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**THE ROLE OF INTEREST GROUPS IN FORMULATING SOUTH AFRICA'S
NATIONAL INTEREST: A FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS 2015-2020**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Sandisile Futshana, declare that this mini-dissertation is my own original work. All secondary sources used, have been acknowledged and referenced in accordance with University of Pretoria requirements. I also declare that this mini-dissertation has not been submitted previously in any institution for purposes of obtaining any qualification.

Signature: Mrs Sandisile Futshana

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Futshana', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.

19 November 2021

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Finally, I dedicate this mini-dissertation to my late Mother, Thembela Msindo. This is for you, my guardian angel.

ANNEXURES

Interviews with members of South African interest groups

Respondent A – F

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
CII	Confederation of India Industry
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
FICCI	Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IGD	Institute for Global Dialogue
IRPS	International Relations Peace and Security cluster
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission
PCFA	Parliamentary Portfolio Committee of Foreign Affairs
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SSIs	Semi-Structured Interviews
USA	United States of America
VCs	Vice Chancellors

Abstract

The main aim of this study is to understand some of the reasons as to why interest groups have played a limited role in the formulation of South Africa's national interest and in the foreign policy decision-making processes in South Africa more generally from 2015-2020. Interest groups are actors that are autonomous from government and they are supplementary to the mass public. Interest groups are linked to the government decision-making system through various forms of communication. It is through various forms of communication that interest groups are able to influence government decision-making because they do not have formal policy-making authority. Rather they depend on the authorities to translate their policy preferences into decisional outputs. It is therefore important that interest groups actively participate and influence the foreign policy decision-making process in order to ensure coherence and comprehensiveness in South Africa's foreign policy generally and in the definition of South Africa's national interest. The theory relevant for this study is constructivism. Constructivism expands the scope of International Relations by embracing non-state actors such as social communities, interest groups, and international organizations and it focuses on the role of actors (agents) in foreign policy formulation. This study analyses and examines existing Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) literature on the phenomenon of the national interest in the South African context in order to explore the extent to which certain interest groups have been neglected by government in formulating the country's national interest. This study also explores explanations in the FPA literature to account for the elitist nature of South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process. The existing literature does not speak to perceptions and lived experiences of interest groups and the reasons why they think that they have played only a limited role in the foreign policy formulation and interest setting agenda in South Africa. As a result, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of South African interest groups in order to explore why they think that they have played only a limited role in the interest setting agenda in South Africa. One of the objectives of this study was to explore some of the reasons that account for the marginalisation of interest groups in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process. This study found out that the centralisation of policy decision-making authority in the South African President and the Executive is one of the contributing factors to interest group marginalisation in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process. Section 83 (a) and 85 (2c) of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa gives authority to the President to formulate and implement government policy including foreign policy. Despite this constitutional limitation, representatives of interest groups that participated in this study believe that interest groups can add great value to the definition of South Africa's national interest and foreign policy formulation generally because of their expertise and experience. Therefore, government should incorporate their perspectives when making foreign policy decisions.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction to research theme

According to Joseph Nye, ‘national interest’ is simply the set of shared priorities regarding relations with the rest of the world” (1999:23). Finnemore (1998:2), goes a little further to posit that a state’s national interests can be defined in the context of universal norms and understandings about what is good and acceptable. The normative context therefore also impacts the conduct of decision-makers and of mass publics who may choose to place pressure on the latter in respect of foreign policy decision-making. The normative context transforms over time, and as universally held norms and values change, they create synchronised shifts in state interests and conduct across the system. For Frieden however, (1999:59) national interests are determined by the enduring interests of domestic actors, who exist below the national level and who dominate the definition of a country’s national interest. Therefore, it can be argued that the role played by interest groups, political parties, and bureaucracies - who interact to form national interests, should be considered in analysis as opposed to only concentrating on interests at an international level. This study employs Frieden’s observation and it assesses the role that has been played by various interest groups in the last five years (2015-2020) in formulating South Africa’s national interest in respect of the country’s foreign policy decision-making process. The study is particularly interested in the perceived role that has been played by the One South Africa Movement, selected South African Universities and the Foundation for Human Rights in the definition of South Africa’s national interest and the country’s foreign policy interest setting agenda more generally.

