibre of the Dalai Lama attending the conference (*The Mercury*, 24/3/2009). He added that although he had not spoken with his grandfather, he was convinced that he supported the decision of Archbishop Tutu and former President De Klerk to boycott the event (*Pretoria News*, 25/3/2009).

Chief Mandela said he had been told by then President Motlanthe’s spokesperson that pressure from China had caused the spat: “It seems that China is exerting pressure that they should not issue a visa to the Dalai Lama to come to South Africa, but they would not say why” (*The Mercury*, 24/3/2009). Chief Mandela also lashed out at the government for treating the Tibetan leader as if he was *persona non grata* in the country: “It is a sad day for South Africa ... and for Africa (because) we are a



nation that is renowned for our efforts for peace in countries like Burundi and Sudan” (*The Star*, 25/3/2009).

#### 4.3. Dissent in government ranks

Certain government representatives broke away from the official stance on the decision not to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama. Health Minister Barbara Hogan criticised the government’s decision to ban the Dalai Lama from attending the Peace Conference and urged the government to apologise to its citizens.<sup>57</sup> Hogan observed:

The very fact this government has refused entry to the Dalai Lama is an example of a government (that) is dismissive of human rights. I believe (the government) needs to apologise to the citizens of this country, because it is in your name that this great man, who has struggled for the rights of his country, has been denied access (*The Star*, 25/3/2009).

Presidential spokesperson Thabo Masebe indicated that the government would not do that. The head of the South African Friends of Tibet, Ian MacFarlane, welcomed Minister Hogan’s remarks. “We applaud (her) honesty and moral stand in this matter and call for other government ministers of conscience to come out on the world stage in support of her (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009)”. In what was described as “an unprecedented attack”, ANC National Executive Member, Enoch Godongwana, said Ms Hogan was pandering to the gallery with her attack on the government over its refusal to allow the Dalai Lama into the country:

The honourable thing for her is to resign if she believes that this government is not committed to the culture of human rights. She must be called to account for her conduct. Barbara Hogan is part of the government and ... my understanding of the constitution is that they are collectively responsible for the decisions they make. I find it strange that she has decided to take the

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<sup>57</sup> Barbara Hogan was South Africa’s Minister of Health from 2008 to 2009 when she was appointed Minister of Public Enterprises. She was dropped from Cabinet in a 2010 reshuffle.

platform in public ... without the courtesy of consulting her colleagues (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009).

ANC spokeswoman Jessie Duarte was surprised by Hogan's defiance: "Normally, members of Cabinet follow Cabinet decisions or the statement made by the President (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009)". The Minister's position received support from civil society as the HSF said Ms Hogan's "principled stance" should be supported, but condemned the government's decision regarding the Dalai Lama:

The notion of a minister having a different view from the Cabinet on a matter is not unprecedented, nor is it unacceptable for that opinion to be voiced publicly. Any censure or other steps that may be taken against Hogan will be deeply unfortunate (*Cape Argus*, 26/3/2009).

The media reported that Minister Hogan was "harshly rebuked" by the government for her public defiance of President Motlanthe's stance to refuse the Dalai Lama a visa (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009). Government spokesman Themba Maseko described her statement as "open defiance":

The position on the Dalai Lama is an official position of the government. It is unfortunate she went on a public platform to attack a decision of this government when she is part of that collective. I think that it is something that will have to be addressed in the near future by this government. How do ministers conduct themselves in instances when they do not agree with the position of government? The way government functions is that it is not for a minister to go to a public platform and openly attack and disagree with a government position (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009).

The DA also supported Minister Hogan's stance. The DA leader and the party's spokesperson on foreign affairs, Tony Leon, said the party was "heartened" by the Health Minister's "pro-human rights stance" (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009). The Congress of the People (COPE) presidential candidate, Mvume Dandala, called on the ANC to clarify its stance on the matter. He accused the ruling party of compromising its values in exchange for money from China (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009).

The split in Government over the decision to bar the Dalai Lama was reportedly widening as claims of Cabinet backing for the move were denied and ministerial opposition to the ban strengthened (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009). It was reportedly revealed that the decision to prevent the Tibetan spiritual leader from entering the country was taken by Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, and not the Cabinet, as claimed by her and other government figures. Another unnamed Cabinet Minister was claimed to have privately declared his opposition to the decision as expressed by Health Minister Barbara Hogan. The senior Minister notified the Foreign Affairs Ministry that he did not agree with the decision to prevent the Dalai Lama from attending the peace conference.

Though the move to prevent the exiled Tibetan leader from attending the peace conference was not a Cabinet decision, Themba Maseko, government spokesperson, created that impression when he claimed that Hogan had defied a “collective” decision: “Cabinet’s position is that we do not want the 2010 FIFA World Cup to be used as a platform to advance the political causes of various groups.” Maseko later reportedly “changed his tune”: “It is a government decision, not a Cabinet decision. Decisions of visas do not require Cabinet approval ... a department takes a decision and it becomes a government decision (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009)”.

As Minister Hogan apologised to Cabinet for publicly criticising government’s stance, opposition parties accused the ANC of applying pressure on her (*Daily News*, 17/4/2009). Themba Maseko told a media briefing that Hogan had been questioned by her Cabinet colleagues about her public criticism of her own government. DA leader Helen Zille said she was disappointed that Ms Hogan, who had received huge public support for her courageous stance, had apologised: “I am sure she was put under pressure.”

COPE also blamed the ruling party for “silencing” Minister Hogan: “COPE condemns this action to silence Hogan, under the guise of party discipline.” Independent Democrats (ID) leader, Patricia de Lille, said Minister Hogan’s change of tune did not take away the fact that government still owed the nation an explanation: “If Barbara

Hogan made an about turn it does not remedy the situation at all (*Daily News*, 17/4/2009).” IFP General Secretary, Musa Zondi, blamed Minister Hogan’s lack of experience in the executive, particularly when it came to decisions taken: “Once government has taken a decision you are supposed to abide by it. She was apologising for breach of procedures and not on substantive issues.” United Democratic Movement (UDM) leader, Bantu Holomisa, believed the Minister should have stood her ground and should not have bowed to pressure: “She stood up and the whole country stood behind her (*Daily News*, 17/4/2009)”.

In the wake of the announcement of the new Cabinet after the 2009 election it was considered encouraging that Health Minister Barbara Hogan, appeared likely to keep her portfolio “for the time being” (*The Star*, 20/4/2009). *The Star* (20/4/2009) also opined that Hogan had shown her to be someone able to listen to, and consider, other people’s points of view, rather than being a slave to ideology and should stay. Lowe Morna, Executive Director of Gender Links, described the retention of Minister Hogan as a welcome sign that ministers of her calibre had a place in the new dispensation (*Cape Times*, 12/5/2009).<sup>58</sup>

Parliament later confirmed that Minister Hogan had resigned (*Daily News*, 2/11/2010). What was described as her “shock decision” to end her parliamentary career of 16 years came a day after she was axed from the Cabinet in one of the most extensive executive shake-ups South Africa had seen. The media argued that Hogan was handed “a poisoned chalice” by President Jacob Zuma, when moved to head up the Public Enterprises Ministry, which had been run down and beset with corruption during the previous administration (*Daily News*, 2/11/2010). Her departure had baffled the opposition, who saw her as a “leading light of transparency and accountability” in the executive.

#### **4.4. Criticism from the ranks of the Constitutional Court**

The Constitutional Court is South Africa's highest court on constitutional matters. Its jurisdiction is restricted to constitutional matters and issues connected with decisions

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<sup>58</sup> Gender Links is an NGO promoting gender equality and justice across Southern Africa (Gender Links, undated).

on constitutional matters. Constitutional Court Justice Kate O'Regan supported Minister Hogan's position: "It is a matter of dismay that human rights do not seem to enter into the picture of some foreign affairs decisions that are made" (*Cape Argus*, 26/3/2009).

The media reported that Constitutional Law expert and academic Pierre de Vos said it was "unwise" for a Constitutional Court judge to publicly criticise the government's executive decisions: "Judges must be careful when commenting on political issues of the day" (*Daily News*, 30/3/2009). De Vos said O'Regan was unlikely to get into trouble over her comments as "it was not an impeachable offence".

The Black Lawyers' Association (BLA) described O'Regan's actions as "mischievous" and urged her to stay out of government decisions (*Daily News*, 30/3/2009).<sup>59</sup> At a BLA meeting in Cape Town, there was a sentiment that a complaint of misconduct should be submitted to the Judicial Service Commission (JSC).<sup>60</sup> BLA Deputy President Sithembele Mgxaji was quoted saying: "It falls beyond the issues that judges need to concern themselves. It is purely a political issue to deny a visa." A legal source within BLA said the comments compromised O'Regan, as the issue could still come before the Constitutional Court. The judge also drew severe criticism from Minister of Foreign Affairs Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma:

It is not for judges to decide on foreign policy. They do not run the government and they do not run foreign policy (*Daily News*, 30/3/2009).

The JSC was asked to investigate Justice O'Regan (*Daily News*, 8/4/2009). Trade Union Amicus South Africa lodged a complaint with the commission, saying O'Regan's comments were "scandalous (and) vexatious" and brought the judiciary into disrepute. Amicus' general secretary Vincent Phillips said that it did not bode well for the constitutional order if judges were seen to be biased in regard to the executive (*Daily News*, 8/4/2009).

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<sup>59</sup> The BLA is a voluntary association of black lawyers in South Africa. It co-exists with statutory bodies governing the legal profession (BLA, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> The JSC was established in terms of the Constitution and selects fit and proper people for appointment as judges and investigates complaints about judicial officers. It also advises government on matters relating to the judiciary or the administration of justice (GCIS, 2010/11: 356).

#### **4.5. Chinese Government statements**

The Chinese Embassy in Pretoria indicated that they had appealed to the South African Government not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa as it would harm bilateral relations. They explained that it was a particularly inopportune time for the Dalai Lama to be visiting South Africa, as it was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what Tibetans regarded as “China’s military invasion of Tibet”, but which the Chinese Government described as its “liberation of Tibetans from feudal serfdom” (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 21/3/2009).

It was furthermore the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dalai Lama’s flight from Tibet into exile in India and the first anniversary of serious political unrest in Tibet. The Chinese Embassy in Pretoria also suggested that for South Africa to allow the Dalai Lama into the country at that time would “greatly harm” South African-Chinese relations (*The Star*, 23/3/2009).

China expressed appreciation for countries that rejected the Dalai Lama. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang said: “All countries should respect China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity ... and oppose Tibetan independence” (*Pretoria News*, 25/3/2009). China’s ministerial counsellor at the embassy in Pretoria, Dai Bing, was quoted as saying that his government had urged South Africa to ban the visit or risk damaging bilateral relations.

#### **4.6. Statements by members of civil society**

Archbishop Emeritus Tutu said he was upset at the refusal of the visa and had written to then President Motlanthe asking him for an explanation:

If His Holiness’ visa is refused, then I would not take part in the upcoming 2010 FIFA World Cup-related peace conference. I will condemn government’s behaviour as disgraceful in line with our country’s abysmal record at the UNSC. We are shamelessly succumbing to Chinese pressure (*Sunday Independent*, 22/3/2009).

Archbishop Tutu slammed both Finance Minister Trevor Manuel and the ANC government for their handling of the Dalai Lama issue. He said if China was owed anything, it was as a party, not as a country. If they wanted to invest here, it was because they believed there were benefits in doing so. Referring to international media coverage of the matter he said: “We are dirt ... people are disappointed (*Sunday Independent*, 22/3/2009).”

Archbishop Tutu said that the Dalai Lama had been trying “for donkey’s years” to say that they did not want separation from China. All they wanted was autonomy to be able to live their lives as Tibetans. He added that the Dalai Lama was someone who won the Nobel Peace Prize. He was given the Congressional Medal of Honour in the US. He asked if Mr Manuel still wanted to know who the Dalai Lama was. Archbishop Tutu saluted Health Minister Barbara Hogan who spoke out against the ban (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 28/3/2009).

Dave Steward, spokesperson for the FW de Klerk Foundation said former President FW de Klerk had expressed concern to the President and Foreign Affairs Ministry and had aligned himself with the position expressed by Archbishop Tutu not to participate in the event if the visa was not granted (*Sunday Independent*, 22/3/2009)<sup>61</sup>. Steward warned that this would not be a good thing for South Africa and the FIFA World Cup (*Sunday Independent*, 22/3/2009). De Klerk argued that the decision to refuse the visa made a mockery of the whole purpose of the peace conference. He said South Africa was a sovereign constitutional democracy and should not allow other countries to dictate to it regarding who it should and should not admit to its territory – regardless of the power and influence of that country (*The Mercury*, 24/3/2009).

#### **4.7. Statements by Tibetans and aligned organisations**

Archbishop Tutu disclosed the Dalai Lama’s own feelings about South Africa’s

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<sup>61</sup> The FW de Klerk Foundation promotes the presidential heritage of former President FW de Klerk by upholding the Constitution and the national accord; working for harmonious relations in multicultural societies; promoting the peaceful and negotiated resolution of disputes; and mobilisation of resources for disabled and underprivileged children (FW de Klerk Foundation, 2010).

decision to stop his visit as contained in a letter to him (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 28/3/2009). The Dalai Lama said the South African Government's decision was another manifestation of one of the fundamental challenges to world peace as a whole: namely, a lack of understanding and mutual respect. He believed that religious, social and political leaders throughout the world had a responsibility to ensure that principles triumph over the obsession with money and power. The Dalai Lama said the decision by the government to refuse him a visa was the result of Chinese diplomatic pressure – but it backfired by generating a storm of publicity (*The Mercury*, 1/4/2009).

The Dalai Lama's representative in South Africa, Sonam Tenzing, explained that the Dalai Lama had applied for a visa on 4 March 2009, but that South Africa's High Commissioner in India, where the Dalai Lama had applied for his visa, had asked him to postpone the visit (*The Star*, 23/3/2009). Referring to the fact that South Africa snubbed the spiritual leader by denying him a visa, Tenzing noted that "the ANC, more than most, should know about oppression". He noted that he could not pinpoint why "one burgundy and orange-robed monk", could be such a dominant threat for "the fiery Asian super-nation" and the reason the ANC government "kowtowed like a whimpering eunuch" (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 28/3/2009).

