

**REPORT: IRPS CLUSTER REVIEW**  
**INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL DIALOGUE (IGD)**  
**2003**

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## SECTION ONE

### 1. Purpose of the study

The Policy Unit in The Presidency is conducting a ten-year review of government business. The main aim of the review is to assess the outcome and impact of policies, programmes and projects as implemented by government since 1994. The Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) has been tasked with assisting the process by conducting a review of the government's foreign policy over the past ten years.

The main objective of the IGD's review exercise was the development and population of ten impact indicators to measure government's progress in achieving the priorities of the IRPS cluster.

### 2. Methodology

As a first step, the IGD Director produced an assessment of South Africa's foreign policy. The Institute then undertook and delivered an analysis of the performance of the Department of Foreign Affairs' training programmes. Third, a focus group meeting was held in May 2003 at which a range of academics reflected on South Africa's foreign policy and discussed the development of indicators. These inputs, together with additional information on IRPS priorities, were used to develop aspects of this report.

### 3. Outcomes

Based on the inputs from the participants at the focus group meeting as well as a literature scan, this report offers

- a general assessment of government's foreign policy performance;
- a list of nine key shortcomings ('anomalies');
- an 'operational matrix' that allows one to list and assess government's key foreign policy objectives over time.

However, due to a number of logistical difficulties the matrix is incomplete and it is hereby **recommended** that the report be subjected to a further critical scrutiny with a select audience of informed analysts – ideally three people, in the fields of peace and security studies, economic diplomacy, and foreign policy.

Such an intervention can take the form of another focus group meeting or individual engagements, and should pay attention to the focus group meeting's third conclusion, namely "...evaluation of policy performance to include a mix of cost/benefit analysis (both financially and politically), the measure of efficiency, whether procedure was followed, and the extent of inter-departmental or –agency cooperation (given that the IRPS cluster is made up of 19 departments/agencies, of which 6 are core)".

## SECTION TWO

### 4. Main conclusions

#### 4.1 Process

The process followed in order to arrive at a review of past performance as well as the identification of indicators to assist with forward planning was not ideal. The IGD did make basic information available to focus group participants but on reflection should perhaps have distributed additional background material. It experienced difficulty in obtaining official material that indicated South Africa's foreign policy objectives over time. This material was eventually made available, after the focus group meeting. This report is partly based on those information. Due to time pressure it was not possible to subject this report to another round of comments by the focus group academics. However, as the next section shows, valuable comments were made and in-depth assessments were arrived at to enable this report to be completed and delivered.

#### 4.2 Content

Based on the input from focus group participants, and the general literature consulted, the report comes to the following conclusions.

Whether foreign policy in its broadest sense, or its peace, security or trade dimensions, South Africa had performed extremely well in the first years of democratic governance. In particular, the key objective of normalising the country's relations with the international community (including individual countries, multilateral institutions and international agreements) was achieved. "Re-entry" did not prove to be difficult – if anything, the new government had to adopt a cautious approach to global affairs, given expectations that it would pay attention to many of the overwhelming number of issues on the diplomatic agenda.

It is clear that in time, government had settled in and became more confident of its foreign policy orientation and identity. Many analysts see South Africa's role as a 'regional leader' as uncontested; its role as 'African leader' as controversial; and its role as 'a leader of the South' as ambitious.

The danger of **over-extending** itself became more pronounced, particularly with president Mbeki taking the lead in 1998. For example, in light of the enormity of the task at hand, some analysts question whether government's Africa policy (philosophically, based on the African Renaissance and practically, on the Nepad programme) is sustainable. Playing an active continental and international role tended to stretch the capacity of the DFA to the limit – a difficult issue to manage, given the domestic requirement for civil service transformation.

In response government streamlined – some say concentrated – foreign policy decision-making via the integrated system of governance and re-shaped Presidency. There is general recognition of the benefits of this system, as well as some criticism. One is that the cluster approach has not yet proven itself; or that DFA and parliament

is being marginalised in the process; or that it tends to stifle the potential contribution and voice of civil society in international affairs.

Finally, focus group participants identified eleven **foreign policy ‘anomalies’** – a useful checklist of current and future challenges for government’s foreign policy decisionmakers. They are:

#### **Relations with Africa:**

- Although a successful mediator in southern and central Africa, it has done so to the exclusion of other conflict complexes on the continent
- The need to come to terms with South Africa’s regional hegemonic role – the absence of which leads to a failure to exercise power more forcefully in the quest for stability and democracy
- Lack of means to do all it wants (not that this is entirely South Africa’s doing – one can argue that the North has not delivered on Nepad)
- Inability to further develop and consolidate people-to-people relations
- The impression that South Africa’s diplomatic presence in Africa is not adequate in qualitative terms (its missions are the least transformed and equipped) or quantitative terms (how many missions in the 53 countries of Africa?)