This study poses the question: Why is it that interest groups have potentially played a very limited role in South Africa’s foreign policy decision-making process and therefore the way in which the national interest is defined in this process? This question was interrogated by examining existing literature within the sub-field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). FPA is concerned with the role played by actors in the foreign policy decision-making process and therefore directly relates to the research question of this study. FPA is actor-specific because everything that happens in international politics is based on human decision-makers either acting independently

or as a group (Hudson, 2005: 1). Foreign policy is by definition an agent-level activity performed by various policymakers (agents) at the domestic and international levels respectively (Hopf, 1998:88).

Interest groups refer to individuals who come together as a group and who seek to influence public policy independently from the government or political parties (Grant 1979:152). For Robert Trice (1978:238), interest groups are actors that are autonomous from government and supplementary to the mass public. Interest groups are linked to the government decision-making system through various forms of communication. It is through the various forms of communication such as media campaigns, shaping public opinion, requesting meetings with policy makers and holding public protests that interest groups are able to influence government decision-making. Ultimately however, interest groups do not have formal policy-making authority but rather depend on the authorities to translate their policy preferences into decisional outputs.

Analysts of international politics should therefore consider the role played by interest groups in foreign policy decision-making when explaining the behaviour of states (Stefanidis, 2001:8). This is because even though the external context may be taken as a starting point, an enquiry into the causes of foreign policy behaviour is simply bound to come across the actors' domestic consideration (Stefanidis, 2001:8). It is then up to the analyst to apply tactic and considered judgement when determining how the interaction of internal and external aspects informed the specific outcome, either as a constraint or opportunity. Interest groups maximise their ability to influence policy decision outcomes by putting pressure on government to consider their views instead of government focusing solely on its ability to retain office (Stefanidis 2001:9). This is also consistent with the liberal school of thought. This actor-related theory suggests that within a state, individuals and groups play a central role in foreign policy decision-making by influencing structure in international politics (Moravcsik, 1997: 518).

1.1 Literature overview

This section provides a brief overview of the scholarly sources which were consulted during the progress of this study. In order to have a clearly defined national interest within a better conceptualised foreign policy, other role players such as interest groups need to be included in the decision-making process (Spies 2010; Alden and Schoeman 2013; Lalbahadur 2014; Notshulwana 2012). The main themes identified in respect of the literature in South African Foreign Policy Analysis are the country's human rights-based foreign policy; the role of interest groups and other sub-national actors in foreign policy formulation and decision making, the interest versus value-based foreign policy; African-centred foreign policy with specific reference to the Thabo Mbeki era; Foreign Policy under Jacob Zuma's administration, and South Africa's hegemonic status in Africa. This study however focuses on the foreign policy decision-making process in South Africa by exploring the reasons why interest groups have potentially played only a limited role in the formulation of South Africa's foreign policy, and by association in the definition of the country's national interest. This contributes further to the existing body of knowledge on the role of interest groups in foreign policy decision making and the definition of South Africa's national interest.

Geldenhuys (2011: 2) posits that in 1994, South Africa assured the world that the country's foreign policy would be based on a highly moralistic and ambitious foreign policy in order to make the world a better place for all. Thus, South Africa sought to portray an image of an exemplary global citizen as opposed to the apartheid regime which damaged the image and the reputation of the country prior to 1994. This implied that South Africa would craft a highly moralistic foreign policy which would embrace all voices of society including interest groups. Being a good international citizen refers to being a law-abiding member of the global community, meeting international obligations, incorporating views of all members of society in foreign policy decision-making, and promoting universal norms of human rights as a logical extension of a country's fundamental national values (Brown 2001:30, Vickers 2003: 31-32). From the outset, the 'new' South Africa assumed the role of a good international citizen. This was inspired by the legacy of the country's apartheid past, its negotiated transition to a non-racial society and expectations of the global

community. Since 1994 the country's foreign policy has prioritised the promotion of human rights abroad, together with the concept of state sovereignty where accountability is a key characteristic of good international citizenship. In 1994, the ANC government pledged to canonise human rights in South Africa's international relations and it assigned a central role to South Africa in a "world-wide human rights campaign" (Geldenhuys, 2011:3). The ANC went on to proclaim that the party would not resist, nor be selective, in raising human rights violations which they saw happening in countries where the party's own interests might be negatively impacted (ANC Policy Document 1994: 2). This was a bold promise to the world by the ANC which acted unilaterally in pursuit of a high ideal and a willingness to pay a price for being faithful to the cause of human rights (Geldenhuys, 2011:3).