The SAFT, the South African chapter of a worldwide network of Friends of Tibet support groups, said that the barring of the Dalai Lama from the peace conference made a mockery of the intentions of the conference (*Sunday Independent*, 22/3/2009). They appealed to the conference organisers, the 2010 FIFA World Cup LOC, to postpone the proceedings until the Dalai Lama received travel documents.

They expressed dismay at the withholding of travel documents, saying that South Africa had bowed to pressure from one of the world's most oppressive nations. The head of the SAFT, Ian MacFarlane, said the fact that the advertisement confirming the Dalai Lama's attendance at the conference was posted on ANC websites – and remained there – confirmed their belief that the Chinese suddenly intervened to impose their will on the South African Government (*The Star*, 25/3/2009).



The TSSA, a Tibet support group which focuses on creating an awareness of Tibet, said it was a sad day in the history of South Africa as a man of peace, internationally recognised for his selfless efforts to promote harmony, was prevented from attending a peace conference in South Africa (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009). It was described as ironic that the South African Government had bowed to the pressure of the People's Republic of China, in the "best interests of the country" (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009). The hope was expressed that the local and international community would express their shock and total dissatisfaction at the way he had been treated (*Sunday Independent*, 29/3/2009).

Chris Kudla of the TSSA said that the Dalai Lama was invited and did not solicit an invitation, nor select the date of the peace conference. He noted that the South African Government was aware of the invitation and described the scrambled excuses and reasons given by government as "ludicrous, embarrassing and frightening". He remarked that eventually the government admitted that the Dalai Lama was barred because of links with the Chinese (*The Mercury*, 31/3/2009).

#### **4.8. Statements by political parties**

The government's opposition to the Dalai Lama's visit drew heavy criticism from political parties, including COPE and the FF Plus, but was supported by the South African Communist Party (SACP), which accused critics of acting "in the interests of imperialism" (*Cape Argus*, 24/3/2009).

##### **4.8.1. Democratic Alliance**

DA foreign affairs spokesperson and former leader Tony Leon said any decision to bar the Dalai Lama would embarrass former President Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former President FW de Klerk, who extended the invitation to him (*Cape Argus*, 23/3/2009). He slammed the decision not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa as "a massive own goal" against the country in the run-up to the World Cup: "Whatever the motivation ... a policy or decision only needs to be measured by the results and the results of this decision clearly have to be against our best national and international interests" (*Daily News*, 26/3/2009). The DA's

spokesperson Ryan Coetzee said there was no reason to deny the Dalai Lama a visa: "South Africa's foreign policy has lost its moral compass" (*The Star*, 27/3/2009).

#### **4.8.2. African National Congress**

Head of the ANC's foreign affairs sub-committee Ebrahim Ebrahim said the ANC and the South African Government did not want to compromise its relationship with China by allowing the Dalai Lama a public platform:

The government did the right thing because for the first time our trade relationship with China is positive ... We cannot say that he is forever excluded, but we value very much our political and economic relationship with China (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009).

ANC President Jacob Zuma defended the government's decision to refuse the Dalai Lama entry into the country amid condemnation and calls by prominent South Africans to reverse the decision. Zuma said South Africa had not neglected its role of upholding human rights by denying the Dalai Lama a visa to attend a peace conference due to pressure from China (*Cape Argus*, 27/3/2009). He said the government would, at times, take decisions that put the interest of relations with other countries first and South Africa had not been the first country to bow to Chinese pressure on the issue of the Dalai Lama: "You will recall that in the Olympics, this issue of the Dalai Lama made France clash with China" (*Cape Argus*, 27/3/2009).

It is explained that in 2010 China postponed an economic summit with France, after French President Nicolas Sarkozy met the Dalai Lama at a gathering of Nobel Prize recipients in Poland. China also boycotted French products in the build-up to the Beijing Olympics, after the Olympic torch relay was disrupted on the way to Paris, when pro-Tibet demonstrators protested against China's record of human rights violations in Tibet. Zuma called for more consultation on any similar controversial issue that may arise in the future: "I do not think it marks the undermining of human rights. I think this country is more sensitive to human rights than many" (*Cape Argus*, 27/3/2009).

Zuma insisted that the government preferred to be safe rather than sorry in deciding against granting the Dalai Lama a visa to attend the peace conference in South Africa. Zuma, who said he could not speak for government, did not rule out a future visit by the Dalai Lama:

The government took a decision which I am sure they will explain ... they did not say the Dalai Lama could not come to South Africa ... they are saying March ... is a serious month between the Dalai Lama and China in a very specific way (*The Star*, 1/4/2009).

Former ANC MP Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of passive resistance proponent Mahatma Gandhi, called on the government to issue the Dalai Lama with a visa (*The Star*, 27/3/2009). She joined Minister Hogan in condemning the government's actions, saying there was a misconception among many people that what the Chinese said about their occupation of Tibet was true. The Chinese said they had been liberating Tibet from feudalism: "If there is sincerity in what China is saying, then why were they still in Tibet 60 years after liberating it? Why are so many Tibetans in exile? Why are Tibetans not free in their own country, to be able to rule themselves?" (*The Star*, 27/3/2009).

#### **4.8.3. South African Communist Party**

ANC national executive committee member and SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande said that most Western countries refused the Dalai Lama entry in March because of the failed Tibetan uprising against the Chinese rule of 50 years, "It is an internationally recognised diplomatic protocol. This has nothing to do with human rights" (*The Mercury*, 26/3/2009).

#### **4.8.4. Congress of the People**

COPE spokesperson Phillip Dexter said the decision was meant to please China: "What this has shown is that South Africa's foreign policy is determined by the highest bidder" (*The Star*, 27/3/2009).

#### **4.8.5. Independent Democrats**

Lance Greyling of the ID said the Dalai Lama had every right to be in South Africa, as he had been to many other countries to talk about human rights issues (*The Star*, 27/3/2009).

### **5. Media reaction**

The *Weekend Argus* (22/3/2009) commented in an editorial that the fact that South Africa had closed its door to the Dalai Lama, who, the world over, commanded immense respect, was a disgrace. It argued that South Africa's "spinelessness on the international stage" was embarrassing and that the world, like South Africans, had become accustomed to the government's "extraordinary hypocrisy" in foreign relations – politicians pay much lip-service to morality, yet through the years have allowed short-sighted expediency to govern foreign affairs policy. It concluded that the government believed that sticking to the spirit of the constitution and abiding by a commitment to international human rights was less in South Africa's interests than "kowtowing to dictators and big brothers".

The *Daily News* (24/3/2009) editorialised that one of the reasons proffered by the government for its refusal to grant the Dalai Lama a visitor's visa to South Africa was that his visit would divert attention from the focus of the conference he was asked to attend, to Tibet. It suggested that government officials would have realised that the snub they were defending was creating more publicity than allowing the Dalai Lama at the conference. It argued that barring the Dalai Lama had everything to do with what decision-makers perceived to be the best interests of the country, rather than distraction.

Relations with China, punctuated with the establishment of an office to disburse a US\$5 billion Africa investment fund, were clearly paramount in their thinking. The paper noted that the disappointing decision denied the South African constitution, surrendering high principle to expediency (*Daily News* 24/3/2009).

Columnist and former newspaper editor Max du Preez suggested that South Africa needed a strong and practical tool to express the view of the people, like rolling mass action (*Daily News*, 26/3/2009). He argued that the presidential spokesperson's explanation that the Dalai Lama was declared unwelcome, because he would draw attention away from the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup, was "an insult to every South African with an IQ higher than nine". He suggested that there would soon be proof enough that the ANC decided to ban him because of all the Chinese money that went into the party's coffers.

Ann Crotty, now *Business Report* editor-at-large, noted that the Chinese Government was hoping to pressure as many as possible of its trading partners into abandoning contact with the Dalai Lama (*Cape Times*, 26/3/2009). Thus, in this "hugely embarrassing" permit refusal decision, South Africa helped the Chinese Government avoid having to engage with the Dalai Lama to reach a workable solution around the issue of Tibetan autonomy.

She suggested that increasingly, it seemed the world could be divided into those countries that were succumbing to this pressure from China and those that were not, with South Africa falling into the former category (*Cape Times*, 26/3/2009). She argued that by refusing to grant the Dalai Lama a visa, the government had sent a loud and clear message to the Chinese Government that it could determine whatever aspect of our national policies that it felt it needed to.

It is speculated whether the government was offered general trade and investment-related inducements - or was there some specific inducement offered to the ANC? She insisted it would be nice, especially ahead of a general election, to know what price was put on the country's independence and concluded that by kowtowing, the government had served nobody's interests – except perhaps a small group within the ANC (*Cape Times*, 26/3/2009).

The *Pretoria News* (28/3/2009) suggested that "the civic edifice" took an uncomfortable knock amid the Dalai Lama debacle. It argued that although the denial of a visa to His Holiness rapidly escalated into an international issue, it spilled into "ideological difference, freedom of speech and cash incentives in South Africa".

It noted that as the government eventually acknowledged that it did not want to jeopardise bilateral relations with South Africa's biggest trading partner, China, "dreams of the struggle" were first conjured up against foes.

Those defending the decision were said to be betraying South Africa's history and democracy (*Pretoria News*, 28/3/2009). Those who disagreed openly, like Health Minister Barbara Hogan, were all but accused of treason. Questions were posed about funding for ANC election campaigns from sources with questionable human rights records, later demanding payoffs in dubious foreign-policy backing.

The *Pretoria News* (30/3/2009) also commented that South African Government officials finally acknowledged that the real reason they denied the Dalai Lama a visa was China, when Foreign Minister Dlamini-Zuma said: "Let us be honest" – it was also about avoiding putting South Africa on a "collision course" with China. It was suggested she had in mind the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) – a major gathering consisting of Chinese President Hu Jintao and the presidents of most of the 48 out of 53 African countries that have diplomatic relations with China, rather than Taiwan (*Pretoria News*, 30/3/2009).

Much aid, trade and investment was promised to Africa there, and considerable Chinese investment flowed into South Africa specifically. The paper explained that in the declaration at the end of that summit, African participants signed on to the one-China policy, the *sine qua non* of diplomatic relations with China. That meant accepting that Taiwan was a renegade province of China that must eventually return to the mother country and was not a sovereign country in its own right.

Beijing's apparent growing sensitivity about the Dalai Lama implied that the policy had now been surreptitiously extended to Tibet. Finance Minister Trevor Manuel helped to reinforce that impression when he said that by creating a Tibetan government in exile, the Dalai Lama had challenged the one-China policy (*Pretoria News*, 30/3/2009). It is stated that China believed that part of the respect they accorded to Africa was not to impose conditions on their aid, as Western nations did. The great irony was that by enforcing this "no-meet-the-Dalai Lama policy" at the risk of losing aid, Beijing was being far more conditional than any Western nation would

dare to be. A Western diplomat is quoted: “If we former colonials had tried that, we would have been hounded off the continent.”

*The Star* argued (2/4/2009) that Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma had escaped most criticism around the “disastrous ban” on the Dalai Lama to come to South Africa, though it was her decision – apparently her decision only, because the Cabinet were only informed of it after the fact. The ANC, Jacob Zuma and caretaker President Kgalema Motlanthe took most of the flak.

The newspaper referred to a press statement announcing that a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed on 26 March 2009, on Sino-South African cooperation on pebble bed nuclear technology (*The Star*, 2/4/2009). It comes to the following conclusion, “A coincidence? ... in the end these cynical, unethical foreign-policy decisions infect our body politic and poison our whole system”.

Media opinion is also visibly illustrated in newspaper cartoons. A cartoon by Zapiro (see Figure 5) is most representative of cartoons on the 2009 dispute and is discussed here though it was published in the *Sunday Times* (5/4/2009) and not in one of the Independent News & Media papers.

The cartoon is based on a classic cartoon by Edmund Linley Sambourne's "The Rhodes Colossus" originally published in 1892 in the *Punch* magazine. A comparison is made between the colonial times of Cecil John Rhodes and what is deemed Chinese neo-colonialism. China is depicted pulling the puppet strings of South African foreign policy with respect to the Dalai Lama visa withdrawal.

The original cartoon in the *Punch* magazine depicted Rhodes striding Africa commenting on his plans to extend an electrical telegraph line from Cape Town to Cairo (*Punch*, 1892). The original striding Colossus of Rhodes, in turn, was imagined in a 16<sup>th</sup> century engraving by Martin Heemskerck, as part of his series of the Seven Wonders of the World, according to which the harbour-spanning pose of the statue on the Island of Rhodes was, established (UN Museum, 2011).

**Figure 7: The Rhodes Colossus - 118 years later**



Source: *Sunday Times*, 5/4/2009

## **6. Reaction of analysts and other commentators**

Wide-ranging comments by media analysts and other commentators were reported by the media. Political scientist and media analyst Adam Habib commented: "I think the refusal of a visa is outrageous and, frankly, stupid if they were attempting to avoid a controversy, but they have created one" (*The Star*, 25/3/2009).

Lack of consensus on what constituted our national interests created the need for a new, smarter diplomacy, wrote Siphamandla Zondi, Executive Director of the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), a South African foreign policy think tank (*The Mercury*, 29/3/2010). The IGD and DIRCO co-hosted a round-table discussion on how the balance between the pursuit of values like human rights and the projection of national interests in South Africa's international relations could be achieved.



On the one hand, there was growing concern in some quarters that South Africa was disengaging from a human rights-based foreign policy in favour of an ideologically driven pursuit for transformation of power relations globally (*The Mercury*, 29/3/2010). For instance the Dalai Lama controversy suggested that values and principles enshrined in the Constitution had been abandoned to protect South Africa's trade links with China.

On the other hand, there had been calls for South Africa to adopt a more mercantilist foreign policy by ensuring that it generated commercial returns from its value-driven peace diplomacy in Africa and elsewhere (*The Mercury*, 29/3/2010). There was agreement that there was not necessarily a conflict between the pursuit of values and national interests; rather, values were often intangible forms of national interests. The Constitution enjoined the government to pursue a balanced foreign policy, both value-based and interest-driven. It was accepted, though, that lack of consensus on what constituted our national interests bedevilled this balancing act.

Lebogang Mokwena, researcher at the think tank, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), commented that we had seen religion, politics and sport clash regarding the government's decision to deny the Dalai Lama a visa to the peace conference ahead of the 2010 FIFA World Cup (*Pretoria News*, 31/3/2009). She noted that the decision to keep the Dalai Lama out of the South African sporting haven had less to do with a return on World Cup investment than it did with our country's political economy. By rights, we should be autonomous yet "we bow to a dragon with a fiery smile". She expressed the hope that in time, Africa's leaders would "snap out of their trance and become fully fledged politicians who have enough confidence in their own country to proudly state their autonomy".

