

**SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY, MIDDLE POWER
LEADERSHIP AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY**

By Hussein Solomon¹

1. INTRODUCTION

South Africa occupies an ambiguous position within the international political economy. It is the most developed state on the continent of Africa. Within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, it contributes 82 per cent to the regional gross domestic product (Kariithi, 2000: 45; Solomon and Cilliers, 1996: 24). In the context of the North-South debate, does this make South Africa a 'Northern' state on a 'Southern' continent, or does this make Pretoria the leader of the South? There are some sections of world opinion who would argue that South Africa is the natural leader of Africa. Consider in this regard, the following statement by Angela King (1994: 8) who headed the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) in 1994: *"... this country [South Africa] will soon become a catalyst for the rapid development of not only the southern African region but the rest of the continent."*

This view is also subscribed to by several South African academics. In an article entitled Global Dialogue, Human Rights and Foreign Policy: Will South Africa Please Lead, Vernon Seymour (1996: 1) noted that *"[t]he world expects more from a democratic South Africa ... After a long struggle for human rights in this country, our new democracy is viewed as a natural leader...."*

Often, this role has been couched in terms of middle power leadership which is seen as the antithesis of the national self-interest foreign policies which dominate realpolitik. Is this really so? Do middle powers conduct their foreign policies in a more altruistic way than do other states caught up in the realism of E.H. Carr and the power politics of Hans Morgenthau? What exactly is middle power leadership? Does South Africa have the capability or the will to fulfil such a role? Should Pretoria pursue such a leadership role, can it balance the attendant international responsibilities against the various and tremendous domestic challenges facing the 'Rainbow' nation? More prosaically, is there an alternative to middle power leadership which would serve as a better conceptual 'fit' for South African foreign policy? These are some of the questions which we would discuss in the first part of the paper, whilst the second part of the paper would focus on one aspect of South African foreign policy, namely preventive diplomacy. This will be used as a case study to discuss the limitations of middle power leadership in the African context.

2. WHAT IS MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP?

In a world increasingly characterised by growing interdependence, all countries now have global interests. In a world characterised by transnational security threats – global arming, mass migrations, narco-trafficking and small arms proliferation, to name but a few – there is an increasing need for multilateral management (Wood, 1988: 1). Such multilateral management, however, is not forthcoming due to the fact that international institutions, are

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generally moribund or in a state of disrepute. In addition, the number of governments which could effectively confront the problems attached to global interdependence and multilateral co-operation are few. Thus, Barbara Ward (1970: 46) commented that "[t]he superpowers are too vast, unwieldy, too locked in their own responsibilities. The great mass of new states are too poor and too shaky. It is the middle powers ... who occupy about the right position on the scale of influence."

Supporting this view, Robert Cox (1989: 826-827) notes that middle powers are to be found in the middle rank of material capabilities, both military and economic, and that they seek to bolster international institutions for co-operative management. In the same vein, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal (1993: 16) note that middle power leadership in the contemporary period is intimately related to the "hiatus in structural leadership in the international order" following the end of the Cold War. As great powers turn inward, following their own brand of the Monroe Doctrine, this opens up more opportunities for smaller powers with sufficient capabilities – the middle powers – to exercise certain forms of leadership. This leadership is seen in benign terms, as it is thought that the "... interests of the middle powers coincide more with the general interest than do the interests of the small powers or of the great powers" (Reid, 1983: 161) Hence, it is thought that in pursuing their national interests, middle powers are also pursuing the general interest which leads to a more stable world order.

By itself, a middle power is unlikely to have overwhelming influence on the international stage. As such, middle power leadership is, in essence, multilateralist in approach (Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, 1993: 19).

Various authors note that middle powers have certain distinct national role conceptions. According to Holsti (1983: 116) national role conceptions are "... the policy-makers' definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their state and of the functions their state should perform in a variety of geographic and issue settings." Some of these include the role of regional or subregional leader, and the role of bridge or mediator (Wood, 1988: 21) Within the context of the Cold War, this latter role was seen in terms of the East-West divide. With the end of global bipolarity, the role of bridge or mediator is increasingly seen in terms of the North-South divide. Another important role ascribed to by middle powers is the role of manager. This emphasises institution-building which is seen in broader terms than just formal organisations and regimes. Rather, it includes the development of conventions and norms (Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, 1993: 25).