According to Notshulwana (2012:1) South Africa's foreign policy is unclear and incomprehensive, because the South African government has not consulted various experts such as interest groups when crafting its foreign policy. As a result, South Africa's foreign policy is lacking in content. The consequence of this is a vaguely defined national interest. This sentiment has been shared by some authors, such as Lalbahadur (2014), who have argued that South Africa's foreign policy lacks focus and coherence. Maphaka (2020) posits that interest groups have had a very limited role in foreign policy formulation and decision-making in South Africa because the government has marginalised interest groups. Graham (2013: 49) agrees and contends that in the post-apartheid era, interest groups have been marginalised in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making.

Hudson (2010) for example studies the involvement, or the lack thereof, of numerous foreign policy actors at local level in South Africa, and specifically assesses the role and position of interest groups within foreign policy decision-making process in South Africa. Hudson (2010:122) argues that in South Africa, foreign policy decision-making remains the domain of government and is not accessible to civil society and to public scrutiny. She concludes that the exclusion of interest groups in formulating the national interest has contributed to the lack of focus and coherence in South Africa's foreign policy.

A country's national interest relates to the shared, and a combination, of all the other interests in all the economic, political and social spheres of national activity

(Notshulwana 2012:3). Notshulwana (2012:3) further contends that defining the national interest of a country based on the perspective of government alone is not only inappropriate, but also restricts the ability of the state to engage with the public when constructing the all-embracing statement of the national interest. Therefore, Notshulwana contends that interest groups should be part of the interest setting agenda in order to ensure that the national interest is inclusive of other views and is comprehensively defined.

Participation by sub-national actors in South Africa's foreign policy-making is very limited, a reality that could be understood as disconnecting communities from their experiences and depriving them an opportunity to shape their destiny (Maphaka 2020:4). This is evidenced by the absence of a regular accessible platform for sub-national actors including interest groups to submit their inputs and influence South Africa's foreign policy making. In other words, ordinary people from South African communities are marginalised from foreign policy making yet decisions by government impacts their lives (Maphaka 2020:4).

Another area of interest in the literature is the role of interest groups in foreign policy decision-making studied within the sub-field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). This theme is crucial as it speaks to the research question in this study. Decision-making involves the choice of an alternative from a series of competing alternatives (Sambo, 1999: 286). For Amusan (2014:4), foreign policy making entails continuous interface between administrative, psychological, domestic and sub-national actors (Amusan, 2014:4). Though the foreign policy approach involves democratised push and pull agreements and disagreements between state and sub-national actors such as interest groups, it is the most secretive aspect of government activities, even, in the post-Cold War foreign policy (Amusan, 2014:4).

FPA, as part of its domestic level of analysis of foreign policy decision-making explores the political and government structure of a country including all laws and government agencies that can either enable or constrain the ability of interest groups to shape foreign policy making. Even foreign policy decisions taken by policy-makers, including the head of state, are impacted by the domestic political environment. The political system will determine the scope and power of policy makers to make foreign

policy decisions. Political system can be defined as a set of formal legal institutions that constitute a government or a nation-state (Hussain 2011:2).

FPA critically investigates the external policies of a state which came to be academically established after World War II. FPA explores how governments formulate and implement foreign policy. It also explores actors at the domestic level who are involved in foreign policy decision-making and what role they play in the process. Thus, why and how public values and interests should be introduced in every stage in the formulation and execution of foreign policy (Ahmed 2020:790). FPA involves the study of how a state makes foreign policy as well as the study of the processes, effects, causes or outputs of foreign policy decision-making either in a comparative or a case-specific manner. FPA also focuses on the study of diplomacy, war, intergovernmental organisations. Foreign policy must be capable of responding to the changing situations globally (Ahmed 2020:790).