*The Star* (26/3/2009) quoted Jay Naidoo, Non-Executive Chairperson of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and a former member of President Mandela's Cabinet, posing the question as to whether we had 'outsourced' our foreign policy. He stated that the denial of a visa to the Dalai Lama was another in a series of diplomatic bungles tarnishing South Africa's human rights record internationally. He remarked that the government's decision not to grant the Dalai Lama a visa was interpreted by many as 'bullying' by the government of China. He

suggested that the right thing to do was to apologise to the nation, and allow our iconic 'elders' to do what they believed was right. He noted that South Africa's Nobel Laureates were recognised globally, because they stood for social justice: "Who are we to question their integrity?" (*The Star*, 26/3/2009)

## **7. Inkatha Freedom Party court challenge of the decision**

IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi brought an urgent court application to order the government to issue a visa to the Dalai Lama "in the nearest future" to enable him to attend another peace conference (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 28/3/2009). In his affidavit before the Cape Town High Court, Chief Buthelezi said if the decision was not rescinded, it would silence and censor the Dalai Lama's religious and political message and violate the constitutional rights of all South Africans to political action, religious freedom, freedom of thought and expression and dignity.

Chief Buthelezi cited the 'unlawful' political motives for barring the Dalai Lama as "the ruling party's relationship with China and its related political fundraising", its dislike of the Dalai Lama and his foreseeable religious and political messages to South Africans, his struggle for the autonomy of Tibet and his meetings and prayers with South Africans (*Pretoria News Weekend*, 28/3/2009). He noted that he and the IFP supported the Dalai Lama's struggle for the political autonomy of Tibet.

Chief Buthelezi's adviser, Mario Oriani-Ambrosini, said the party had evidence that the South African High Commission in India had refused to accept a visa application from the Dalai Lama: "It is outrageous that the government is taking a position that it did not process the visa because the Dalai Lama did not apply" (*The Mercury*, 1/4/2009). Lawyers for the government argued that the Dalai Lama had not applied for a visa and that the government therefore could not be forced to grant him one (*The Mercury*, 1/4/2009).

Home Affairs Director-General, Mavuso Msimang, claimed the Dalai Lama had not applied for a visa to attend the conference and there was no evidence he wanted to enter the country any time soon. Mr Themba Mgabe, a Home Affairs official based at the South African High Commission in India, said in his affidavit that he had met a

representative of the Dalai Lama, but that the leader had decided to put a hold on applying for a visa, pending talks over the postponement of the conference (*Cape Argus*, 1/4/2009).

Chief Buthelezi said the reputation of South Africa and the government depended on the Western Cape High Court ruling on his urgent application to compel the government to grant the Dalai Lama a visa (*Cape Times*, 2/4/2009). He challenged the assertion of Msimang, that his application was “flawed”. Chief Buthelezi said it was significant that Msimang had failed to advance any reason why the Dalai Lama was not permitted to enter South Africa. He added that the suggestion that the Dalai Lama had not applied for a visa needed to be rejected. He said the Cabinet had admitted that it had barred the Dalai Lama. The onus had shifted to the government to show why its conduct was justifiable.

Chief Buthelezi insisted that judicial cognisance should be taken of this matter having tarnished the domestic and international image of the country and its government (*Cape Times*, 2/4/2009). He quoted Archbishop Tutu saying it was the government’s “worst decision ever” and said that a tardy or indecisive judicial response would concretise such negative perception, thereby irreparably damaging the national image.

Fresh efforts were later launched to give the Dalai Lama an opportunity to visit South Africa (*Cape Argus*, 2/4/2009). The SAFT was to arrange an alternative peace conference following the government’s refusal to allow the Tibetan leader into the country and the postponement of the initial conference as a result. This emerged in papers SAFT filed as part of the urgent application lodged in court to order the government to provide the Dalai Lama with a visa.

The SAFT was included in the application as *amicus curiae* (friend of the court). The SAFT’s co-founder, Mr Ian Duncan MacFarlane, said in an affidavit that the association had an interest in the case and believed the Dalai Lama’s visit would benefit South Africans. He said China had consistently used its influence to isolate the Dalai Lama internationally. The inescapable inference was that the incident was

as a result of pressure from the Chinese Government, or anxiety not to compromise relations with China (*Cape Argus*, 2/4/2009).

## **8. Continued coverage after the issue disappeared from the headlines**

Further media references to the government's decision to refuse the Dalai Lama a visa were noted long after the issue disappeared from the headlines.

### **8.1. Inauguration guest list**

President Jacob Zuma's inauguration as the country's fourth post-apartheid president generated controversy as unions, political parties and civil rights groups were furious over the inclusion of unpopular leaders on the guest list (*Daily News*, 8/5/2009). COSATU, the SACP and civil rights group AfriForum, criticised the government for inviting Swaziland's King Mswati III and Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe to the inauguration.

Government insisted there were no grounds to exclude either leader from the festivities (*Daily News*, 8/5/2009). Presidency spokesman Thabo Masebe said although government respected people's dissenting views, the invitations would stand. AfriForum Chief Executive Kallie Kriel said inviting Mugabe was 'distasteful' because the Zimbabwean leader was guilty of crimes against humanity: "We want to send a strong message because government has invited Mugabe and has refused the Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, an invite".

The *Pretoria News* (24/4/2009) noted that it had been "a bad season for human rights" in South Africa, with the Dalai Lama being refused a visa to meet his fellow Nobel Peace Prize Laureates in Johannesburg and "all those votes" by South Africa's Ambassador to the UN, Dumisani Kumalo, against human rights resolutions on the UNSC. So it was "very heartening" to discover that South Africa was going to strike a few blows for human rights, democracy and the rule of law by disinviting at least five leaders from the inauguration of the next president in Pretoria on 9 May 2009 (*Pretoria News*, 24/4/2009).

Most encouraging of all was that one of those would be Sudan's President Omar el-Bashir. The other four disinvited leaders were those of Mauritania, Madagascar, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, because, as Foreign Affairs Director-General Ayanda Ntsaluba announced, they were "under sanctions" – judged to be under AU suspension as member governments which had come to power by unconstitutional means, in effect *coups* (*Pretoria News*, 24/4/2009).

## **8.2. Buddha Day**

Addressing Buddha Day celebrations, also referred to as *Vesak Day*, when the Buddha and his Enlightenment is recalled, at the Shree Ranganathar Temple Hall in Greenwood Park, Durban, executive member of the KwaZulu-Natal Buddhist Forum, Jerald Vedan, expressed disappointment at the controversial banning of the Dalai Lama's visit to South Africa, but added, "It also resulted in extensive international publicity for Tibetan culture which would have cost millions of rands" (*Daily News*, 11/5/2009).

## **8.3. Zuma administration**

As the new administration of President Jacob Zuma took over in mid-2009, newly appointed DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, reiterated that the country's foreign policy would remain unchanged, while stressing that the Dalai Lama was now free to visit (*The Star*, 15/5/2009). Commenting on the refusal to grant the Dalai Lama a visa, she said: "Though we did not communicate clearly at first what had transpired, this country discriminates against no one, and the Dalai Lama is more than free (to visit)".

It was noted that better communication of what appeared to be unpopular foreign-policy decisions, and finding a carrot to dangle in influencing Africa's big men to democratise, were top priorities of the DIRCO Minister (*Sunday Independent*, 17/5/2009). She admitted that the seemingly strange decisions – for not supporting a resolution against Burma's military regime, Zimbabwe and the banning of the Dalai

Lama – could have been communicated better: “Maybe we underestimated the noise that was (going) to come with the decisions.”<sup>62</sup>

Soon afterwards *The Star* (29/5/2009) commented that the Zuma administration had quickly distinguished itself from the Mbeki administration in defending human rights abroad. It was noted that whereas Mr Mbeki’s government had voted against a resolution at the UNSC condemning the human rights abuses of the Myanmar (Burma) military junta, by contrast Ebrahim Ebrahim, the new Deputy DIRCO Minister, called in Myanmar’s ambassador-designate to South Africa and sharply rebuked him for his government’s arrest of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Ebrahim’s Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, also drew positive comment for her statement that the Dalai Lama was welcome to visit South Africa – in apparent contrast with the Motlanthe administration which denied him a visa to visit in March 2009 for a meeting with fellow Nobel Peace Prize winners (*The Star*, 29/5/2009). It was remarked that this, however, was not such a clear break with the past, because the Motlanthe government did say it did not want the Dalai Lama to visit particularly in March 2009, because that was a sensitive month to China.

The *Sunday Independent* (7/6/2009) quoted Ebrahim Ebrahim indicating that human rights were a priority and there were some perceptions that needed correcting. It was noted that South Africa’s vote as a non-permanent member of the UNSC against the UNSC’s failed draft resolution condemning human rights abuses in Burma in January 2007 had damning effects on the country’s human rights record, as had the government’s refusal to grant the Dalai Lama a visa. Ebrahim explained:

We had refused the Dalai Lama a visa in March. This March marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tibetan people’s peaceful uprising against China ... China, is an important trade partner and South Africa may look at expanding IBSA to include China ... We believe in the one-China policy and have even broken off relations with Taiwan in observance of this.

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<sup>62</sup> Burma’s name was changed to Myanmar by the military junta, however the opposition parties, the exile groups, most ethnic groups, the US and Western nations continue to call the country Burma (*Eurasia Review*, 2012).

Nonetheless, Ebrahim said, “We are looking at all our policies in all the international organisations and look at how best we can position ourselves. I feel we should make a strong stand on human rights issues” (*Sunday Independent* , 7/6/2009).

## **9. Conclusion**

Considering the government reception of the Dalai Lama over successive visits to South Africa since the Mandela administration, attitudes have clearly hardened towards him with each visit. In 1996 former President Nelson Mandela agreed to meet with him. In 1999 the Dalai Lama was allowed to attend the PWR in Cape Town, but President Mbeki would only meet with a representative group, including the Dalai Lama, and not meet him one-on-one. The Dalai Lama did not meet President Mbeki on his visit to South Africa in 2004 at all. By 2009 the situation was reached that President Motlanthe’s administration would not even issue a visa for the Dalai Lama to visit the country anymore.

The government justified its refusal of a visa in terms of South Africa’s “best interest”. Those criticising the decision quoted the government’s commitment to upholding human rights. There was very little support for government’s stance. This argument about the trade-off between human rights on the one hand and interests on the other is evident in the reaction from almost all commentators. The promotion of human rights, democracy, justice and peace in South Africa’s international policy received a lot of emphasis in the period immediately after the end of apartheid, whereas interest had probably never been properly defined or profiled. This might have created an expectation of a pursuit of moral objectives over interests at all times.

Outrage almost immediately greeted the government’s 2009 ban on a visit by the Dalai Lama. The decision of the South African Government was interpreted as an indication that it bowed to pressure from China not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa, especially after the Chinese embassy in Pretoria admitted to appealing to the South African Government not to allow the Dalai Lama into the country; warning that it would harm bilateral relations and sketching the historically inopportune timing of the visit.

The South African Government was instantly on the defence in its response, saying South Africa made its own sovereign independent decisions based on what it deemed to be in the best interests of the country. These interests were defined in terms of the 2010 World Cup, arguing that the Dalai Lama would divert the attention of the country and the world.

Government repeatedly denied it had been pressured by the Chinese Government, but conceded that faced with the choice between allowing the Dalai Lama access and damaging relations with China, interests would be better served by making sure relations with China were not jeopardised. Government's bias in favour of China surfaced in the uncharacteristically angry speech by Finance Minister Trevor Manuel.

The ANC conceded that they and the South African Government did not want to compromise its political and economic relationship with China by allowing the Dalai Lama a public platform, but ANC President Jacob Zuma said South Africa had not neglected its role of upholding human rights in doing so.

Media insisted that the fact that South Africa had closed its door to the Dalai Lama, who, the world over, commanded immense respect, was a 'disgrace'. Politicians paid lip-service to morality, yet allowed short-sighted expediency to govern foreign policy. The explanation that the Dalai Lama would draw attention away from the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup was rejected and it was suggested that the ANC banned him because of all the Chinese money that went into the party's coffers.

Media analysts and commentators argued that by refusing to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama the government might have attempted to avoid a controversy, but instead created one.

From a constructivist point of view it is significant that the government/ANC justified the decision not to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama in terms of South Africa's best interest, but maintained that this did not compromise South Africa's stand on human rights. The government clearly does not want to seem to be abandoning the normative principles it purports to base its foreign policy on. In constructivist terms



this is important as the government does seem to want to be discarding its idealist principles to pursue materialistic interests, though reality might be pushing it towards taking decisions based on such interests. Furthermore, the government was moved from its initial justification that it did not want the Dalai Lama to draw attention away from the 2010 World Cup to arguing that the country's interests would be better served by making sure relations with China were not jeopardised.

Though the media could not shift the government from its position of not granting the Dalai Lama a visa with its own arguments or the arguments of other stakeholders quoted, the government was moved to explain the decision in different terms.

The next chapter discusses of the refusal of a visa to the Dalai Lama in 2011.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### NOT GRANTING A VISA TO THE DALAI LAMA IN 2011

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the issue of the South African government again not granting a visa to the Dalai Lama in 2011. This includes the media coverage of the voices of the South African and Chinese governments, the organisers of the planned visit, civil society, Tibetans, political parties, media itself, analysts and other commentators. The chapter also considers the IFP court challenge to the handling of the visa application, a survey of adult perceptions of the matter and a peace award to the Dalai Lama by the Mahatma Gandhi Development Trust.

The same media sources have been used throughout the study for synergy and consistency. For the same reason, the categories have, as far as possible, also remained the same. In some cases similar issues have not come up, or the same voices have not been active. In such instances differences will be notable.

#### 2. The 2011 invitation to the Dalai Lama

As early as the end of August 2011, the media started hinting that “another row” might be brewing in the light of an invitation by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu to the Dalai Lama to attend his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party in Cape Town on 7 October 2011 (*Sunday Independent*, 28/8/2011). The paper already suggested that the South African Government might be reluctant to grant the visa, for fear of offending the Chinese Government. Unnamed diplomatic sources were quoted saying the Dalai Lama had applied for a visa from the South African High Commission in New Delhi in June 2011 and his officials were told that political guidance was required from Pretoria on the application.