Middle powers are generally active in what some writers have termed low politics or second order issues on the international agenda. Several reasons account for this. Firstly, great powers largely have a monopoly over first order issues. Secondly, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal (1993) note that middle powers do not feel themselves threatened by the issues on the first agenda of international politics – for example, the territorial integrity of the Scandinavian states is not threatened from outside. Rather, middle powers are concerned with threats emanating from second order issues which threaten their traditionally high standards of living. Consider here, "... the Australian economy being hurt by a subsidy war between the United States and the European Community or the quality of the environment in Canada being under jeopardy from American pollution" (Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, 1993: 25).

It should be noted, however, that with the easing of interstate warfare which has accompanied the end of the Cold War, first order issues on the international agenda concerning the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states, are increasingly marginalised by issues traditionally seen as low politics. This has found expression in the theoretical discourse of new security thinking which emphasises the importance of non-military security issues – international foreign trade, environmental degradation, population growth – to a nation's survival. This widening of the security agenda, resulting in low politics issues becoming first agenda issues, could result in the further marginalisation of middle powers as the great powers take over these issues as well.

3. WHO QUALIFIES FOR MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP?

There is a fierce, and as yet unresolved, debate among academics and policy-makers on the criteria needed for states to qualify for middle power leadership. While it is accepted that middle powers generally are in the middle range of power capabilities, proponents of middle power leadership are unsure of how to assess these power capabilities.

Some proponents of middle power leadership use Gross National Product (GNP) as the best general indicator of national power. Thus, Wood (1988: 17) argues, "GNP automatically captures aggregate economic power, wealth and/or population size, and to a substantial extent, military potential ..." On the basis of using GNP as a criterion for identifying middle powers, Wood arrives at a list of states which includes:

- 1 Italy 2 China 3 Canada 4 Brazil
- 5 Spain 6 Netherlands 7 India 8 Poland
- 9 Australia 10 Mexico 11 Belgium 12 Sweden
- 13 Switzerland 14 Saudi Arabia 15 Czech Republic 16 Nigeria
- 17 Austria 18 Denmark 19 Turkey 20 Argentina
- 21 South Korea 22 South Africa 23 Indonesia 24 Venezuela
- 25 Romania 26 Norway 27 Finland 28 Hungary
- 29 Pakistan 30 Algeria 31 Iran

A second area of contention is: which China is Wood referring to? If the reference is to the People's Republic of China, then it could convincingly be argued that it is more a great power and a nascent superpower than a middle power. If Wood is referring to Taiwan, his classification is similarly problematic, as Taiwan is not recognised as an independent sovereign state by international law.

Thirdly, several academics have problems with this list on normative grounds and they object to certain states with poor human rights records being granted the status of middle power which, for many, is viewed as one of moral leadership. On this basis, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal (1993) suggest certain behavioural criteria which middle powers should subscribe to. These are closely related to whether or not a particular state is a good global citizen. These judgemental criteria, however, are value-based and are specific to certain cultures. As such, the behavioural requirements for middle power leadership are the subject of great controversy.

It has also been noted that different kinds of middle power leadership require different criteria. Essentially, there are two kinds of middle power leadership: subregional or regional leadership, which is seen in spatial terms, and functional leadership which is

viewed in terms of leadership in a specific issue area (Evans and Newnham, 1992: 193-194; Wood, 1988: 3; Schoeman, 2000: 48) Thus, while regional leadership requires certain military and economic capabilities, functional leadership requires expertise in a specific issue area, for example nuclear non-proliferation or environmental degradation.

It should be noted that even these seemingly objective criteria for middle power leadership are not unproblematic. For instance, to what extent was South Africa's election to the chair of SADC related to the prestige of its first President, Nelson Mandela, as opposed to certain military or economic requirements of leadership? Similarly, there are other variables impacting on a leadership role which are unaccounted for in the literature on middle power leadership. This, in turn, raises doubts as to the analytical usefulness of the middle power concept.

4. COLLECTIVE INTERESTS VERSUS NATIONAL INTERESTS

Not all analysts view middle powers in benign terms. They argue that, despite claims to the contrary, national self-interest and realpolitik concerns still largely influence the foreign policies of these states.