1.2 Theoretical framework

In preparation for this study, mainstream IR theories namely realism; neo-realism, liberalism and constructivism were consulted in order to establish which theoretical approach was relevant for the purposes of the study. In the end, constructivism was selected. Constructivism expands the scope of the study of International Relations by embracing sub-national actors such as social communities, interest groups, and international organisations. With regard to actors, even though constructivists stand by the primacy of states, they conclude that it does not necessarily mean that the dynamics in world politics do not emerge as the result of other actors' behaviour or choices in respect of foreign policy decision-making. Sub-national actors under certain circumstances and constraints are able to influence the structure where foreign policy decisions are made based on norms, values and identity of sub-national actors (Weber, 2007:98).

Constructivism originated in the 1980s and was based on the perception that all ideas in international relations are socially constructed (Bourne, 2014:51 & Wendt, 1995:71). Jackson and Sorenson (2006:165) contend that everything in the social world in which people live, is created by them: all the beliefs, concepts, thoughts, and ideas generate an understanding between people and especially between groups of people, such as sub-national actors. Constructivism as an IR theory posits that

structures and agents are mutually constituted and can influence each other through practice (Flockhart 2016:81). Shared knowledge, interests and identities between agents are interlinked and may contribute to transforming deeply entrenched practices and structural conditions (Flockhart, 2016: 81). This theory is therefore helpful in understanding FPA and the role of interest groups in foreign policy decision-making because FPA focuses on the role of actors or agency in foreign policy formulation.

For Checkel (1998:325), constructivism studies the fundamental conceptions of how foreign policy decisions are made. It is concerned with the power imbalances at the domestic environment in which agents act and argues that this environment is both social and material. Checkel goes further to posit that for constructivists, material structures such as bureaucracies, beyond certain biological necessities can be understood only through the social context through which they are constructed (Checkel, 1998:326). Kaarbo (2015:206) argues that FPA studies the role of agency as a central decision-making unit and the impact of their subjective understandings on international and domestic opportunities and constraints. FPA studies the role of the agency of central decision-making units in order to offer a different perspective to the study of international politics that is distinct from traditional IR theories such as realism and liberalism. This is also done to explore meanings and the environment where ideas or concepts are formed by agents in their social contexts (Kaarbo 2015:206). This includes the dynamics of institutional decision-making processes and elite-mass relations. These factors are filtered through subjective understanding of human actors. As an alternative perspective to mainstream IR theories, FPA views the agent decision-maker as an important or central unit of analysis —this is its distinct contribution to the study of international politics and its alignment to constructivism (Hudson 2005).

1.3 Formulation and demarcation of research problem

This study explores some of the reasons that account for the marginalisation of interest groups in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process and the definition of the country's national interest. The centralisation of foreign policy decision-making authority in the South African President and the Executive contributes to the marginalisation of interest groups in South Africa's foreign policy

decision-making process. Foreign Policy decision-making as it stands in South Africa is elitist in nature because the President and the Executive often take unilateral decisions on what ultimately becomes the country's national interest. This exacerbates interest group marginalisation in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process. Also, as new administrations come into power, they introduce new policy goals and programmes which may not be aligned with those of previous administrations, therefore making South Africa's foreign policy inconsistent and lacking focus. The study finds these practises problematic because they result in the challenge of an incoherent foreign policy and a vaguely defined national interest in South Africa.

1.4 Aims of the study

The central aim of the study is to explore some of the reasons why interest groups have played only a limited role in the formulation of South Africa's national interest and foreign policy decision-making process. The study is also aimed at exploring the value that interest groups can add to South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process and the definition of the country's national interest should their perspectives be incorporated into foreign policy decisions taken by government.