#### **Multilateral relations:**

- The discrepancy between South Africa’s ideational power (the power of ideas) and its material (and commercial) power. In the view of the group the reason South Africa was pushing the former was because it couldn’t affect much change at a structural level (failure to effect reform of the UN and International Financial Institutions) or even the democratisation of some of the institutions of the South

#### **Domestic:**

- Despite the rhetoric, the reality that its policies result in wealth creation for the few and very little poverty alleviation
- The Smuts syndrome: the president spending too much time abroad
- The reluctance to fully democratise foreign policy making processes
- The uneven process of departmental restructuring and ineffectual training of diplomats

#### **General:**

- The tendency to over-extend itself, “doing too much” with too little resources, giving rise to a situation where it has been unable to prioritise and choose among many objectives (550 objectives in the 2002/3 IRPS cluster!)

### 4.3 IRPS cluster review: Operational matrix

The matrix that flowed from the focus group allows one to list and assess government's key foreign policy objectives of the last few years.

Key policy objectives	Policy activities	Impact	Lessons learnt
1 Normalise multilateral relations	Joined or normalised relations with all significant regional, continental and international multilateral institutions	<b>SA plays a constructive multilateral global role</b> in the UN, IMF and WB, NAM, Commonwealth, AU, SADC	SA has successfully rejoined the international community and is actively promoting its own interests; however, unable to bridge the S-N gap and unable to mobilise around financial issues; time for a G8 of the South? Its diplomats also need to be made more professional
2 Normalise bilateral relations	Renewed or initiated bilateral relations with Africa, the South and strengthened relations with the N	<b>SA is maintaining positive relations with most countries</b>	Although successful many argue for SA to increase its presence in Africa
3 Conduct peacekeeping activities	Undertook or participated in PK missions in DRC, Burundi, Ethiopia/Eritrea	<b>Our involvement in PK activities assisted with the creation of space for negotiations</b> in DRC, Burundi; stability in Ethiopia/Eritrea	PK in support of negotiations processes positive <b>but</b> overall outcome i.t.o. peace still unclear; Peacekeeping should not be confused with peace enforcement (Burundi); there is a urgent need for training, funding and proceeding with establishing Africa Standby Arrangements.
4 Offer to facilitate and mediate in peace negotiations in Africa	Facilitated and mediated in peace negotiations in Lesotho, DRC, Burundi, Comores, Zimbabwe	<b>Mediation and facilitation impacts are country- and context-specific.</b> Lesotho: negotiations broke down but military intervention restored order DRC: various peace agreements signed and transitional government established Burundi: ceasefire and transition to Hutu president Comores: ongoing Zimbabwe: ongoing	Without sticks the carrot often isn't attractive enough – that is, SA must find a way to force participants in peace negotiations to abide by majority decisions and must have access to robust forces on standby to intervene where necessary; without grassroots support, peace deals do not last very long
5 Assist with conflict resolution elsewhere	Hosted talks, seminars, sending of envoys & mediators to Iraq, Palestine, N-Ireland, E-Timor	<b>Promotion of dialogue; offering alternative perspectives (from the South); acted as honest broker</b>	SA plays a constructive role in brokering peace deals elsewhere but at the risk of overstressing its diplomats and other personnel

<b>Key policy objectives</b>	<b>Policy activities</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Lessons learnt</b>
6 Support the global 'campaign against terrorism'	Cooperate with the US in sharing information; promote the adoption by the (O)AU of an anti-terrorist framework; develop a domestic anti-terrorist bill	<b>O/AU adopted legal framework; in SA the development of a legal framework ongoing</b>	No choice but to cooperate with the US on its 'war on terror' – by being supportive of overall goals as defined by the international community (UN); however, negotiate specific strategies and tactics where possible
7 Assist restructuring of SADC, OAU, NAM, Commonwealth, UN SC	Active participation in processes to restructure SADC, OAU, and improve working methods of NAM, Commonwealth	<b>Fundamental restructuring of SADC, OAU/AU.</b> SADC, AU poised to perform more efficiently. <b>Some efficiency improvement with NAM, Commonwealth. No change at UN SC level;</b> although charing Unctad was a success	On SADC and O/AU, take the lead and exercise leadership! However, at the same time build coalitions of support. On NAM and Commonwealth, the investment appears not worth it – call for merger of G77 and NAM and a 'G8 of the South'. On UN SC reform, recognise the limitations and work on more modest proposals.
8 Influence the restructuring of the International Financial Institutions	Active participation in processes, SA joined the WTO and management structures of WB and IMF	<b>SA helps shape (influence) the IMF, WB and WTO agendas in the interest of SA and the South</b>	No real progress on conditionalities, farming subsidies, debt; need to act with the 'mandate' of the masses of the South; serious need to bolster our analytical and negotiation skills and capacities.
9 Develop and implement Nepad	Active participation in processes and contribution to programme and policy content; hosting of Nepad secretariat	<b>Nepad adopted by AU, UN, G8 as Africa's development programme</b>	Key challenges: get Nepad projects off the ground; implement peer review; get grassroots support for Nepad
10 Environmental and sustainable development issues	Active participation in Kyoto protocol and WSSD		