While middle powers seem to be committed to collective interests, at least at the rhetorical level where such interests conflict with the national interest, it is the latter which prevails. For example, while the Canadian Government under the administration of Pierre Trudeau placed a high priority on global economic development, it was also sensitive to the local needs and interests of Canadian industries. Hence, the Canadian Government embarked on a policy of protectionism which witnessed the imposition of quotas on the imports of clothing and footwear from low-cost countries. Similarly, Australia responded with greater protectionism when faced with stiffer competition (Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, 1993: 22).

Middle powers' excessive concern with stability and order in the international system often results in their being supportive of the hegemonic status quo. Thus, one Canadian diplomat was quoted as saying, "*Pax Americana is better than no Pax at all*" (Cox, 1989: 826).

A concomitant of this is that some analysts have noted that Western middle powers, in particular, are not overly anxious to strengthen universal 'egalitarian' bodies where minor powers might gain excessive influence. A good example of this is the resistance displayed on the part of Western middle powers to calls from Third World states for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). In a penetrating examination, David Black (1997: 2) comments: "*... some middle-sized Western states ... had a strong interest in supporting the norms and institutions of the post-war 'liberal economic order' – the Bretton Woods Institutions and the GATT. Their, and their dominant classes' strong interest in maintaining a relatively open, liberal and stable international economy also contributed to the development of internationalist interests and behavioural patterns, through active support for, and participation in, the major institutions of this economy. Later, when the stability of the international economy seemed threatened by 'Southern' dissatisfaction and demands for a New International Economic Order, some of these states (notably the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) were particularly active in seeking to forge a reformist response which would allow the international economy to meet the challenges, while retaining its essential continuity and viability.*"

The above illustrates that, far from reflecting the collective interests of humanity, Western middle powers are prone to supporting the interests of the North at the expense of the South.

In the same vein, other commentators have viewed middle powers as little more than status-seekers: basically those powers that do not qualify for a place in the ranks of the great powers, but are unwilling to be classified with the 'mediocre rest', seeking alternative roles to exercise leadership. Thus, Touval and Zartman (1985: 252-253) notes that "*[m]ediation by the medium-sized states appears to have been motivated by the desire to enhance their influence and prestige. There should be little wonder that small and medium-sized states seek to enhance their international standing by assuming the role of mediator - they have few ways in which to do so. Moreover, mediating often saves them from having to take sides when pressed to do so in a conflict.*"

Reluctance on the part of middle powers to take a stance in a conflict situation is intimately related to their national role conceptions of mediator, bridge or conciliator; and has led to the charge of 'fence-sitting' often levelled against them. Coupled with this is the charge often made by the United States that such middle powers are shirking their international responsibilities and are not engaged in burden sharing (Wood, 1988: 21-23).

Black (1997: 1) notes that middle power leadership is often based on implicit or explicit assumptions of moral superiority. However, critical examination of middle power foreign policies often contradicts these assumptions of occupying the moral high ground. In this regard, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal (1993: 17) effectively illustrate this moral relativism by comparing Australian and Canadian rhetoric on Kuwait's sovereignty in the Gulf conflict of 1990-1991 with their silence on Indonesia's invasion and annexation of East Timor in 1975.

In short, middle power leadership is an extremely ambiguous theoretical construct. There is a fierce debate as to what middle powers are and whether they play a positive or negative role in the international system. Given this ambiguity and the fact that theory impacts on policy; it is hardly surprising that Cox (1989: 828) holds a pessimistic view as to the utility of middle powers in practice: "*Through most of the period between World War II and the present, the middle-power thesis has been more of an idea, a potentiality, than a realised and effective strategy of world politics.*"

5. DOES SOUTH AFRICA QUALIFY FOR MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP?

Despite the ambiguous nature of middle power leadership in theory and practice, it has been noted that certain academics have called on Pretoria to play such a role. In this regard, perhaps the first question should be whether South Africa qualifies for such a role according to the various criteria listed above.

On the basis of its GNP, South Africa certainly qualifies for middle power leadership. However, it is also true that this aggregate figure hides wide discrepancies between rich and poor within the country. According to Ellen Sirleaf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), South Africa is two nations in one: a minority of the population with a per capita income far in excess of US \$3 000 a year, and a majority with US \$300 a year like much of Africa (The Star, 21 February 1996). Placing issues further in perspective, Mahmood Mamdani (1999: 126) recently noted, "*If white South Africa were a country on its own, its per capita income would be 24th in the world, next to Spain, but if black South*

Africa were a separate country, its per capita income would rank 123rd globally, just above the Democratic Republic of the Congo".