Ronnie Mamoepa, now spokesperson for the Department of Home Affairs led by former Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, said that the Dalai Lama had not applied for a visa in New Delhi. The Dalai Lama’s officials indicated they would again

apply in New Delhi. The 2009 statement by DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, saying the Dalai Lama was welcome to visit South Africa and describing what happened around the earlier decision as poor communication by the government, was quoted by the media (*iol*, 28/8/2011).

### **3. Media coverage of government's indecision in granting a visa to the Dalai Lama**

DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, admitted to having received the application saying it was under process (*Pretoria News*, 14/9/2011). This process would eventually just be delayed until it was too late for the Dalai Lama to consider attending the event anymore.

#### **3.1. South African Government sources**

Soon afterwards DIRCO said that a decision on the Dalai Lama's visa application would not be made public, as it would be communicated to the applicant (*Pretoria News*, 3/10/2011). DIRCO spokesperson Clayson Monyela declined to comment on suggestions from diplomats in New Delhi that the decision would be made by DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, herself. President Jacob Zuma indicated that he would have no hand in the decision: "I do not know what will be the final thing." It was noted that the *City Press* quoted an unnamed diplomatic source as saying it was 'unlikely' that the Dalai Lama would be granted a visa, because the government did not want to strain its ties with China (*The Star*, 4/10/2011).

As the government failed to provide an answer about the status of the visa, the Dalai Lama eventually cancelled his application (*The Star*, 5/10/2011). Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe reacted saying the government would have given the Dalai Lama a visa if he had not cancelled his application.

*The Star* (7/10/2011) reported that the "buck-passing" over the failed visa application continued as Home Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma denied that the issuing thereof had ever been the responsibility of her Department or that her Department had referred the Dalai Lama to DIRCO, saying it had always been a DIRCO matter.

Clayson Monyela, was also quoted saying DIRCO was processing the visa according to normal procedures, after it had been referred to them by Home Affairs. He indicated that spokesperson for Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe had earlier said a letter from the Desmond Tutu Peace Trust about the matter would be passed to the Home Affairs Minister, as the Deputy President did not “issue visas” (*The Star*, 7/10/2011).

### **3.2. Statements by organisers of planned visit**

The Desmond Tutu Peace Centre (DTPC),<sup>63</sup> aligned to the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation, and the Office of Tibet<sup>64</sup> issued a joint statement saying the government had been “profoundly disrespectful” towards the two Nobel Peace Laureates in its slow response to the application, adding that the government should have had the courage of its conviction to make a decision and that it would have been much more respectful to have received a negative answer than no answer at all (*Sunday Tribune*, 29/9/2011).

The organisers of the Dalai Lama’s planned visit to South Africa, the DTPC, urged Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe to support his statement that the government was ready to give him a visa (*The Mercury*, 6/10/2011). The DTPC sent an open letter to Motlanthe urging him to announce ‘unequivocally’ to the nation that a visa would be granted to the Dalai Lama and he was free to travel to South Africa immediately (*The Mercury*, 6/10/2011). The Centre also asked the Dalai Lama to consider travelling to South Africa after all. The Deputy President’s spokesperson said that he had not yet received the letter, but he would probably refer it to the Minister of Home Affairs “as the deputy president does not issue visas (*The Mercury*, 6/10/2011)”.

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<sup>63</sup> The DTPC is a resource for African and global peace movements, as well as people interested in contributing to a more equitable world order. The focus of its work is on peace, leadership training and sustainable development. The mission of the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation is to support and promote the creation of a culture of peace throughout the world (Tutu Foundation, undated).

<sup>64</sup> Offices of Tibet are the official agencies of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration based in Dharamshala, India (Central Tibetan Administration, 2012).

### 3.3. Statements by members of civil society

Following the decision of the Dalai Lama to withdraw his visa application once again, Archbishop Desmond Tutu had harsh words for the government, saying the current government was "disgraceful" and "worse than the apartheid government" (*The Star*, 5/10/2011). He added: "We were expecting we would get a government that was sensitive to the sentiments of our constitution".

The government also came under pressure from rights activists and Tripartite Alliance ally COSATU to allow the Dalai Lama into the country. COSATU said that even though China was South Africa's biggest trading partner, "we should not exchange our morality for dollars or yen" (*Pretoria News*, 4/10/2011). COSATU later condemned the government's 'clumsiness' in handling the application, using bureaucratic red tape to block it (*The Star*, 7/10/2011).

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) said that the government had an obligation to explain its actions and inactions in the application, voicing concern over unexplained delays (*Pretoria News*, 6/10/2011).<sup>65</sup> The Commission added that failure to provide reasons for its handling of the matter raised serious concerns about discriminatory applications of its power, a lack of commitment to transparency and enabling freedom of speech in the country (*Pretoria News*, 6/10/2011).

*The Mercury* (10/10/2011) reported that an empty chair, a burning candle and framed picture of the Dalai Lama were placed symbolically on the stage to depict his absence at the Durban City Hall during the Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Reconciliation and Peace ceremony. The award was created in memory of Mahatma Gandhi in 2003, to mark the centenary of the newspaper, the *Indian Opinion*, which he published in South Africa (Gandhi Development Trust, undated). Sonam Tenzing, who was representing the Dalai Lama in Africa, received the award on his behalf.

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<sup>65</sup> The SAHRC is the national institution established to support constitutional democracy. It is committed to promote respect for, observance of and protection of human rights for everyone without fear or favour (SAHRC, undated).

Ela Gandhi, Chairperson of the Gandhi Development Trust (GDT) <sup>66</sup> and Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter, said that the South African Government was deeply divided on the Dalai Lama matter, because there were those who wanted him to visit the country, although they feared that it would sour economic ties with the Chinese Government. However, there were also those in government who did not respect him and they were the ones controlling the situation (*The Mercury*, 10/10/2011).

Archbishop Tutu eventually asked the Dalai Lama to hold a public dialogue with him via a video link-up in what was described as "a second-best method of communicating" (*iol*, 5/10/2011). *iol* reported that the dialogue would be moderated by Mabel van Oranje, the Chief Executive Officer of The Elders, replacing the inaugural peace lecture the Dalai Lama had been scheduled to deliver at the University of the Western Cape, as part of Archbishop Tutu's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations.<sup>67</sup>

### **3.4. Statements by Tibetans and aligned organisations**

In a video message to universities and organisations that invited him, the Dalai Lama said he had no choice but to withdraw his application for a visa to visit South Africa (*iol*, 7/10/2011). He added that the government of South Africa felt that it would be an inconvenience and with no sign or answer about his visit/visa, there was no other alternative but to withdraw. The video was posted on the website of the University of the Witwatersrand ([www.wits.ac.za](http://www.wits.ac.za)) where he was due to speak.

The *Daily News* (13/10/2011) quoted Sonam Tenzing, representative of the Dalai Lama in South Africa, saying sovereign nations such as South Africa should never allow themselves to be intimidated or scared into making decisions. He added that South Africa had the right not to grant the Dalai Lama a visa, but failed to give a decision. He referred to the 2009 promise by DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, after the Dalai Lama had been denied a visa, that he would be free to

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<sup>66</sup> The GDT promotes a culture of non-violence through a wide range of initiatives and is also the custodian of the Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Reconciliation and Peace (GDT, undated).

<sup>67</sup> Chaired by Kofi Annan, The Elders is an independent group of global leaders who work together for peace and human rights. They were brought together in 2007 by Nelson Mandela, who is not an active member of the group, but remains an Honorary Elder (Elders, 2013).

visit South Africa in the future. Tenzing said he “carried the quote around in his pocket” (*Daily News*, 13/10/2011).

### **3.5. Statements by political parties**

DA foreign affairs spokesperson, Stevens Mokgalapa, said the DA supported the Dalai Lama’s application and saw him as a champion of human rights (*iol*, 29/8/2011). He said that one would have hoped that the government had learnt from their mistakes and would rethink. Opposition leader, the DA’s Helen Zille, said that South Africa should not be blackmailed into defying its Constitution (*Pretoria News*, 3/10/2011).

Reacting to the statement by Deputy President Motlanthe saying the government would have given the Dalai Lama a visa if he had not cancelled his application, COPE accused the government of “blatant dishonesty” (*Pretoria News*, 5/10/2011). They said that the government was set to trample underfoot the rights of citizens to freedom of association by picking and choosing who citizens might have as friends and associates, citing it as proof that the Constitution was in danger from the ruling party.

Further criticism came from the UDM saying it was a sad day in South Africa, where a nation, who knows the suffering of domination and cruelty, turned a blind eye to oppression elsewhere in the world (*Pretoria News*, 5/10/2011). They said that the government could deny outside pressure (from China) to deny the Dalai Lama access to South Africa “as much as they like – the impression they give is to the contrary”.

## **4. Media reaction**

From the outset some media corporations argued that South Africa would have to decide between its commitments to human rights and its desire not to offend its Chinese trading partners and cautioned that “our conscience could not be on sale” (*Pretoria News*, 30/8/2011).

The *Daily News* (25/9/2011) wanted to know why the government took almost a month to decide whether an international figure of peace should be allowed into the country. The paper asked whether the curious delay in granting the Dalai Lama a visa was “timidness” in the face of not wanting to anger China, or whether there was an unseen diplomatic tussle going on as China lobbied to forbid him access to South Africa. It referred to President Jacob Zuma’s 2009 explanation as ANC President, when the Dalai Lama was refused entry, saying the real problem then was that the visit would have coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of him fleeing into exile in India. It was noted that the government had then not ruled out a visit on another occasion and challenged the President to grant the visa (*Daily News*, 25/9/2011).

The *Pretoria News* (6/10/2011) quoted from DIRCO’s Draft White Paper on Foreign Policy published in 2011, saying that as a multifaceted, multicultural and multiracial country, South Africa embraced the concept of *ubuntu* as a way of defining who we were and how we related to others. The paper explained that according to DIRCO, the philosophy of *ubuntu* meant humanity and was reflected in the idea that we affirmed our humanity when we affirmed the humanity of others.

These words were scrutinised in the light of the handling of the visa application by the Dalai Lama, saying that South Africa had not chosen to affirm the humanity of the Tibetan people, presumably because Tibet had nothing to offer South Africa. It argued that China would not stop investing or trading with South Africa if we allowed the Dalai Lama to visit the country, but suggested that cash might have been secured for the ANC, which could be cut off without affecting the Chinese economy (*Pretoria News*, 6/10/2011).

The *Cape Times* (5/10/2011) commented that it seemed that all pretence at finding a balance between practical and principled considerations in South African foreign policy had been abandoned. The paper added that the South African Government’s disingenuous responses to questions on the Dalai Lama’s visa served as the “flimsiest of fig leaves”: the truth was that it chose not to offend China, which regarded the Dalai Lama as an enemy. This was beyond disappointing: it suggested a lack of moral fibre and ineptness in the foreign-policy arena. It quoted the Civil Society Coalition (CSC) campaigning for the Dalai Lama to be granted a visa, saying



South Africa's approach had been exposed as "unaccountable, secretive and disrespectful".<sup>68</sup>

The *Pretoria News* (6/10/2011) accused the government of pursuing a "cynical strategy" over the planned visit to South Africa by the Dalai Lama, by delaying to grant a visa for so long that he had to cancel his visit, thus allowing the government to claim it never came under any pressure from China to prevent him from visiting and would have given him a visa, had he not cancelled. The paper commented that this was very implausible.

According to the *Daily News* (6/10/2011) officials could finesse it as much as they would, but no amount of explanation or argument would counter the impression of a government that caved in to China's wishes and sacrificed its fierce independence in the process. The government sought to look unhurried and strong in considering the Tibetan spiritual leader's application for a visa. Instead it showed weakness and an inability to deal with tricky situations. It was distasteful to know from this episode that while the government had previously stood firm on principle, it had a price.

*The Star* (14/10/2011) described the way the government handled the Dalai Lama's planned visit to South Africa as "very clumsy". The paper referred to an explanation by President Jacob Zuma saying no one in government was saying why he did not get a visa, because it was a state secret. It stated that the Dalai Lama visa affair should therefore probably be regarded as a forerunner of how the PSIB would operate once it came into effect.

It indicated that the President implied that it was not in South Africa's national interest to disclose why the Dalai Lama was barred entry, but implicitly provided the answer saying that China had agreed to help South Africa add value to its raw materials, while South Africa fully backed the one-China policy, which addressed "the question of the territorial sovereignty of China as the sole and legitimate representative of all the people of that country" (*The Star*, 14/10/2011). Essentially it

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<sup>68</sup> The CSC consisted specifically of signatories committed to the course of letting the Dalai Lama into South Africa: Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum; Buddhist Practitioner Group RSA; SAFT; Ndifuna Ukwazi; South African Peace Alliance; Cape Town Interfaith Initiative; and Reclaim Camissa Trust (Ndifuna Ukwazi 2011).

said that allowing the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa would have jeopardised Beijing's undertaking to help South Africa economically.

Again in 2011, Zapiro (2011) provided the quintessential examples of cartooning on the matter (see Figure 6). He depicts the Dalai Lama visiting a guru sitting on a mountain displaying a sign that he could be asked anything (implying that he knows the answer to everything), except how to get a South African visa, if the Chinese do not wish to. A disappointed Dalai Lama is pictured looking on. It is thus again implied that China is prescribing to South Africa regarding its foreign-policy decisions.