## **5 ADDENDA**

### **5.1 Focus group meeting**

Two roundtable discussions were facilitated by the IGD – a morning session on the peace and security aspects of the government’s foreign policy, and an afternoon session on the broader themes of the government’s foreign policy and relations. The list of participants is attached to this report.

#### **The following main points emerged from the peace and security session**

Regarding the proposed methodology of developing indicators to assess government’s performance in the area of external peace and security issues, the meeting noted that it would be important not to ignore the domestic dimension, namely the role and impact of the armed forces on the promotion and consolidation of democracy. For example, one would have to understand the status of the armed forces inside the country in order to explain its role outside the borders. Nevertheless, it was emphasised by the project managers that the current review’s mandate excluded such a focus.

The group also agreed that it would be difficult to assess the governments’s past performance by using indicators developed in 2003. The danger with such a ex-post facto method, according to the group, was that areas of achievement could be emphasised at the expense of a critical examination of areas of weakness and failure. The group also noted that it would be awkward to assess such performance between 1994 and 1999 – the period pre-dating the establishment of the cluster system – on the same basis as the post-1999 period. It was assumed that for the latter period, peace and security objectives were part of the IRPS cluster activities and would be given to the research team, if not the focus group itself, to examine. For the former (pre-cluster) period, objectives would have to be researched and traced via various methods, an activity that was not undertaken as yet. The IGD director shared his fruitless experience with securing such information from the relevant authorities. Members of SASS who formed part of the meeting agreed to investigate the possibility of providing the IGD with the appropriate policy objectives.

The meeting agreed that in the absence of a clear list of given policy objectives, and given its reluctance to identify such a list, the best that could be done was to identify and develop a matrix that could serve as a guide to researchers for examining government’s performance in this area of activity.

The meeting further agreed that unlike the assesment of government’s performance in the area of policy objectives such as housing, welfare, trade and the like, external peace and security objectives were not easily quantifiable and had to be assessed from a qualitative perspective. One ought to further keep in mind that by definition, external peace and security issues were complex as its dynamics were determined by many international, regional and local variables. In such a context it would be difficult to isolate and assess the impact of the policy objectives of one government on the evolution of a peace or security situation.

The group then turned to the identification of key external peace and security objectives. It agreed that it would be useful to start with Mr Mandela's term of office (1994-98). During this period, the following key objectives were identified:

1. Normalisation of diplomatic and security relations with / in southern Africa. To this end, the government decided to join the SADC and signed the new Windhoek Treaty of 1994.
2. The Defence Review (a process that ended in 1997) and the development of the White Paper on Defence (1997). The former spoke to regional security cooperation as well as peacekeeping objectives. The latter should be seen as a key document in terms of the identification of peace and security objectives.
3. The White Paper on Peacekeeping (1998) sets out additional peace and security objectives.
4. The promotion of arms control and the NPT.

The group made a general point regarding these documents, which was that most of it contained many fine expressions of vision but very few definitions of policy objectives. One participant noted that 'everything is vision, but no plan to get from A to B'. Another participant stated that these documents were generally quite ambiguous, that one could read into them what one wanted, and that they contained no plan.

Regarding **South African participation in UN-sanctioned peace operations**, a recent analysis by Kent and Malan (2003) concluded that such engagements have enhanced the country's image in the eyes of Africa and the international community, the latter which is increasingly unwilling to send its own troops to bolster peace and security in Africa. However, it must be kept in mind that not all conflicts are amenable to resolution through peacemaking or peacekeeping interventions – hence the need for South Africa to ensure that deployments are based on clear international mandates, have clear entry and exit strategies, and a reasonable chance of success prior to engaging in a peace mission – especially with respect to the intractable and complex missions found in Africa. They illustrate this point by noting that South Africa's increased deployment to Burundi "...will certainly test the depth of its capacity to confront an on-going crisis...the AU and South Africa should be aware that their role will very likely degenerate into that of a peace enforcer, not a peacekeeper."