In this context, some commentators have suggested that South Africa should not pursue the role of regional leader, as this leadership would come with certain responsibilities. Sirleaf, for instance, further commented that it is imperative that South African resources should not be used outside the country until the lot of its own citizens, who had so long been denied, is improved.

Similarly problematic are the behavioural criteria for middle power leadership and whether Pretoria can be construed as a well-behaved global citizen.

On the one hand, numerous examples can be cited where South Africa played the role of a good global citizen. For example, in July 1994, President Mandela convened a meeting in Pretoria with the Heads of State of Angola, Mozambique and Zaire to act as a facilitator between Angola and Zaire on the issue of alleged Zairian support for Jonas Savimbi's Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). This resulted in a follow-up meeting which witnessed the revival of the Joint Security Commission (JSC) between the two countries (Marx, 1995: 8). South Africa also played a key role in the negotiations on the international convention on the banning of anti-personnel landmines, chairing the Oslo negotiations that dealt with the final text of the treaty (Schoeman, 2000: 51).

On the other hand, South Africa's friendship with Cuba and Libya is seen by the US, in particular, as not in keeping with being a good international citizen. This was further compounded by Pretoria's proposed sale of weapons technology to countries such as Syria. But these behavioural criteria for middle power leadership are extremely problematic, since one might ask whose values are employed to judge whether this is a bad or a good state. After all, US support for some of the world's most malevolent dictators – Somoza, Batista and Mobutu to name a few – are well-documented.

While South Africa's meeting of GNP and behavioural criteria for middle power leadership may be seen as unresolved at best, it should be noted that Pretoria has demonstrated that it has the material capability and the technical expertise to function as a middle power at both the spatial and the functional levels. This was revealed during the Lesotho constitutional crisis in October 1994, and during the negotiations for the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995 (Masiza and Landsberg, 1996).

6. DOES SOUTH AFRICA HAVE THE POLITICAL WILL?

More important than having the capabilities is whether South Africa has the political will to take on the mantle of leader in both regional and functional terms. The ability to make a sound judgement on this aspect is confounded by the ambiguity generated by the contradictory statements emanating from this country's leadership.

On the one hand, South Africa's leaders seem distinctly reticent about taking on a leadership role on a crisis-ridden continent. In his address to the United Nations General Assembly in June 1994, former South African Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo (1994) stated: *"Uppermost in our minds, however, are the responsibilities which our Government of National Unity has towards the people of South Africa. Our primary goal is to strive to create a better life for all our people ... [as a result] South Africa will have extremely limited*

resources for anything which falls outside the Reconstruction and Development Programme."

This view was further entrenched by Pierre Dietrichsen (1994: 212) a senior Department of Foreign Affairs official, who wrote that "*South Africa is a medium military power with limited resources at its disposal for use in the international arena, for example for peacekeeping operations. Although South Africa's foreign debt is low by world standards, the country's own development needs are such that South Africa could not become a substantial donor of development assistance.*" At the same time, Mr Aziz Pahad, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, was quoted as saying that a leadership role was being thrust upon South Africa, and South Africa could no longer sit on the sidelines (Quoted in Simpson-Anderson, 1997: 37).

It is imperative that for a successful and coherent South African foreign policy to develop, this ambivalence among policy-makers needs to end.

7. WHAT ABOUT 'FOLLOWERSHIP'?

Cooper, Higgott and Nossal (1993: 15) have argued that leadership is based on some measure of consent among followers. However, the level of consent among South Africa's neighbours on the issue of its leadership has also been characterised by ambiguity.

Consider, in this regard, the case of Nigeria. In late 1995, President Mandela led a one-man campaign against Nigeria on account of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni activists. Abacha was unmoved. Africa was embarrassed, and distanced itself from Pretoria's stance, both at the levels of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The Commonwealth fudged. By April 1996, South Africa's ambassador was back in Abuja; while his bosses joined African resistance to a UN resolution that would have appointed an international human rights watchdog over Nigeria (Bell, 1997: 16). Clearly, the lesson is that the world will not simply follow because the Rainbow nation is blowing the whistle. This view is further entrenched if one considers South African foreign policy reversals on the questions of dual recognition in the 'Two Chinas' dilemma and Pretoria's failed attempts to mediate in Angola, Sudan and Zimbabwe