1.5 Research and methodological approach

The nature of this research lends itself to a qualitative research paradigm which involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data. This is because this research is concerned with exploring perceptions and the lived experiences of members of the different interest groups selected in respect of their perceived exclusion in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process. Values are intersubjective and constructed. Therefore, one cannot measure them in research as they cannot be quantified numerically. Hence the need for a qualitative approach in this study. This study consequently sought to obtain insights directly from members of these interest groups regarding their perceptions and experiences about why they felt that they had been marginalised in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process and the definition of the country's national interest. The researcher obtained lived experiences and perceptions of members of interest groups that participated in this study in order to explore reasons why interest groups thought that they had been

marginalised in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process more generally and in the definition of the country's national interest in particular.

1.6 Methods and data collection

The study employed multiple methods to collect and triangulate data. These included existing primary sources such as the 1996 Constitution of South Africa in order to account for the marginalisation of interest groups in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process. The study also utilised secondary sources or literature which analysed and conceptualised the role of interest groups in foreign policy decision-making process and the definition of the country's national interest. It also utilised existing government policy documents, namely the 2011 White Paper on South Africa's foreign policy published by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and Chapter 7 of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 as published by the National Planning Commission within the Presidency to understand how the government currently defines the national interest in these documents. The researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of purposively selected interest groups in South Africa in order to gain their understanding and perception of the country's national interest and the reasons why they think their role has been limited in the process of defining South Africa's national interest.

Existing literature sourced from books and journals on the phenomenon of national interest in the South African context was analysed in order to assess the explanations which were put forward by other authors to account for the marginalisation of interest groups in defining the country's national interest. These sources provided useful information relevant to the conceptualisation of the national interest as presented by academics, scholars and researchers such as Nye, (1999), Spies, (2010) and Landsberg, C (2010).

1.7 Sampling frame and sampling procedure for semi-structured interviews

The researcher sought to understand the phenomenon of national interest and foreign policy decision-making process in South Africa from the perspective of representatives of South African interest groups selected for this study. As a result, semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were conducted with a purposively selected

sample of representatives of interest groups. SSIs involve a conversation between a researcher and one respondent at a time and are interactive in nature (Adams 2015:493). SSIs allow the interviewer to ask respondents both closed and open-ended questions thus allowing for further probing by the researcher whenever necessary. These interviews are very useful in providing researchers with rich and in-depth data that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. They are flexible and interactive in nature and provide the researcher with an opportunity to probe the responses of interviewees and obtain in-depth understanding and thoughts of respondents on the phenomenon under investigation. SSIs are also useful to researchers planning to employ multiple methods where more than one data collection method is employed (Adams 2015:493).

In order to gain detailed, rich information from participants regarding their perceived exclusion from South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process, certain criteria were employed for the purpose of selecting a sample of interviewees. The research used a purposively selected sample of participants for the purpose of this mini-dissertation. A small sample of 6 participants was selected for the interviews namely; Mr Mmusi Maimane, the founder of One South Africa Movement, Ms Janet Love, the Deputy Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission, who is also the former National Director of the Legal Resources Centre. Ms Janet Love also served as the part-time member of the South African Human Rights Commission. Mr Hanif Vally, the Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights and Mr Siyabonga Hadebe who is a scholar also participated in the study. In addition, 2 members of Vice Chancellors' Executive participated on an anonymous basis namely Mr London and Mr November (pseudonyms). Representatives of Vice Chancellors (VCs) of selected universities including the University of the Free State and University of Venda were interviewed in their official capacity in order to get perspectives from institutions of higher learning on the role of interest groups in the definition of South Africa's national interest. Universities often have cooperation agreements with their counterparts abroad, exchange programmes and international students enrolled in their institutions. They are therefore affected by the foreign policy decision-making process. Therefore, their experiences and views on South Africa's foreign policy formulation is important.

Moreover, the decision to select a small sample for this study was a deliberate step aimed at focusing on depth of investigation rather than a large number of participants. Interview schedules were developed for the purposefully selected sample. This ensured that a guideline existed for all interviews. All interviews were recorded, transcribed- and then reviewed, with qualitative data provided by the interviewees responding to open-ended questions.