**Figure 8: Dalai Lama requests visa to attend Desmond Tutu's 80th birthday celebrations**

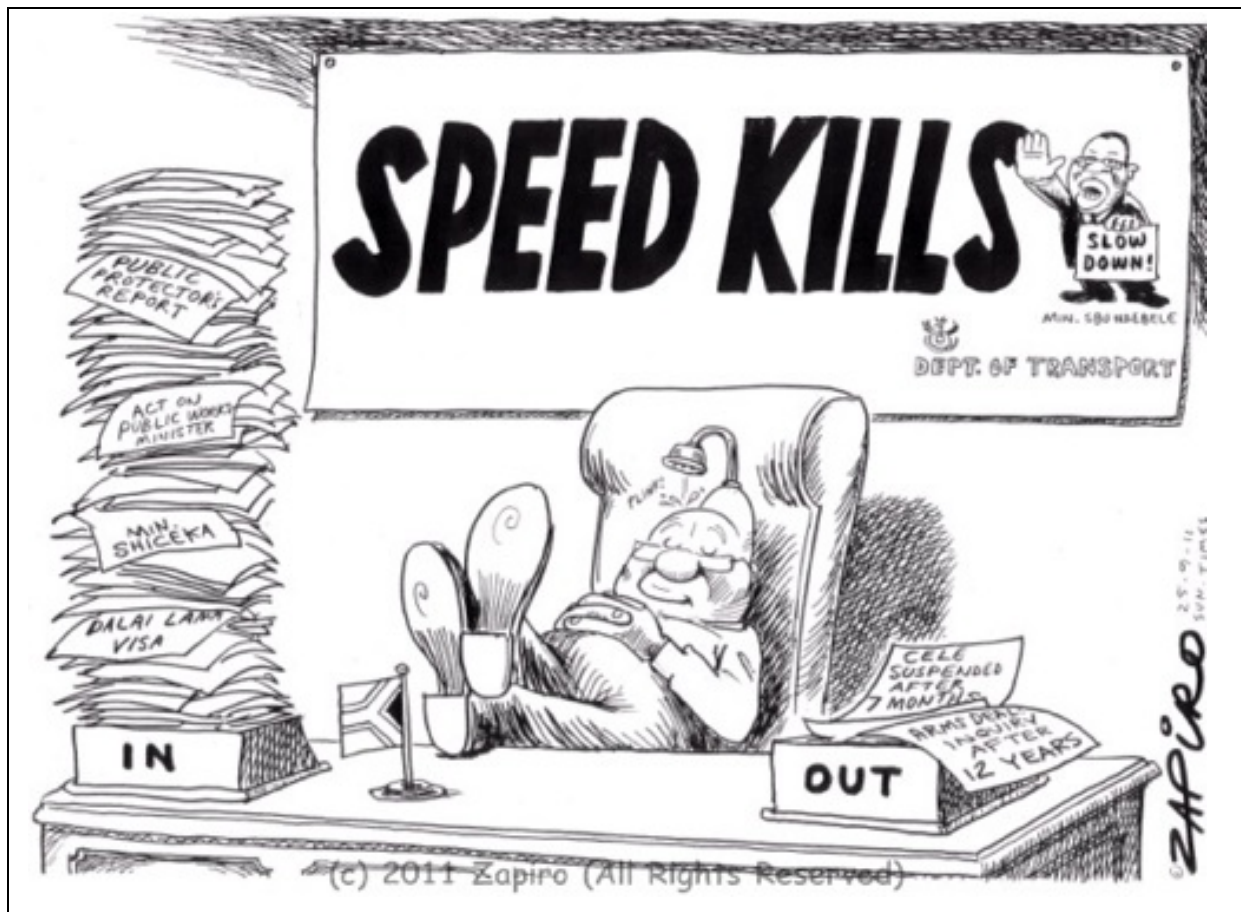


Source: *The Times* (22/9/2011)

A few days later, reference is made about the government's general lack of urgency in dealing with matters, also referring to the visa for the Dalai Lama (Zapiro, 2011) (see Figure 7). Sitting in front of a huge banner of the Department of Transport

warning that “Speed Kills” President Zuma is depicted sitting with his feet on his desk with an outbox showing only a few completed tasks and a hugely piled up inbox with the visa for the Dalai Lama visible at the bottom and thus clearly not a priority.

**Figure 9: Speed kills!**



Source: *Sunday Times* (25/9/2011)

## 5. Reaction of analysts and other commentators

Advocate Shami Kholong, a policy and risk analyst, wrote that the government’s ‘abortion’ of the Dalai Lama’s visit undermined a pillar of our constitution – the protection of human rights (*The Star*, 6/10/2011). He argued that the government’s indecision, incompetently tossing the application from one official to the other, was informed by a desire to please “new colonial master” China.

Solly Moeng, brand management consultant and social commentator, argued that the caring human rights-inspired and listening state that we thought we were nurturing was disappearing (*The Star*, 6/10/2011). He asked what price freedom-loving South Africans had to pay for deals struck between China and the South African political elite and what more China would make our ruling party succumb to.

## **6. Inkatha Freedom Party court challenge of the handling of the application**

It was later reported that the government was going to have to defend its handling of the Dalai Lama's visa application in court, as the IFP and COPE jointly lodged an application in the Western Cape High Court for a judicial review of how the matter was dealt with and for the government's action – or inaction – on the matter to be declared invalid (*The Star*, 18/10/2011).

As indicated before, the IFP also brought a court application in 2009 to have the government's decision not to grant the Dalai Lama a visa overturned. The Western Cape High Court threw out the case and the party then took it to the Constitutional Court, but it had not yet been heard. The new application would override the earlier one (*News24*, 18/10/2011). IFP MP Mario Oriani-Ambrosini said the government's conduct, which his party believed had led to an "effective denial" of the visa, was both illegal and unconstitutional. He explained that COPE leader, Mosiuoa Lekota, and IFP leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, felt that condemnation was not enough and there had to be redress.

Responding to the news that the IFP and COPE had lodged the legal challenge, the ANC slammed it as "astonishing silliness" and "political shallowness" (*The Star*, 19/10/2011). In response, the ANC said that the IFP and COPE were aware of the frivolity of their legal challenge and had embarked on this action regardless, for the sake of scoring a few political points and cheap publicity.

The ANC argued that the parties should have used parliamentary channels to hold the executive accountable for the decisions it took and said the notion that the government had violated the Constitution on the matter was "misguided" and could not be backed up by facts. The ANC added that such "spurious court actions" wasted

the courts' time. The IFP and COPE had also asked the court for a declaratory order which they hoped would pave the way for the Dalai Lama to receive a visa to attend a prayer meeting to be hosted by IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi in Durban in March 2012 (*The Star*, 19/10/2011).

A senior unnamed South African official later reportedly admitted that the Dalai Lama was prevented from attending Archbishop Tutu's 80th birthday celebrations to preserve vital trade ties with China (*iol*, 7/12/2011). Home Affairs Director-General Mkuseli Apleni said in a court affidavit quoted by *The Post* (7/12/2011) that his advice to his minister on the Tibetan spiritual leader's visa application was not to jeopardise ties with Beijing: "In giving advice ... regarding the application for a visa by the Dalai Lama, I had recourse to our trade relations with China."

The "backlash" for France and Australia "provided some learning to the government and the sensitivities that were attendant" to allowing the visit by the Dalai Lama, whom China considers "a dangerous separatist". Apleni insisted that the Home Affairs Minister had not acted "under the dictates of China," but "further took into account the fact that the Deputy President had just conducted a successful visit to China" (*iol*, 7/12/2011). The country also felt indebted to China for orchestrating South Africa's invitation to join BRICS.

Judge Elizabeth Baartman dismissed with costs the application brought by the IFP and COPE on whether it was constitutional for the government not to have granted a visa to the Dalai Lama (*iol*, 3/2/2012). The IFP said that the Western Cape High Court eventually dismissed the application on the Dalai Lama's visa as it was "too late to fix the past". IFP MP Mario Oriani-Ambrosini said the Court held that it could do nothing to fix what was done in the past if that was wrongful and that nothing had yet been done in respect of the future which could enable the court to fix it before it happened. IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi had invited the Dalai Lama to visit him in 2012.

Home Affairs Director-General Mkuseli Apleni said in an affidavit that the Dalai Lama had not submitted a visa application for a visit in 2012 and there was a possibility he would not be in a position to come to South Africa at that time: "This application and

the invitation of March 2012 are part of a political point-scoring exercise that constitutes a patent abuse of process by two seasoned politicians” (*iol*, 7/12/2011).

Oriani-Ambrosini said the legal routes had thus far proven unsuccessful which was a grave indictment on the entire system of government which had not yet been able to find a mechanism to correct what everyone perceived as an injustice, ranging from the churches to the trade unions to the common people who, in their overwhelming majority, declared themselves in favour of the Dalai Lama coming to South Africa. Oriani-Ambrosini said they might consider appealing the judgment (*iol*, 3/2/2012).

The IFP and COPE then filed an application for leave to appeal the judgment that dismissed a Dalai Lama visa suit (*Daily News*, 19/2/2012). IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi and COPE leader Mosiuoa Lekota believed that the Western Cape High Court erred in its judgment. According to papers filed, the Court had assumed that “the only constitutional rights at play were those of the Dalai Lama, when the application was centrally to vindicate the constitutional rights of the applicants and public” (*Daily News*, 19/2/2012).

The Court found that the issue was “moot” because the spiritual leader had withdrawn his visa and the event he had planned to attend had passed. The applicants argued that the application raised “important issues in the public interest” (*Daily News*, 19/2/2012).

The IFP and COPE were granted leave to appeal against the judgment dismissing their bid to have the government's refusal to grant the Dalai Lama a visa declared unlawful (*iol*, 19/3/2012). IFP spokesperson Mario Oriani-Ambrosini said the Western Cape High Court granted them leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeal to have the constitutionality of the government's “persistent denial” of a visa to the spiritual leader reviewed (*iol*, 19/3/2012). He said both parties were committed to pursue justice in this matter in which the government “acted against the will of the people” who, according to a survey, would want the Dalai Lama to come to South Africa (*iol*, 19/3/2012).

The Supreme Court of Appeal heard the application by the IFP and the COPE in November 2012 relating to whether it was unconstitutional and unlawful for Home Affairs to turn down a visa for the Dalai Lama (*iol*, 12/11/2012). *iol* (12/11/2012) quoted from an earlier IFP statement saying that because of its absurdity, the Dalai Lama case brought to the fore the extent to which the South African ruling class was beholden to the Chinese Government. The IFP also noted that the Government's lawyers had argued in their papers that the refusal to grant a visa was justified by the South African Government's intention not to displease the Chinese Government (*iol*, 12/11/2012).

As an unanimous judgement by a full bench found that former Home Affairs Minister Dlamini-Zuma had unreasonably delayed the decision on a visa application by the Dalai Lama, media predicted that the Dalai Lama could expect another invitation to come to South Africa (*Pretoria News*, 30/11/2012). Archbishop Tutu welcomed the ruling saying the finding reflected positively on the judiciary and the country (*Pretoria News*, 30/11/2012). IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi reacted asking why it was necessary to go all the way to one of the highest courts in the land to force the government to do what they should do. He wanted to know whether the government had “really lost the moral compass” (*Pretoria News*, 30/11/2012).

COPE leader Mosiuoa Lekota said the rule of law had been upheld confirming the rights of all citizens to freedom of association (*The Star*, 30/11/2012). The DA's Sandy Kalyan said South Africa's name would now be vindicated abroad.

The most comprehensive reaction from the government was noted in *The New Age* (30/11/2012) where Home Affairs spokesperson Ronnie Mamoepa was quoted saying Minister Naledi Pandor, successor to former Minister Dlamini-Zuma, would study the ruling and respond at a later stage. He was, however, quick to point out that the right of the government to issue visas had not been challenged.

Zapiro (2012) was swift to comment on this ruling with a cartoon (see Figure 8) depicting the Dalai Lama in a little car celebrating with a cheering Archbishop Tutu in the wings and former Minister Dlamini-Zuma as a dog ran over on the ground, quipping that his “karma” ran over the government's “dogma” - a clever wordplay

linking all the positive sentiments associated with the word karma to the Dalai Lama and all that is negative connected with dogma to the Minister.

**Figure 10: South African Supreme Court of Appeal declares blocking of the Dalai Lama's visa illegal**



Source: *Sunday Times* (2/12/2012)

## 7. Continued coverage after the issue disappeared from the headlines

### 7.1. Taylor Nelson Sofres Survey

Nearly half of urban adults believe that the Dalai Lama should be allowed to visit South Africa, a study by marketing company Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) claimed (*Times Live*, 6/12/2011). About 47 percent of adults polled in metropolitan areas at the end of October and early November 2012 felt he should be allowed to visit the country while a fifth (21 percent) disagreed. A third of metro adults gave a "do not know" response. Neil Higgs, the head of innovation at TNS South Africa, said that



amongst those giving an opinion there was a more than a two-to-one majority in favour of the Dalai Lama coming to South Africa. The study was conducted among 2 000 metro adults into attitudes to various social and political issues in late October and early November 2011. The study has a margin of error of less than 2,5 per cent. He explained that for such issues, there was much less variation by race group than usual, with whites and Indians being the most in favour.

People in Johannesburg and East London were the most positive. In Pretoria, however, 30 per cent felt he should not be allowed to visit (*Times Live*, 6/12/2011). Across the different religious groupings, 60 per cent of Muslims approved of the visit, 56 per cent of Hindus and 48 per cent of Christians. The most negative, at 37 percent, were those with no religion or those who were atheists or agnostics.

## **7.2. Peace award to Dalai Lama in India**

The Dalai Lama was given the Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Peace and Reconciliation in January 2012 (*The Mercury*, 28/12/2011). Media sources explained again that the exiled Tibetan leader could not travel to South Africa to receive the award in October 2011, because the government failed to give him a visa in time.

The Award was created in memory of Mahatma Gandhi by the Gandhi Development Trust in 2003. The Dalai Lama was chosen for being outspoken on a variety of issues. The Trust said the award was in recognition of his “humility and compassion” in raising issues of peace, conservation of the environment and human rights and in so doing constantly advocating non-violent means in true “Gandhian tradition” (*The Mercury*, 28/12/2011). The Gandhi Development Trust said Ela Gandhi, chairwoman of the trust and Mahatma Gandhi’s granddaughter, presented the award to the Dalai Lama at an international Buddhist gathering in India on 4 January 2012.

## **8. Conclusion**

While admitting that it received another application for a visa on invitation by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu for the Dalai Lama to attend his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party in 2011, DIRCO eventually just delayed the process until it was too late for the

Dalai Lama to consider attending the event anymore, never really actually taking a decision on the matter.

As the news of the 2011 invitation broke the media immediately suggested that the South African Government might again be reluctant to grant the visa, for fear of offending the Chinese Government. The 2009 statement by DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, saying the Dalai Lama was welcome to visit South Africa and describing what happened around the earlier decision as poor communication by the government, was quoted by the media and representatives of the Dalai Lama.

When the Dalai Lama eventually cancelled his application as the government never provided an answer about the status of the visa in time for the visit, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe reacted saying the government would have given him a visa if he had not cancelled. This statement was met with scepticism, it was described it as 'dishonest' and followed by requests for the government to go ahead and issue it.

The government was slated for not having "the courage of its conviction" to make a decision and reprimanded that it would have been much more respectful to give a negative answer than no answer at all. In the court application by the IFP and COPE the government's conduct was described as "effective denial" of the visa and seen as both illegal and unconstitutional. In its affidavit to court the government admitted that the Dalai Lama was prevented from visiting South Africa to preserve vital trade ties with China.