On the other hand, these 'failures' must be balanced by the leading role Pretoria is currently playing to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe, and by calls from Namibia, Mozambique and Tanzania for the South African Navy (Simpson-Anderson, 1997: 37) to protect their maritime resources, South Africa's election to chair SADC, and its election to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) chair in 1998; it chairing the Commonwealth the following year; as well as it chairing the African Union (AU) and being the architect of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

How does one account for this ambiguity among so-called followers? South Africa's level of development, the stature of its leadership and its relative military and economic strength are being called upon to aid the continent. At the same time, there are real fears about South Africa and middle power leadership. These revolve around the fact that Pretoria's foreign policy is characterised more by continuity than change; that the coercive diplomacy which characterised South African foreign policy during the destabilisation years of the 1980s has been replaced by the assertive diplomacy of the 1990s under the new mantle of middle power leadership. This, generally, is seen in terms of a benevolent

leadership by Pretoria. But a concomitant of this, is that our neighbours are accorded a rather passive role: the relationship is characterised more by paternalism than by partnership. Another problem with middle power leadership which is serving to sour South Africa's foreign relations with the rest of the African continent is the perceptions that Pretoria is the "lackey of the West." Schoeman (2000: 53) notes how this perception has come about, "*Western encouragement of South Africa as an emerging power results, inevitably, in South Africa being characterised as having a Western orientation in its foreign policy*".

8. THE WAY FORWARD: CO-OPERATIVE LEADERSHIP VERSUS MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP

Given the ambiguities of middle power leadership – both as an academic construct and in practice, and because of the real fears among our neighbours – it is imperative that middle power leadership, as a foreign policy orientation, needs to be eschewed in favour of what could be termed co-operative leadership. Here, leadership is more diffuse and the emphasis is on consensus-seeking among the various players. This kind of leadership, which the Department of Foreign Affairs has embarked upon, has already borne fruit. Consider in this regard, South Africa's active participation in OAU efforts at bringing conflict to an end in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Somalia (Marx, 1995: 8). It should also be noted that the constitutional crisis in Lesotho in October 1994 was defused by South Africa, acting in alliance with Zimbabwe and Botswana. Similarly the attempt at a coup in Lesotho in 1998 that resulted in Operation Boleas - a joint military intervention on the part of Botswana and South Africa took place under the SADC mantle (The Sunday Independent, 27 September 1998).

The emphasis on co-operative leadership as opposed to unilateral leadership has deep roots in traditional African philosophy and society (Malan, 1997). Such a leadership would also find resonance in President Thabo Mbeki's concept of the African Renaissance which stresses the need to mobilize all constituencies for the emancipation of the African continent (Solomon and Muller, 2000). The need for unity of purpose and action amongst Africa's leadership was also stressed by the former Director-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Siphon Pityana who argued that, "*... a coherent common continental agenda is required in order for Africa to rise*" (Pityana, 2000: 1).

To be sure, co-operative leadership does have its down-side. For instance, the search for consensus might slow attempts to act quickly as and when a crisis develops. This, however, has to be balanced against addressing regional fears of South African domination. For example, no charge of status-seeker can be levelled against this form of leadership. Moreover, historical experience has indicated that where such regional fears are left unchecked – Kenya's role within the East African Community, Chile's hegemonic role in the Andean League and Nigeria's leadership position within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) come to mind – the entire regional project may be scuppered.

The principle of co-operative leadership, moreover, has deep roots within the African National Congress (1994: 227): "*... the construction of a new regional order will be a collective endeavour of all the free peoples of Southern Africa and cannot be imposed either by extra-regional forces or any self-appointed 'regional power' ... a democratic South Africa should therefore explicitly renounce all hegemonic ambitions in the region. It should resist all pressure to become the 'regional power' at the expense of the rest of the*

sub-continent; instead it should seek to create a new form of economic interaction in Southern Africa based on the principles of mutual benefit and interdependence."