1.8 Data analysis

The data collected during the study was interpreted through data reduction, data reorganisation and data representation (Roulston, 2013). For data reduction, similarities and differences between data from different strata was identified; similar, recurring themes within current literature on South Africa's Foreign Policy and national interest was also identified; and data irrelevant to this study was subsequently eliminated in order to keep content relevant. The study employed thematic analysis as a research method to interpret and understand identified patterns resulting from data collection. Once the semi-structured interviews were completed, similar and contradictory themes regarding participants' understanding and perception of South Africa's national interest and the role of interest groups was collated. The key findings emanating from the interviews is presented in Chapter 4 of this study based on the data collected. This study employed thematic analysis which allowed the researcher to closely examine data collected in order to identify common themes that came up frequently (Lorelli et al 2017:2).

1.9 Ethical considerations

During the study, data collected from existing literature was referenced and authors cited accordingly. This ensured that existing research on South Africa's Foreign Policy and national interest was acknowledged and not plagiarised. In terms of policy documents, specifically the White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy and the National Development Plan; information was sourced from data that was in the public domain as published on government websites. In terms of the interviews conducted, purposively selected participants were provided with a consent form clearly stating the background and objectives of the study as well as the individual informed consent forms for signature. Interviewees were informed that their participation was voluntary

and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time- and that they could remain anonymous. In the event that any interviewee wished to remain anonymous, this was respected and pseudonyms were used whenever necessary to obscure their identity. Participants that wished to be quoted directly were quoted in the transcripts used and in the writing up of the dissertation. The researcher also ensured that participants were comfortable and that the interviews were conducted in a mutually agreed venue to ensure that the privacy of participants was not invaded by the researcher. Ultimately all interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom given the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, participants were not comfortable with physical meetings and this was respected accordingly.

All participants gave written consent to participate in the study prior to the interviews being conducted. Interviewees were informed that the objective of the interview was to provoke their personal opinions, perceptions and experiences regarding their perceived neglect in foreign policy decision-making and the formulation of the national interest which informs foreign policy practice. Letters of Introduction and Letter requesting permission, as well as Letters of Informed Consent, were prepared and sent to potential participants. These were attached in the Application for Ethics Approval by the University of Pretoria. In the Letters of Informed Consent, respondents who agreed to participate in the study were asked to indicate if they wished to remain anonymous in the study or not. Respondents who chose to remain anonymous were given pseudonyms. This ensured confidentiality and anonymity of participants. The Application for Ethics Approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee of Humanities Faculty of the University of Pretoria in April 2021.

1.10 Structure of the research

The research paper consists of four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 1 introduces the study and outlines the research question and the objectives of the study. It explains why the study has been undertaken and what it hopes to achieve in the end. It also discusses the research approach, methodology, design and ethical considerations. Chapter 2 focuses on conceptual and theoretical framework. It explains key concepts used in the study such as interest groups, national interest

and FPA. The chapter explains how constructivism helps us understand the role of interest groups in foreign policy decision-making.

Chapter 3 is based on the literature review which presents different viewpoints from researchers and scholars on whether interest groups are neglected by those in power in foreign policy decision making and formulation of South Africa's national interest. Chapter 4 is the findings and analysis chapter which presents and analyses data collected from the literature and the interviews. The information and practical experiences obtained from interviewees are presented in order to demonstrate real-lived experiences of participants.

The last section of the paper consists of key conclusions of this study and makes recommendations for further research and policy formulation for South African foreign policy decision-makers.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces and describes constructivism as a theory selected for this study- as it is the theory relevant for the research problem investigated by this study. The chapter also explains how FPA aligns with some elements of constructivism. FPA helps us understand why states undertake certain foreign policy decisions by studying the foreign policy decision-making process at the domestic level (Wicaksana, 2009: 2). According to FPA, human decision makers are the primary units of analysis in world politics including at the domestic level (Busse, 1999: 44). Therefore, this chapter explains how constructivism makes sense of the role of sub-national actors such as interest groups in the definition of South Africa's national interest. Furthermore, the chapter seeks to demonstrate how constructivism explains the relationship between agency and structure in the domestic political environment. Members of interest groups do not have policy decision-making authority in defining the national interest but rather rely on government to take into account their perspectives when defining what constitutes any country's national interest.