Criticism of the government's handling of the matter can be summarised as: not being sensitive to the sentiments of the constitution; exchanging morality for financial gain; a lack of commitment to transparency; allowing itself to be intimidated and even 'blackmailed' by China; not affirming its professed philosophy of *ubuntu* in its handling of the issue; and abandoning all pretence at finding a balance between practical and principled considerations in South African foreign policy.

The same arguments as in 2009 were made in criticism of the government, albeit termed differently. In essence, values (the Dalai seen as a champion of human

rights) are juxtaposed against interest (trade with China), which are in actual fact more painted as expedience.

Instead of acting from lessons learnt from 2009, as the government in fact hinted at the time, the government froze as the 2011 situation occurred and simply would not take a decision despite pressure from the media, opposition and civil society. The outcome was, however the same. The communication was probably even worse in that the overall strategy was apparently to avoid making any illuminating statements on the matter, corresponding with the approach to simply not take a decision.

The Dalai Lama was refused a visa by default and the criticism from all sides was phrased in the same terms and possibly even in sharper tones, accusing the government of putting interest before principle and bowing to pressure from China. The ruling by the Supreme Court of Appeal seemingly vindicated the sentiments of those criticising the government for its handling of the matter - especially its dithering in taking a decision.

The same constructivist principles were evident from an analysis of the 2011 Dalai Lama invitation, as were observed from the 2009 invitation. As the government deferred taking a decision it never really had to justify not granting a visa to the Dalai Lama. It only confessed that the Dalai Lama was prevented from visiting South Africa to preserve vital trade ties with China in an affidavit to court. Again the media, civil society and opposition political parties could not shift the government from its position of not granting the Dalai Lama a visa. It took a court case to get the government to state its reasons for not granting a visa.

The next chapter consists of an overall review and evaluation of this study.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Introduction

On the premise of the constructivist theory that international reality is socially constructed and its assumption of rationality linking interests, norms and identity the policy outcome of the case study, in view of the role played by the main stake holders, can be evaluated.

#### 2. Research question, analytical framework and theoretical approach of study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how media reporting framed foreign-policy issues, especially in the South African context. The primary aim was to illustrate the relationship between the media and a country's foreign policy, as conducted through public diplomacy, with specific reference to South Africa. The aim was not necessarily to prove or disprove the causal effect of media opinion on foreign policy, but to investigate how the media framed and analysed South African foreign policy and very specifically with regard to the matter investigated in the case study.

The research question posed was: How do the South African media frame foreign policy and how do administrators react to this actuality? The discourse between the South African media and government with regard to South Africa's foreign policy was illustrated in the matter of the South African Government not granting a visa to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama on two occasions, in 2009 and 2011, which served as a study case of the interchanges between the media and the government on the matter.

The study predominantly accepted the constructivist approach as theoretical foundation in analysing the relationship between government entities and the media. It is thus assumed that international reality is cognitively and "socially constructed" to

give meaning to the material world. In accordance with the constructive approach international politics is seen as being shaped by influential ideas, collective values, culture and social identities.

The method used in this study was to concentrate on a cautiously selected case study to examine the issue at hand. The case study selected offered an example where government decisions drew strong reaction from the media, there was significant media coverage from various angles to the story, there were statements from government in reaction to the publicity and there was a final conclusion to the matter to facilitate a complete analysis. There was thus enough evidence of an interaction between media coverage and government reaction to make the study viable.

Constructivism was selected as the main theoretical approach from which to conduct this study, as the dealings between the government and the media in the above study might lead to a newly constructed foreign-policy stance. Issues of values are also repeatedly highlighted in arguments in the disputes in both instances when the Dalai Lama's visa was not granted.

### **3. Findings of research**

As judged from the perspective given in initial media coverage of the Dalai Lama dispute in 2009, there was confusion about whether the government had in fact strictly taken a decision not to grant him a visa, and if so, the reasons therefore.

DFA denied that the government was blocking the invitation, insisting that no invitation had been extended to him and said South Africa made its own decisions based on the best interests of the country. However, the Chinese embassy in Pretoria admitted to appealing to the South African Government not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa, warning that it would harm bilateral relations. The embassy also explained that it was a particularly inopportune time for the Dalai Lama to be visiting South Africa as it was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what Tibetans regarded as China's military invasion of Tibet, but which the Chinese Government described as its liberation of Tibetans from "feudal serfdom". It is interesting to note the ANC's

mention of this in its defence of the decision and the DFA saying he was welcome to visit South Africa, but “not now”.

At the end of August 2011, the media started hinting that “another row” might be brewing in the light of the invitation by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. The 2009 statement by DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, saying the Dalai Lama was welcome to visit South Africa, was immediately recalled by the media. Home Affairs said that the Dalai Lama had not applied for a visa. However, Minister Nkoana-Mashabane admitted to having received the application saying it was under process.

This process would eventually just be delayed until it was too late for the Dalai Lama to consider attending the event anymore. As the government failed to provide an answer about the status of the visa, the Dalai Lama finally cancelled his application. Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe reacted saying the government would have given the Dalai Lama a visa if he had not cancelled his application.

### **3.1. Human rights and South African foreign policy**

The issue of human rights was prominent in the discourse between the government and the ANC on the one hand and the media, opposition political parties and civil society on the other. This was true both with regard to the 2009 and the 2011 invitations to the Dalai Lama. It was the predominant normative argument for those insisting that the Dalai Lama should have been allowed to visit the country. For the most part this was justified in terms of the Constitution. There were no attempts to justify this in terms of any international obligations the country might have.

From this research, it would seem as if ideas about values are mostly articulated by civil society leaders, political parties, academics and the media. Though the government would often express support for such ideas, even in policy documents, actual implementation does not necessarily follow in practice, as the harsh reality of interest may override its commitment to these values.

There was a strong voice criticising the government's 2009 decision, accusing it of abandoning human rights principles under pressure from China for the sake of trade benefits. The Dalai Lama said religious, social and political leaders had a responsibility to ensure that principles triumph over the obsession with money and power. Health Minister Barbara Hogan accused the government of being 'dismissive' of human rights.

Pro-Tibetans and opposition political parties applauded her "pro-human rights stance" in this matter, while the ANC urged her to resign if she believed the government was not committed to a culture of human rights. Constitutional Court Justice Kate O'Regan supported Minister Hogan's position saying it was a matter of 'dismay' that human rights did not seem to enter into the picture of some foreign affairs decisions. The DA said South Africa's foreign policy had lost its "moral compass". Media argued that the government believed that sticking to the spirit of the constitution and abiding by a commitment to international human rights was less in South Africa's interests than kowtowing to China.

Analysts explained that there was not necessarily a conflict between the pursuit of values and national interests; rather, values were often intangible forms of national interests. The constitution enjoined the government to pursue a balanced foreign policy, both value-based and interest-driven. Lack of consensus on what constituted the national interests bedevilled this balancing act.

Despite the very strong attack on the government's foreign-policy human rights credentials, government did very little to defend itself in this respect, but chose to make it a national interest issue. The ANC merely maintained that this decision did not compromise South Africa's stand on human rights.

The human rights issue came up again in 2011. Archbishop Tutu had harsh words for the government, saying it was 'disgraceful' and "worse than the apartheid government" as it was not sensitive to the sentiments of the Constitution. The government also came under pressure from COSATU who said that even though China was South Africa's biggest trading partner, "we should not exchange our morality for dollars or yen". The SAHRC said that the government's failure to provide

reasons for its handling of the matter raised serious concerns about discriminatory applications of its power, a lack of commitment to transparency and enabling freedom of speech in the country.

Opposition political parties accused the government of trampling underfoot the rights of citizens to freedom of association by picking and choosing who citizens might associate with, citing it as proof that the Constitution was in danger from the ruling party. Media argued that the way the government handled the matter suggested a lack of moral fibre and ineptness in the foreign-policy arena. Analysts concurred that the government's 'abortion' of the Dalai Lama's visit undermined a pillar of the constitution – the protection of human rights.

Again the government did not defend itself with regard to accusations on the issue of human rights, especially as it did not actually take a decision to refuse a visa. It was not very active in the media space during the 2011 dispute.

### **3.2. National interest versus pressure from China**

The government introduced the angle of "South Africa's interest" to the story in 2009. However, the media framed this as "bowing to pressure" from China. In 2011 the media predicted in advance that the government might not approve a visa to the Dalai Lama under Chinese pressure.

As the government admitted South Africa had refused the Dalai Lama a visa to attend the conference, they explained it was "not in South Africa's interest" for him to attend, as the focus would shift away from the 2010 World Cup. The media suggested that barring the Dalai Lama had everything to do with what decision-makers perceived to be "the best interests" of the country, rather than distraction.

In what the media interpreted as an indication that South Africa 'bowed' to pressure from China, the government explained that the decision was made so as not to jeopardise bilateral relations with China. Government insisted that it was not in South Africa's interest to invite the Dalai Lama, but rejected suggestions that it had denied him entry under pressure from China. TSSA described the government's 'scrambled'



excuses as 'ludicrous' and noted that they eventually admitted that the Dalai Lama was barred because of links with the Chinese.

The Dalai Lama also ascribed the decision by the government to refuse him a visa to Chinese diplomatic pressure, but said it 'backfired' by generating a storm of publicity. Former President FW de Klerk argued that South Africa was a sovereign constitutional democracy and should not allow other countries to dictate to it regarding who it should and should not admit to its territory – regardless of the power and influence of that country. The DA said a policy only needed to be measured by the results and the results of this decision clearly had to be against South Africa's best interests. The media linked the decision to China's establishment of an office in Johannesburg to disburse a R50 billion Africa investment fund. Analysts noted that China was demanding much more from African states in enforcing its "no-meet-the-Dalai Lama policy" than any Western nation would dare to.

Whereas the government apparently attempted to deflect the attention from the human rights allegations by offering an explanation for its decision in terms of national interest, it was interpreted as bowing to pressure from China.

In 2011, the representative of the Dalai Lama in South Africa said sovereign nations such as South Africa should never allow themselves to be intimidated into making decisions. Opposition political parties were quoted as saying that the government could deny outside pressure (from China) to deny the Dalai Lama access to South Africa as much as they like, the impression they gave was to the contrary.

The media also insisted that no amount of argument would counter the impression of a government that "caved in" to China's wishes and sacrificed its fierce independence in the process. Analysts argued that the government's indecision, incompetently tossing the application from one official to the other, was informed by a desire to please "new colonial master" China.

As in 2009, despite protestation from the government, the consensus was that the government gave in to pressure from China in not granting a visa to the Dalai Lama. It is noteworthy from the media set monitored that whereas the government did not

do much to contest the human rights angle to the story, it did, however, challenge the accusation that it took the decision under pressure from China.

### **3.3. How Government adapted its professed stance on granting a visa to the Dalai Lama over time**

The government's initial stance in 2009 was that no invitation had been extended to the Dalai Lama, but the insistence of the media and civil society forced them to acknowledge that a visa had in fact been denied to him, taking the line that government did not want the focus to be shifted from the 2010 World Cup.

There was confusion about whether the government had in fact strictly taken a decision not to grant the Dalai Lama a visa in 2009, and if so, the reasons therefore. The government denied that it was blocking the invitation, insisting that no invitation had been extended to him and said South Africa made its own decisions based on the best interests of the country.

As the media and conference organisers maintained that the Dalai Lama was invited to speak at the peace conference linked to the 2010 World Cup, the government admitted South Africa had refused the Dalai Lama a visa to attend the conference, saying it was not in South Africa's interest for him to attend, as the focus would shift away from the 2010 World Cup. TSSA described the reasons given by Government as 'ludicrous' and noted that they eventually admitted that the Dalai Lama was barred because of links with the Chinese. The government also said they did not want the event to be used as a platform to advance political causes.

Another shift in stance can be detected in that government finally indicated that they did not want to jeopardise relations with China. Though government denied the suggestion, media interpreted this as bowing to pressure from China.

The government explained that the decision was made not to jeopardise bilateral relations with China. They insisted that it was not in South Africa's interest to invite the Dalai Lama, but rejected suggestions that they had denied him entry under

pressure from China. It is thus clear that the government was repeatedly pushed to adapt its stated public policy messages with regard to this story.

As the prospect of another visit to South Africa by the Dalai Lama came up in 2011, the media and later the representative of the Dalai Lama in South Africa referred to the 2009 promise by the government that the Dalai Lama would be free to visit South Africa in the future. Media also referred to the 2009 ANC explanation that the real problem then was that the visit would have coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dalai Lama fleeing into exile in India and challenged the President to grant the visa. In not granting the 2011 visa, the government clearly had to backtrack on these stated positions.

As the 2011 visa story broke, Home Affairs denied that the Dalai Lama had applied for a visa. However, they soon afterwards admitted to having received the application, saying it was under process. This process would eventually just be delayed until it was too late for the Dalai Lama to consider attending the event anymore. As the government failed to provide an answer about the status of the visa, the Dalai Lama eventually cancelled his application. The Deputy President reacted saying the government would have given the Dalai Lama a visa if he had not cancelled his application. As the Deputy President was challenged to issue such a visa, his spokesperson merely stated that the Deputy President did not issue visas.

As in 2009, the government was repeatedly pressured into adapting its public stance on the matter, though it might not necessarily have come down to an actual policy adjustment.

### **3.4. Secrecy and foreign-policy decision-making**

With regard to the 2011 invitation to the Dalai Lama, media also related the decision to the proposed PSIB. Media referred to an explanation by President Jacob Zuma saying no one in government was saying why he did not get a visa, because it was a state secret. Media inferred that this should therefore probably be regarded as a forerunner of how the PSIB would operate once it came into effect.

From 2009 to 2011 media and analysts carried the argument that China would not stop investing or trading with South Africa if the Dalai Lama was allowed to visit the country. It was suggested that cash might have been secured for the ANC, which could be cut off without affecting the Chinese economy. The question was posed what price South Africans had to pay for deals struck between China and the South African political elite and what more China would make the ruling party succumb to.

### **3.5. Diplomacy and public diplomacy as instruments of foreign policy**

Whether traditional diplomacy was used in the matter of the non-issuing of visas to the Dalai Lama can only be inferred from the media coverage investigated for the case study. If there was any contact at diplomatic level between the countries involved, specifically South Africa and China, it was probably in the form of 'silent' diplomatic exchanges.