Co-operative leadership is also leadership by example. One senior Department of Foreign Affairs official, Johan Marx (1995: 9) puts it succinctly: *"... the greatest contribution which South Africa can make to the development of Africa is by demonstrating that effective and corruption-free administration, constant maintenance of existing infrastructure, and in the long run, a democratic system in one form or another are essential prerequisites for sustained development. If South Africa could render that service to Africa, it would be a leadership role of which all Africa could be proud."*

9. MIDDLE POWER LEADERSHIP VS CO-OPERATIVE LEADERSHIP: THE CASE OF PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

Pretoria views the plethora of wars currently being waged on the African continent, as anathema to the notion of an African Renaissance. Recognising that there can be no emancipation for Africa's people from socio-economic emiseration if conflicts persist, the South African government has made the ending of these conflicts as one of its main foreign policy goals. As early as November, 1994 Pretoria's Ambassador to the United Nations noted, *"South Africa believes that in the southern African context, as also further afield, the fundamental objective of our regional policy should be preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and humanitarian assistance"* (Business Day, 22 November 1994). Six years later, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (2000: 3), stressed the importance of preventive diplomacy, *"The regional conflicts wreaking havoc across the continent cast a dark shadow over the prospects of success of the vision of the African Renaissance. ... It is wrong to think that all conflicts should be resolved through the barrel of the gun. Political solutions should be explored at all times"*. Thus, it could be argued that preventive diplomacy, which may be defined as the successful resolution of conflicts through non-military means, lies at the very heart of South Africa's regional policy. What will be endeavoured in this section is by means of two case studies – the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Burundi – to illustrate some of the problems inherent in middle power leadership.

9.1 Understanding the logic and objectives of South African preventive diplomacy in the Great Lakes Region

The need and logic for preventive diplomacy cannot be doubted. First, it makes sense to engage in preventive action before an incipient conflict flares up. As any medical practitioner knows prevention is better than cure and in this sense more pro-active as opposed to reactive measures are called for. Moreover various authors have noted that outside intervention to end internal conflicts are more successful at the early stages in the conflict cycle as opposed to in the later stages when loss of life has occurred and the phenomenon of revenge killings emerge (Walker, 1993: 179; Ryan, 1998:81; Zartman, 1995). Second, given the limited peacekeeping capabilities of African states, especially in the arena of force projection, necessitates an alternative that stresses more political and diplomatic instruments as opposed to military ones (Berman and Sams, 2000). Third, there is the strategic dimensions. For instance, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) total territory is 2,345,410 square kilometers making it roughly twice the size of Western Europe. Moreover it shares borders with nine other African states (CIA World Factbook, 2001). Thus instability in the DRC has

meant instability in neighbouring states forming one large conflict system. In addition to the geo-strategic imperatives there are good reasons at the economic level why conflict in the DRC needs to end. These revolve around the abundant natural wealth the DRC possesses which includes large deposits of cobalt, copper, cadmium, petroleum, industrial and gem diamonds, gold, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, germanium, uranium, radium, bauxite, iron ore, coal, hydropower and timber (CIA World Factbook, 2001). Thus at both political and economic levels, stability in the DRC is crucial if the vision of President Mbeki for an African Renaissance is to be realized. Finally, there is the moral imperative that makes preventive diplomacy essential. The ongoing war in Burundi, for instance, has resulted in the deaths of more than 250,000 people (mainly civilian) since 1993 (Parayre, 2002). Similarly, the ongoing human carnage in the DRC has claimed 2,5 million people since 1998 (Agence France-Presse, 27 September 2002).

Pretoria's involvement in the Great Lakes region began in 1997 when it became clear that the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) under the leadership of Laurent Kabila was on the military offensive whilst President Mobutu's power base crumbled and his armed forces, including his Presidential Guards, retreated in the face of the rebel offensive. In Pretoria, as in several regional and international capitals, concern was expressed regarding the spill-over effects of the disintegration of the Zairian state for neighbouring states. The need was expressed for an orderly transition to a post-Mobutu era in Zaire. Pretoria, under President Mandela's leadership, immediately responded to this situation by attempting to negotiate between President Mobutu and Laurent Kabila. This attempt at preventive diplomacy however ended in failure for South Africa's diplomats. Moreover this failure was repeated more spectacularly in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue at Sun City in April 2002. Here President Mbeki had proposed that Joseph Kabila² hold the post of interim president but that he be supported by a triumvirate of vice-presidents, chosen from the main armed groups, the Congolese Liberation Movement (MLC), the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) and a representative of civil society (Mail and Guardian, 19 April 2002). However this too, proved to have no support amongst the protagonists of the conflict in the DRC. Instead, Kabila signed a separate agreement with the Ugandan-backed MLC leader Jean Pierre Bemba. Under the terms of the this agreement, Kabila would remain interim president whilst Bemba would be named Prime Minister of an interim government. This pact has served to infuriate the Rwandan-backed RCD (Agence France-Presse, 18 August 2002).