Kent and Malan also makes a series of policy recommendations. In their view, since the decision whether or not to participate in a peace mission is a political and foreign policy one, it must be made via an established, co-ordinated structure. In theory such a structure does exist (the National Office for the Coordination of Peace Missions or NOCPM) but in reality, they found that little emphasis is placed on consultation and coordination: "...decisions continue to be taken at the level of the Presidency with little or no prior consultation or input from other levels of government, state departments, parliament or civil society. This has led to interdepartmental confusion, poor pre-deployment planning and preparation, media criticism, and a general lack of public enthusiasm for South African participation in peace missions".

The authors conclude that a 'thorough update' is required to re-evaluate many of the extant recommendations, incorporate the best practices and to validate the lessons of



the past four years. They suggest that the NOCPM should take the lead in establishing a working group responsible for reviewing and updating the White Paper as soon as possible.

### **The following main points emerged from the foreign policy session**

This group made the obvious point that the key foreign policy objective for the new government immediately after coming to power was to ensure South Africa's comprehensive re-entry into the international arena. It then agreed to make a distinction between more abstract, **substantive** foreign policy objectives, and more instrumental or **managerial** objectives. On the latter, the group saw mostly continuity between the so-called Mandela and Mbeki eras. It then spent considerable time identifying substantive foreign policy objectives, and came up with the following:

1. The question of unequal power relations in the world. One participant expressed it as follows: has the government engaged the global order in a way that allows it to begin to transform power relations? This was seen by the group as the fundamentally strategic, overriding global priority the government faced post-1994. Another referred to a statement by Mr Mbeki in which he said that South Africa had to walk in the world on two legs: one leg engaging the North, and the other engaging and transforming the South. The engagement with the North included issues such as the reform of the international financial institutions and the UN, in order to create political space for the South to negotiate a better relationship. The engagement with the South included the revival and reshaping of the institutions of the South such as the NAM, Unctad and Commonwealth, as well as putting Africa on the agenda. To that extent, Nepad was adopted as a strategy.
2. Normalisation of South Africa's relations with the world (mostly during the Mandela era)
3. Wealth creation and poverty alleviation
4. Disarmament, arms control and landmines
5. Promoting the African Renaissance
6. "Exporting the GNU" – meaning the government's tendency to offer its experience with negotiating a political settlement to countries in conflict
7. "Securing our independence" – meaning the challenge of consolidating South Africa's democracy
8. South Africa's role in Africa (Renaissance, Nepad, AU, identity – Mbeki's "I am an African" speech)

The group came to a general conclusion that overall, South Africa has conducted a very successful foreign policy. However, the group also identified what it believed to be **anomalies** in South Africa's foreign policy (see section four, main conclusions).

### **Conclusion**

- 1 The meeting recommend that the IRPS cluster review process adopt the matrix in order to assess government's performance on the basis of certain key policy objectives

- 2 To be able to do that, the meeting further advised that IGD redouble its efforts to obtain the appropriate authority to gain access to the appropriate documentation
- 3 It further suggested indicators to be used to evaluate policy performance to include a mix of cost/benefit analysis (both financially and politically), the measure of efficiency, whether procedure was followed, and the extent of inter-departmental or –agency cooperation (given that the IRPS cluster is made up of 19 departments/agencies, of which 6 are core).

## 5.2 Focus group participants

NAME	ORGANISATION
<b>Dr Garth Shelton</b>	WITS
<b>Prof Gavin Cawthra</b>	P&DM
<b>Vasu Gounden</b>	ACCORD
<b>Patrick Rankhumi</b>	Africa Institute
<b>Annette Seegers</b>	University of Cape Town
<b>Mr Schalk Malan</b>	Dir - SA Secret Service
<b>Maureen van der Merwe</b>	Dir - SA Secret Service
<b>Victor Motjope</b>	Dir - SA Secret Service
<b>Prof John Stremlau</b>	Wits
<b>Dr Janis van der Westhuizen</b>	University of Stellenbosch
<b>Dr Chris Landsberg</b>	Centre for Policy Studies
<b>Prof Rok Ajulu</b>	Rhodes University
<b>Dr Manelisi Genge</b>	Dept. of Foreign Affairs
<b>Michael Sachs</b>	African National Congress
<b>Jo-Ansie van Wyk</b>	UNISA
<b>Dr Pandelani Mathoma</b>	Dept. of Foreign Affairs
<b>Prof Adam Habib</b>	University of Natal
<b>Dr Garth le Pere</b>	IGD
<b>Anthoni van Nieuwkerk</b>	Wits

## 5.3 Literature

Kent, V and M Malan (2003) Decisions, decisions: South Africa's foray into regional peace operations. ISS Paper 72, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria.

Written communication from Dr Garth Shelton.

Government publications (various).