A media statement by the Chinese Embassy in Pretoria seems to imply that the Chinese Government had appealed to the South African Government not to issue such a visa in 2009. The South African Government seemed to want to refute such an interaction. Asked if South Africa had consulted China before taking the decision not to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama, the South African Government said it was a decision taken by the South African Government alone. Both countries did, however, clearly use public diplomacy to state their positions on the matter.

Regarding the 2009 visa dispute, the Chinese Embassy in Pretoria, using public diplomacy, admitted through the media to using traditional diplomacy in appealing to the South African Government not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa. They warned that it would harm bilateral relations and explained that it was a particularly inopportune time for the Dalai Lama to be visiting South Africa referring to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tibetan uprising.

The Chinese Embassy further indicated that for South Africa to allow the Dalai Lama into the country would greatly harm South African-Chinese relations. China also expressed appreciation for countries that 'rejected' the Dalai Lama, saying all countries should respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and "oppose

Tibetan independence". Issuing this statement to the media was most probably aimed at influencing the communication environment and through this, the South African Government's further handling of the matter.

The South African Government was probably more reluctant to use the public diplomacy instrument, and was most likely only forced into putting its position on the matter in the public domain by the outcry from media and civil society against its disinclination to issue a visa to the Dalai Lama. Government was mostly prompted for information on the situation, first insisting that no invitation had been extended to the Dalai Lama; then stating that it had decided it was not in South Africa's interest to invite the Dalai Lama, putting forward the argument that the Dalai Lama would divert the attention from the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the peace conference. Government eventually added that it was also faced with the choice of either allowing the Dalai Lama access or damaging relations with China, but rejected suggestions that it had denied him entry under pressure from China.

The progressive divulgence of the government's stance seems to prove that its hand might have been forced into acceding to handling this on a public diplomacy platform. It may much rather have used traditional 'silent' diplomacy techniques to address the issue, but the civil society and media sentiment on the matter was such that it had to state its case in public.

The same reluctance to divulge information was evident around the 2011 visa dispute. The government initially said that the Dalai Lama had not applied for a visa in New Delhi, but soon afterwards admitted to having received the application, saying it was under process. Government later said that a decision on the application would not be made public, as it would be communicated to the applicant. As the government failed to provide an answer about the status of the visa, the Dalai Lama eventually cancelled his application. Government then claimed it would have given the Dalai Lama a visa if he had not cancelled his application.

In 2011, the government was even more secretive about the process and eventually did not take a decision at all. The only statement on the issue really offered voluntarily was the unfortunate assertion that the visa would have been granted had

the Dalai Lama not cancelled his visit. It seems a valid observation from both events that government only went public on the matter under duress.

### **3.6. Link between foreign policy, diplomacy and public diplomacy**

There were assertions that government had even before the Dalai Lama's 2009 visa application accepted the principles of the one-China policy which addressed the question of the territorial sovereignty of China as the sole and legitimate representative of all the people of that country. The anniversary of the 1959 uprising and establishment of a Tibetan government-in-exile in India, as well as anti-Chinese riots in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 2008, also heightened sensitivities about the issue of China's occupation of Tibet. The ANC explained that the government was not saying that the Dalai Lama could not come to South Africa, but the month of March was serious between the Dalai Lama and China "in a very specific way" in view of the aforementioned history.

A statement by the Chinese Embassy in Pretoria implied activity at diplomatic level. It suggested that China had appealed to the South African Government not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa, as it would harm bilateral relations. They also explained that it was a particularly inopportune time for the Dalai Lama to be visiting South Africa. The Chinese Embassy was quoted as saying the Chinese Government had urged South Africa to ban the visit or risk damaging bilateral relations. The South African Government would not concede to such interaction.

Through the South African Government's public diplomacy communication it was argued that the government did not consider it in South Africa's interest for the Dalai Lama to attend the peace conference, as the focus would shift away from the 2010 World Cup. It was also conceded that a choice was made that South African interests would be better served if bilateral relations with China were not jeopardised.

As the new administration of President Jacob Zuma took over in mid-2009, it was reiterated that the country's foreign policy would remain unchanged, while specifically emphasising that the Dalai Lama was now free to visit. This statement was soon quoted by the media and supporters of the Dalai Lama regarding the 2011

invitation. However, the government would not be moved to react to this by word or deed.

No hint of diplomatic activity between South Africa and China is evident from communication from either country regarding the 2011 invitation to the Dalai Lama. Even regarding public diplomacy no communication from the Chinese Government was noticed in the media, and the South African Government was very reluctant to communicate on the matter as explained before, probably as a result of its unfortunate experience in 2009.

The South African Government even indicated that a decision on the Dalai Lama's visa application would not be made public, as it would be communicated to the applicant. As the government failed to provide an answer about the status of the visa, the Dalai Lama eventually cancelled his application. The government then made the opportunistic claim that it would have given the Dalai Lama a visa if he had not cancelled his application.

Though the new administration expressly stated as part of a foreign-policy statement in 2009 that the Dalai Lama would be welcome in South Africa in future, this would not materialise in 2011. When reminded of this, the government chose to ignore the remark. Whereas there was a hint of diplomatic activity between South African and China in 2009, none was admitted to in 2011. The 2009 experience also made both countries shy to handle the 2011 situation enthusiastically on the public diplomacy platform.

### **3.7. How the South African media frame foreign policy and how the government reacts to this actuality**

Media reacted with outrage to the government's handling of the Dalai Lama's visa applications both in 2009 and in 2011.

The media described the fact that South Africa had in 2009 closed its door to the Dalai Lama, who, the world over, commanded immense respect, as "a disgrace". South Africa's "spinelessness on the international stage" was portrayed as

'embarrassing'. It was argued that the world, like South Africans, had become accustomed to the government's "extraordinary hypocrisy" in foreign relations – politicians paid lip-service to principles, yet thoughtless pragmatism governed foreign policy.

Regarding the argument that his visit would divert attention from the focus of the conference he was invited to attend, to Tibet, it was suggested that government officials would have realised that the snub they were defending was creating more publicity than allowing the Dalai Lama to attend the conference. There were also suggestions that there would soon be proof enough that the ANC decided to ban the Dalai Lama because of all the Chinese money that went into the party's coffers. Media also argued that increasingly, the world could be divided into those countries that were succumbing to pressure from China and those that were not, with South Africa falling into the former category.

Media referred to the "one-China policy", that meant accepting that Taiwan was a renegade province of China that had to return to the mother country. China's apparent mounting sensitivity about the Dalai Lama implied that the policy had been secretly extended to Tibet. Media noted that China proffered that part of the respect they accorded to Africa was not to impose conditions on their aid, as Western nations did. The paradox was that by enforcing this "no-meet-the-Dalai Lama policy" at the risk of losing aid, Beijing was being far more conditional than any Western nation would dare to be.

In 2009 the government was keen to interact with the media in an attempt to put defensible arguments in the communication environment. Followed by an initial denial about extending an invitation to the Dalai Lama, the first firm line from the side of government was that it did not want the Dalai Lama in the country because he would "divert attention" from the country's 2010 FIFA World Cup celebrations. This was coupled by denials that South Africa had been pressured by the Chinese Government. As the media rejected this line of argument the government later conceded that it was also faced with the choice between allowing the Dalai Lama access and damaging relations with China.



If possible, the media was even harsher in its criticism of the government's handling of the 2011 invitation to the Dalai Lama. Media quoted statements from 2009 not ruling out future visits and challenged the government to grant the visa. DIRCO's Draft White Paper on Foreign Policy published in 2011 was quoted, which embraced the concept of *ubuntu*, concluding that South Africa had not chosen to affirm the humanity of the Tibetan people, presumably because Tibet had nothing to offer South Africa.

Media argued that China would not stop investing or trading with South Africa if South Africa allowed the Dalai Lama to visit the country, but suggested that cash might have been secured for the ANC, which could be cut off without affecting the Chinese economy. It was commented that it seemed that all pretence at finding a balance between practical and principled considerations in South African foreign policy had been abandoned.

South Africa's approach was described as "unaccountable, secretive and disrespectful". The government was accused of pursuing a "cynical strategy" over the planned visit to South Africa by the Dalai Lama, by delaying to grant a visa for so long that he had to cancel his visit, thus allowing the government to claim it never came under any pressure from China to prevent him from visiting and would have given him a visa, had he not cancelled. This was seen as 'implausible'.

Media suggested that no amount of explanation would counter the impression of a government that caved in to China's wishes and sacrificed its independence in the process. The government sought to look unhurried and strong in considering the Tibetan spiritual leader's application for a visa. Instead it showed weakness and an inability to deal with tricky situations. An explanation by the President saying no one in government was saying why he did not get a visa, because it was a "state secret", was seen as foreboding the Dalai Lama visa affair as a forerunner of how the PSIB would operate once it came into effect.

Government's approach to the media's reaction was very different in 2011 in that they tried more to evade than to engage with media about the issue. After an initial knee-jerk reaction, similar to 2009, saying that the Dalai Lama had not applied for a

visa, the government admitted to having received the application indicating it was under process. It was also pointed out that a decision on the Dalai Lama's visa application would not be made public, as it would be communicated to the applicant. As the government failed to provide an answer about the status of the visa, the Dalai Lama eventually cancelled his application.

The Deputy President opportunistically reacted by saying the government would have given the Dalai Lama a visa if he had not cancelled his application. It seems that the government did not want to repeat the 2009 public debate about the visa application in 2011. The avoidance tactic did little to arrest the fury expressed in the media about the way the government handled the situation again.

### **3.8. Civil society, foreign policy and diplomacy**

There are many actors involved in the foreign policy process: parliament, the media, civil society, political parties and the government (Van Nieukerk 96-99). Ideally, through the democratic process of consultation and seeking consensus, foreign policy can be improved. However, to be useful, these voices have to be taken seriously and their contribution included in the policy process. The challenge in foreign policy making is the synchronisation of all these actors in deciding and, ultimately, executing policy. While DIRCO carries the main responsibility for foreign policy decision-making and implementation, it is frequently in conflict with other actors. The dynamic apartheid civil society responded eagerly to the new government's pledge that policy making would be more participatory. However, little came of that undertaking. Civil society actors often experience aggravation in making their voices heard.

Despite the outcry by civil society, as reflected in the media, about the government twice not granting a visa to the Dalai Lama, government could not be moved from its position regarding this issue.

With regard to the 2009 disagreement, civil society argued that government's behaviour was disgraceful in line with the country's abysmal record at the UNSC. South Africa was shamelessly succumbing to Chinese pressure. Referring to

international media coverage of the matter, South Africa was described as 'dirt'. It was suggested that the decision to refuse the visa made a mockery of the whole purpose of the peace conference. South Africa was a sovereign constitutional democracy and should not allow other countries to dictate to it regarding who it should and should not admit to its territory – regardless of the power and influence of that country.

Civil society's comment on the 2011 dispute was that the current government was "disgraceful", "worse than the apartheid government" and insensitive to the sentiments of the constitution. Even though China was South Africa's biggest trading partner, "we should not exchange our morality for dollars or yen". The government's 'clumsiness' in handling the application, using bureaucratic red tape to block it was condemned. Government had an obligation to explain its actions and inactions in the application. Failure to provide reasons for its handling of the matter raised serious concerns about discriminatory applications of its power, a lack of commitment to transparency and enabling freedom of speech in the country.

Though they may have moved the government to rephrase the content of its public diplomacy messaging, none of these protestations managed to change government's foreign-policy decision that it was more important not to damage relations with China than to go the suggested route of granting a visa to the Dalai Lama, which was held up as the pro-human rights alternative.

### **3.9. South Africa's relations with China**

Much was said in the communication environment about the relationship between South African and China around both the 2009 and the 2011 invitations to the Dalai Lama.

With regard to the 2009 invitation, the March 2009 anniversary of the 1959 uprising and establishment of a Tibetan government-in-exile in India, as well as anti-Chinese riots in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 2008, heightened sensitivities about the issue of China's occupation of Tibet. The media linked the decision not to grant a visa to the

Dalai Lama to China's establishment of an office in Johannesburg to disburse a R50 billion Africa investment fund.

The South African Government insisted that it had not been pressured by China, but later conceded that if you have to compare allowing the Dalai Lama to attend a peace conference, to economic concerns and bilateral relations, interests would be better served by making sure relations with China were not jeopardised.

The Chinese Embassy in Pretoria admitted to appealing to the South African Government not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa as it would harm bilateral relations and also explained it was a particularly inopportune time for the Dalai Lama to be visiting South Africa. The Dalai Lama, SAFT and the media said the incident was as a result of pressure from the Chinese Government, or anxiety not to compromise relations with China.

Media also suspected that the ANC decided to ban him because of "all the Chinese money" that went into the party's coffers. FOCAC participants signed on to the one-China policy, which meant accepting that Taiwan was a renegade province of China that must eventually return to the mother country. Beijing's apparent growing sensitivity about the Dalai Lama implied that the policy had now been covertly extended to Tibet. China believed that part of the respect they accorded to Africa was not to impose conditions on their aid, as Western nations did. The irony was that by enforcing this "no-meet-the-Dalai Lama policy" at the risk of losing aid, Beijing was being more conditional than any Western nation would dare to be.

The new 2009 administration said that China was an important trade partner and South Africa may look at expanding IBSA to include China. South Africa believed in the one-China policy and had even broken off relations with Taiwan in observance of this.

The government avoided being drawn into a debate about the 2011 invitation to the Dalai Lama, but more or less the same arguments about the role of relations with China ensued in the public space. From the outset, the media and COSATU argued that South Africa would have to decide between its commitments to human rights

and its desire not to offend its Chinese trading partners and cautioned that “our conscience could not be on sale”.

The question was posed as to whether the delay in granting the Dalai Lama a visa was ‘timidness’ in the face of not wanting to anger China, or whether there was an unseen diplomatic tussle going on as China lobbied to forbid him access to South Africa.

The media again suggested that China would not stop investing or trading with South Africa if we allowed the Dalai Lama to visit the country, but inferred that cash might have been secured for the ANC, which could be cut off without affecting the Chinese economy. The media accused the government of pursuing a “cynical strategy” over the planned visit to South Africa by the Dalai Lama, by delaying to grant a visa for so long that he had to cancel his visit. This would allow the government to claim it never came under pressure from China to prevent him from visiting and would have given him a visa, had he not cancelled – which was implausible.