By 30 July 2002, South African diplomats managed to secure a peace agreement between Joseph Kabila and Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Under the terms of this agreement, the DRC was to round up and extradite an estimated 12,000 ex-Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Rwandan Hutu militia (Interahamwe) who were deemed to be responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide in which almost a million people were killed and who Kigali alleges has been launching attacks into Rwanda. In return Rwanda, promised to withdraw its 30,000 troops deployed inside the DRC (IRIN News, 22 August 2002). Whilst it is too early to assess the success of the agreement, commentators are already expressing concerns on the viability of the agreement despite the fact that Rwandan troops have already started withdrawing. For example, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an organization representing armed Rwandan Hutus rebels in the DRC have rejected the peace deal

² Joseph Kabila was Laurent Kabila's son. He replaced his father as Head of State after the latter was assassinated on 16 January 2000.

(IRIN News, 1 August 2002). This would suggest that any attempt to disarm Hutu militias under the peace agreement would be forcefully resisted – thus making implementation of the agreement that much harder.

South Africa's involvement in the search for sustainable peace in Burundi began in August 1998 when former President Nelson Mandela became mediator in the Arusha Peace Process following the death of former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. By August 2000, a peace agreement was signed between the various parties, which provided for a power-sharing arrangement between Hutus and Tutsis. Despite this breakthrough, various analysts expressed misgivings when the two most powerful protagonists – the Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD) and the National Liberation Forces (FNL) did not take part in the Arusha Peace Process. The failure to arrive at an inclusive peace settlement was to haunt the Arusha Peace Process when violent conflict continued to escalate in this tiny central African state (Agence France-Presse, 11 August 2002).

Recent attempts to halt the ongoing carnage in Burundi now take place under the mediation efforts of South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma, assisted by Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa and President Omar Bongo of Gabon. Talks held in Dar es Salaam in September 2002 aimed at securing a ceasefire between the FDD and the Burundian government never even got off the ground. By 28 September 2002, Zuma left Tanzania admitting failure (Parayre, 2002).

9.2 Understanding Failure

Why are Pretoria's policy-makers getting it so wrong? Three inter-related reasons could explain Pretoria's failures. The first relates to it projecting its own personal bias on both the DRC and Burundian conflicts. For instance, in 1997 when Pretoria was attempting to strike a deal between Mobutu and Laurent Kabila it looked at the situation in Zaire through lenses tinted by its own Kempton Park negotiation process. Commenting on this failure Mahmood Mamdani (Weekly Mail and Guardian, 29 May 1997) succinctly commented:

“South Africa emerging from apartheid is not the same as Congo emerging from Mobutuism. At least two political differences are worth noting. The South African transition was a compromise between forces for and against apartheid; the Congolese transition is marked by military victory of the anti-Mobutu forces. Whereas the South African transition was worked out mainly through an internal arrangement, with foreign influence limited to an indirect role, the transition in Congo is being worked out through a much more direct regional involvement. These differences explain why South African diplomacy failed to achieve its intended objectives over the past few weeks. South African diplomats publicly sought a transitional authority led by forces other than Laurent Kabila and the Alliance, and tried to convince Kabila to acquiesce in this. The initiative asked Alliance forces to turn from the brink of victory and sign a compromise! Was this breathtakingly naïve because South African diplomats read the Zaire situation through South African lenses?”

Despite this failure, it did not stop South Africa's foreign policy establishment from revisiting the notion of a Government of National Unity (GNU) at the Sun City talks and in Burundi. Unable to learn from past mistakes, Pretoria's diplomats are bound to repeat them. In both Angola and in Zimbabwe Pretoria's policy-making elite mooted

the notion of a GNU and was met with similar failures. If there is anything that points to the poverty of South African foreign policy it is this.

Second, and a concomitant of the first, is the simplified view that Pretoria's mandarins have of the world. The assumption underlying South Africa's approach to Burundi is the notion that the conflict is simply one of ethnicity and that if a power-sharing agreement between Hutus and Tutsis can be found, peace will be attained. However as Oketch and Polzer (2002:86) brilliantly argue, the situation is far more complex:

“Belligerents and analysts alike frame the conflict in the context of ethnicity. The reality, however, presents a more complex and seemingly intractable picture of competition for scarce resources, competing urban and rural development and investment policy priorities and industrial and agricultural demands. Furthermore there is a glaring schism between the country's southern and northern regions with far-reaching implications for the conflict. The ethnic mask has served to draw attention away from the current structural conflict of interests between the elite and the rural majority”.

This is a damning failure since it also points to the dearth of analytical skills inside the South African Department of Foreign Affairs and once more reinforces the notion of the poverty of South Africa's foreign policy establishment.

Third, and on a related point, is that this dearth in analytical skills is accompanied by a similar lack of understanding of processes. For instance, under the terms of the 30 July 2002 accord between Kabila and Kagame, the Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) together with United Nations Observer Mission to Congo (MONUC) troops are to start rounding up the 12,000 Hutu militia within 30 days of the signing of the agreement (end of August). But most observers note that the under-equipped and demoralized FAC is really not up to the task and as such MONUC would have to bear the responsibility for the rounding up and disarming of the Hutu militia. However, according to UN officials on the ground, at least six months would be needed just to deploy the necessary forces required for such an enormous operation (Akpate-Ohohoe, 2002: 14). The failure to understand basic processes, which would determine the timelines in any peace process, is an unforgivable sin and can be easily rectified by the simple inclusion of military officials as resource people in any peace talks. The implications for the DRC's long-suffering people of this negligence could be profound. According to Akpata-Ohohe (2002: 14) failure to disarm the Hutu militia by the timeframe specified *“may give Kagame an excuse to pull out of the deal, while claiming that the Kabila government did not fulfill its own end of the bargain”.*

The above case studies clearly point to problems associated with middle power leadership. In both these case studies, Pretoria's interventions were largely unilateral. Whilst in the case of the DRC, the Office of the Facilitator of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue - Sir Ketumile Masire, was consulted, consultation is **not** multilateral intervention which defines co-operative leadership. These interventions by South Africa in the Great Lakes region was more in the mode of middle power leadership. Moreover, what is clearly evident from the above is that South Africa does not have the capacity to play this role of middle power leadership. A more co-operative leadership, in my view, would obviate much of the problems outlined above. For instance, it is clear from the above case studies that Pretoria's diplomats do not have a good understanding of the drivers of the respective conflicts in the DRC and Burundi – an

understanding that is possessed by neighbouring countries. Partnership on this issue therefore would have cured Pretoria of its blind spots.

10. CONCLUSION

This paper began with an overview of the concept of middle power leadership and illustrated the ambiguity with this form of leadership both as a theoretical construct and in practice. It then proceeded to put forward the idea of co-operative leadership as an alternative to middle power leadership. This idea of co-operative leadership it is argued with its emphasis on interconnectedness and consultation and co-operation is African at its roots. As Alison Lazarus (2000: 11) recently noted:

“Interdependence is captured in the concept of Ubuntu. African epistemology bases its challenge to realpolitik on the philosophy of ubuntu. This philosophy recognises that individual identity is possible only in community with others and nature. ‘I am because you are’. Without relationship with the other and without reference to the other, the individual cannot be. One cannot have a sense of ‘me’ without a sense of ‘we’. ... This philosophy creates a mindfulness of the other that is so necessary, relevant and significant to any conflict resolution process and joint generation of long term solutions. It challenges us to find resolution that meets the needs of the other and nature”.

By stressing co-operation as opposed to competition, co-operative leadership reinforces a holistic approach to problem solving. By means of two case studies – the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi we witnessed the problems of middle power leadership with respect to preventive diplomacy and strongly argued for a more co-operative leadership approach in South Africa’s continued intervention in the Great Lakes Region. Such an approach to leadership would also be in accord with the Department of Foreign Affairs’ own priorities. In response to the question of how her Department envisages its programme for Africa, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma responded, *“To present South Africa as an equal partner in our interaction with the continent”* (Dlamini-Zuma, 2000a: 1). Such an equal partner approach cannot emanate from middle power leadership with its emphasis on differential power realities between states but only from a co-operative leadership that is grounded in the philosophy and realities of Africa’s peoples’.

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