The media said that no amount of explanation or argument would counter the impression of a government that caved in to China’s wishes and sacrificed its independence in the process. The President said it was not in South Africa’s national interest to disclose why the Dalai Lama was barred entry, but explained China had agreed to help South Africa add value to its raw materials, while South Africa fully backed the one-China policy. The media argued that essentially it said that allowing the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa would have jeopardised Beijing’s undertaking to help South Africa economically. The government also explained that they had not acted under the dictates of China, but the country felt indebted to China for orchestrating South Africa's invitation to join BRICS.

In essence the 2009 and 2011 arguments were the same, most notably the assertion from the media that the government gave in to pressure from China not to allow the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa, while the government insisted that they did not act under strain from China, but merely in the best interest of South Africa.

### **3.10. The position of the Dalai Lama**

Though he was the person at the centre of the disputes not to grant him visas to visit South Africa in 2009 and 2011, the Dalai Lama was strangely enough not the focus of media coverage on the issue.

The 2009 invitation to the Dalai Lama was in his capacity as Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. One of the major arguments against granting him a visa was in view of the anniversary of him establishing a Tibetan government-in-exile in India. The Dalai Lama argued that the South African Government's decision was a manifestation of a lack of understanding and mutual respect.

The TSSA pictured the Dalai Lama as a man of peace, internationally recognised for his selfless efforts to promote harmony, was prevented by South Africa from attending a peace conference here. Media also depicted him as someone who, the world over, commanded immense respect. In this "hugely embarrassing" permit refusal decision, South Africa helped the Chinese Government avoid having to engage with the Dalai Lama to reach a workable solution around the issue of Tibetan autonomy.

The new administration reiterated later in 2009 that the Dalai Lama was now free to visit.

The 2011 invitation to attend the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party of Archbishop Desmond Tutu led to the media immediately quoting the 2009 statement by the government saying the Dalai Lama was welcome to visit South Africa. Several stakeholders said the government had been disrespectful towards the two Nobel Peace Laureates in its slow response to the application, adding that the government should have had the courage of its conviction to make a decision and that it would have been much more respectful to have received a negative answer than no answer at all. Opposition political parties supported the Dalai Lama's application and saw him as a champion of human rights.

In arguments in both 2009 and 2011, the Dalai Lama was held up as a man of peace; internationally recognised for his selfless efforts to promote harmony;

someone who, the world over, commanded immense respect; and a champion of human rights. This contributed to the outrage at the refusal to grant him a visa. On the side of the argument not to grant him a visa was his role in establishing a Tibetan government-in-exile in India and how this offended the Chinese Government in its pursuit of the one-China policy.

### **3.11. Lessons learned from 2009 to 2011**

In 2009, as well as in 2011, there were public debates through the media about the way the government handled the invitations to the Dalai Lama and the related applications for visas for him.

As indicated before, there was initially uncertainty about whether the government had in fact taken a decision not to grant the Dalai Lama a visa in 2009, and if so, what were the grounds for this decision. The DFA denied that the government was obstructing the invitation, maintaining that no invitation had been extended to him. As the media and conference organisers insisted that the Dalai Lama was invited to speak at the peace conference linked to the 2010 World Cup, The Presidency acknowledged South Africa had refused the Dalai Lama a visa to attend the conference, saying it was not in South Africa's interest for him to attend.

The new administration of President Jacob Zuma emphasised that the Dalai Lama was now free to visit. However, apparently not learning much from the consequences of the initial denial about the 2009 visa application, the government followed much the same route when the news about the 2011 invitation broke in the media.

Unnamed diplomatic sources were quoted saying the Dalai Lama had applied for a visa from the South African High Commission in New Delhi in June 2011, and his officials were told that “political guidance” was required from Pretoria on the application. However, Home Affairs said he had not applied for a visa in New Delhi. DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, soon afterward admitted to having received the application saying it was under process. This process would eventually just be delayed until it was too late for the Dalai Lama to attend the event.

As the government failed to provide an answer about the status of the visa, the Dalai Lama eventually cancelled his application. Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe reacted by saying the government would have given the Dalai Lama a visa if he had not cancelled his application. When the Deputy President was challenged to grant such a visa, his spokesperson had to explain that the Deputy President did not issue visas.

The government faced an outcry from all fronts for its handling of particularly the 2011 invitation.

The only reaction from the South African Government to lessons learned from the 2009 chorus of disapproval against not granting a visa to the Dalai Lama, was to avoid not actively taking a decision in 2011. The reaction to this way out may have been even more negative.

The DTTC and the Office of Tibet said the government had been “profoundly disrespectful” towards the two Nobel Peace Laureates in its slow response to the application. They said the government should have had the courage of its conviction to make a decision. It would have been much more respectful to have received a negative answer than no answer at all.

Opposition political parties accused the government of “blatant dishonesty”. With the 2011 application opposition political parties argued that the government should have learnt from their mistakes. COSATU condemned the government’s ‘clumsiness’ in handling the application, using bureaucratic red tape to block it. The SAHRC said the government had an obligation to explain its actions and inactions in the application, voicing concern over unexplained delays.

The media commented that the government sought to look unhurried and strong in considering the Dalai Lama’s application for a visa. Instead it showed weakness and an inability to deal with tricky situations. It accused the government of pursuing a “cynical strategy” by delaying to grant a visa for so long that the Dalai Lama had to cancel his visit. This allowed the government to claim it never came under any



pressure from China to refuse the Dalai Lama a visa, and would have given him a visa had he not cancelled. This was described as “very implausible”.

In a case brought by the IFP and COPE the Supreme Court of Appeal found that former Home Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma had unreasonably delayed the 2011 decision on a visa application by the Dalai Lama. Home Affairs pointed out that the right of the government to issue visas had not been challenged.

The government thus repeated the mistake of 2009 denying receiving a visa application in 2011. It again had to admit that it was processing it, but this time avoided taking a decision by delaying to give an answer until it was too late for the Dalai Lama to attend the event he was invited to. This strategy was highly criticised as showing weakness and failure to deal with the situation.

## **5. Contribution of study**

Media mostly framed the foreign-policy issue studied in normative terms. They did not buy into the national interest angle put forward by the government, but reframed it as bowing to pressure from China.

The study found that the South African Government does take note of media coverage in conducting public diplomacy. Even if opinions expressed through the media do not actually change foreign policy, they do influence the content of public diplomacy messaging.

The way the South African government conducts public diplomacy is probably closely linked to its paranoia about how the media reports about it. Instead of trying to foster better relations with the media and using the media as a partner to bring its policy messages to its target audiences, government seems to be convinced that the media is its mortal enemy.

In 2012 then GCIS CEO Jimmy Manyi told the media about the Rapid Response System at GCIS, which is in essence merely a government reputation management tool. However, Mr Manyi told the media that “we sit and we check who is saying what

about government” and “some of the responses will mean people must apologise to GCIS or to government” and “we will have to educate the media about issues it in fact got wrong” (SABC online 2012). This led to the media dubbing this a “Big Brother monitoring tool”.

If there was more trust between the government and the media, the government could be more enthusiastic and open in the way it conducted public diplomacy. There would not be the perception that the government was mostly pushed towards the public diplomacy route rather than opting for it by choice.

Media and those quoted in the media could not sway the government to change its position on granting a visa to the Dalai Lama, but the government was pushed to review the content of its messages or its approach to the issue as indicated above. With regard to the actors in the foreign policy landscape, the media, civil society and political parties were particularly active in the Dalai Lama visa dispute. The involvement of the government in the discourse was more under duress than by choice. Civil society and opposition political parties were very vocal in supporting the case of allowing the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa. They had an extremely willing partner in the media, which carried their messages and supported these with opinion of their own in editorials. With government adamant that this was not in the best interest of the country, despite the strong united moral stand of all the other actors, they could not move the government to their position. This is typical of the limited influence other actors have on foreign policy in general.

After the 2009 invitation it seemed as if government may have been convinced to review the policy, with an undertaking that the Dalai Lama would be welcome in future. However, when faced with the 2011 invitation, it was clear that this was not the case.

The study also makes it clear that the priorities of human rights and national interests cannot always be pursued in concord. This sentiment was expressed by analysts, but the government did not see its way clear to articulate this angle in public communication.

## **6. Recommendations for future research**

Similar studies could be pursued using media content analysis. Media content analysis seeks to describe with optimum objectivity, precision and generality, what is said on a given subject in or by the media. It includes an analysis of placement of stories, tone, prominence, messages, advocates, critics and journalists to track how media outlets cover various subjects, issues or themes. This, being more of a quantitative approach, could bring an entirely new perspective to the study.

Another aspect that may need further investigation is the role of social media in public diplomacy in South Africa. International scholars have given significant attention to this aspect in recent years, but little has been written from a South African perspective.

Scholars from the fields of communication, international relations and diplomatic studies should be encouraged to conduct multidisciplinary research on these topics to investigate how each of these disciplines complement each other.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study investigated how media reporting framed foreign policy in the South African context. The discourse between the South African media and government regarding South Africa's foreign policy was demonstrated in the matter of the South African Government not granting a visa to the Dalai Lama in 2009 and 2011 respectively. This study, based on the premise of the constructivist theory that international reality is socially constructed, considered how foreign policy was influenced by this process, if at all.

In the media monitored for this study, it was seen that media, opposition parties and civil society found the government lacking in upholding the constitutional value of human rights in both instances where the Dalai Lama was invited. The government also did not convincingly defend itself against this accusation.

The government explained its decision not to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama, both in 2009 and in 2011, in terms of “South Africa’s best interest”. However, media, opposition parties and civil society saw this as an admission to “bowing to pressure” from China.

From a constructivist point of view the government was repeatedly pushed to adapt its stated public policy messages regarding this story, though it might not necessarily have come down to an actual policy adjustment. Both in 2009 and in 2011, the government’s initial stance was that no invitation had been extended to the Dalai Lama; however, the insistence of the media and civil society forced the government to acknowledge that an application had at least been received.

In 2009 the government first insisted that it did not want to grant the Dalai Lama a visa as his visit would divert attention from the 2010 World Cup. They then had to acknowledge that they did not want to jeopardise relations with China. When the Deputy President said the government would have given the Dalai Lama his 2011 visa if he had not cancelled his application, his spokesperson had to explain that the Deputy President did not issue visas, when the Deputy President was challenged to grant such a visa.

The biggest change in government approach may lie in the government choosing not to take a decision at all regarding the 2011 application, apparently to avoid a repeat of the media and public outcry encountered in 2009.

Furthermore, during and in the aftermath of the 2009 incident the government indicated that the Dalai Lama would be free to visit in future. But by not taking a decision on issuing a visa in 2011, the government had to backtrack on these utterances.

The media mostly framed the foreign-policy issue studied in normative terms. They did not buy in to the national-interest angle put forward by the government, but reframed it as bowing to pressure from China.

The government's insistence not to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama triggered enormous attention. This cannot be explained in terms of interest, as South Africa has a minute Buddhist community and there is little to no trade relations with Tibet. It can only be understood in normative terms. What did trigger that much awareness was the stature of the man himself as a Nobel Peace Laureate; his invitation to be present at a peace conference with other Nobel Peace Laureates (including all surviving South African winners); and to attend the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations one of them. All those involved were much-admired men of peace. Especially the South African Laureates have a hugely sentimental following among their compatriots and are seen as men of vision who had saved their country from the perils of civil war and put it on a road to peace. This was juxtaposed against the poor human rights record of China to whose demands the government was seen to be bowing in denying the Dalai Lama entry to South Africa. The government was therefore perceived to be slighting men of peace in an attempt to pacify an ally with a very poor record in that regard.

The study found that the government does take note of media coverage in conducting public diplomacy. Even if opinion expressed through the media does not actually change foreign policy, it does influence the content of public diplomacy messaging.

The media and those quoted in the media could not sway the government to change its position on granting a visa to the Dalai Lama, but the government was pushed to review the content of its messages or its approach to the issue as indicated.

After the 2009 invitation it even seemed as if government might have been convinced to review the policy, with an undertaking that the Dalai Lama would be welcome in future. However, when faced with the 2011 invitation, it was clear that this was not the case.

The study also found that the priorities of human rights and national interests could not always be pursued in concord. This sentiment was expressed by analysts, but the government did not see its way clear to articulate this angle in public communication.

The foremost comment about the findings of this study must be that the media and the voices quoted in media sources might have to some degree adjusted the way the South African Government packaged its messages on the matter of issuing a visa to the Dalai Lama, but they could not manage to alter the government's policy stance on the matter. This despite an indication in 2009 from the government that the Dalai Lama would in future be welcome in the country.

These findings have certain implications for the nature of foreign policy making processes in South Africa. It is clear that though an issue such as the visa application by the Dalai Lama is taken up by civil society and driven by notable media coverage, with very strong opinion expressed, the government is not easily convinced to adopt a different stance. Presumably international stakeholders such as BRICS partner China has a much stronger influence than local media and civil society groups, as they exert much more influence. This determines the limitation of public diplomacy in the South African context. This is also tied up with the huge majority enjoyed by the ruling party and the sense that its voters would continue supporting them despite dissatisfaction and even open dissent within its own ranks.

Every time the government is faced with the prospect of a visit by the Dalai Lama it has gone the way of denying receiving a visa application; then having to acknowledge that an application was received; indicating that it was under consideration (creating expectations that it might be approved); and finally either denying him a visa or not taking a decision at all (waiting so long to give an answer that a visit to attend the event the visa was intended for, was no longer feasible). Government might be under the impression that this procedure is convincing in creating the notion that the Dalai Lama's visa application is handled like any other, thereby avoiding the impression that it was acting under pressure from China in denying him access. However, it creates ample opportunity for those in favour of a visit by the Dalai Lama to agitate around the matter and question the government's motives should a visa not be granted.

In dealing with any potential future Dalai Lama visa applications, the government has to adjust the way it conducts public diplomacy around this issue. It should take a unyielding decision either for or against granting a visa and firmly communicate around this decision. A decision in favour of a visa would be positively received by the media, civil society and the wider international audience. It would, however, require the government to be convinced that China would see the mutual benefit of maintaining trade and other relations with the country, despite such a decision. A decision against would obviously set the government on a collision course with media and civil society again, but would give it a sense of security in as far as relations with China are concerned.

Either way, the damaging rollercoaster ride of creating expectations and demands around access for the Dalai Lama every time there is an invitation extended to him to visit the country could be avoided.

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