However, interest groups can still influence foreign policy decision-making by employing various strategies such as shaping public opinion, engaging the media or supporting politicians in their campaigns so that in turn, they support policies favourable to interest groups. According to Holsti (1995:262), interest groups are likely to exert pressure on government when government introduces policies that impact negatively on interest groups. In such circumstances, interest groups are most likely to use their agency to exert pressure on government through direct submission of their grievances to policy decision-makers. This is because actors hold some ideas of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate therefore government decisions cannot always go unchallenged (Holsti, 1995: 255).

Wicaksana (2009:3), contends that constructivism is relevant to FPA research because constructivism explores the ability of human actors to influence the structure around them where foreign policy decisions are made. To make reference to the words of Alexander Wendt (1992), foreign policy is what decision makers make of it.

2.2 A constructivist approach to foreign policy decision-making

For Checkel (1998:325), FPA and constructivism explore the fundamental conceptions of how foreign policy decisions are made. Constructivism is concerned with the power imbalances in the domestic environment in which agents act, and it argues that this environment is both social and material. Checkel goes further to posit that for constructivists, material structures such as bureaucracies, beyond certain biological necessities, can be understood only through the social context through which they are constructed (Checkel, 1998:326). Furthermore, norms are collective understandings that account for the behaviour of actors (Checkel, 1998:327). Norms inform interests and identities of actors based on their beliefs and values and do not simply regulate behaviour as neoliberalism claims. Identities tell actors who they are, what they want (interests) and this ultimately becomes evident in their behaviour. Thus, identities illustrate how actors understand themselves. In the case of 'collective identities' such as interest groups, actors in these settings have an understanding of who they are and what they want as a group based on their collective understandings of self, what they stand for and what they want to pursue and for what purpose.

An action or interaction is meaningful if it is possible to place it in an inter-subjectively shared context based on intermediated rules and norms (Van Wyk 2004:124). Change at the international and domestic level occurs when actors, through their practices, reconstruct their identity, rules and norms and, in the process, create new practices and interactions. Therefore, rules and norms establishing international interactions can change only when 'beliefs and identities of domestic actors are altered thereby also changing rules and norms that are constitutive of their international and domestic political practices' (Koslowski & Kratochwil, 1994: 216).

A constructivist reading of South Africa's national interest implies that its interests define situations and conditions and determine the way South Africa acts, reacts and interacts internationally, based on the meaning it (South Africa) ascribes to objects, other actors and the actions and interactions among them (Van Wyk 2004:124). Meaning, then, becomes the basis for all actions and is developed or constructed in interaction with other actors in a way that enables states to acquire or maintain their identities (Wendt, 1992:397).

For constructivists, human consciousness is the starting point to understanding human behaviour (Busse, 1999:44). Constructivism perceives states as social actors, whose behaviour is informed by domestic and international rules. The domestic political system is not a given but a product of intersubjective consciousness amongst human beings who live in that world (Wicaksana, 2009:4). From this point of view, the arena of states interaction is also social in nature and more flexible (Busse, 1999:44). Therefore, each system is founded on human thoughts and not on material forces. Thus, human beings create their own body of thought and a set of norms to define and make sense of their world system (Sorensen & Jackson, 2007:162).

The identities of actors influence their interests and subsequently inform their behaviour (Hopf, 1998: 175). Constructivists believe that the actions of actors are informed by their interests. Actors vigorously construct their own knowledge and their reality is informed by their own experience (Elliot et al 2000:256). Thus, meaning is influenced by the interaction of prior knowledge and new events. Constructivism explores not only how particular interests come into existence, but also explore why some interests do not exist based on identities and values of actors (Hopf, 1998:176).

Constructivism, therefore also theorises about the meaning of absent interests. Just as identities and interests are produced through social practices, missing interests are understood by constructivists as being deliberately excluded or omitted from the stated interests because decision-makers are not interested in them and such interests do not form part of the identities and values of decision-makers and therefore they are omitted (Hopf 1998:176). This idea is relevant for the research question of this study because the absence of interest groups in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process implies the absence of their views in the definition of the country's national interest.

Constructivism expands the scope of International Relations by embracing sub-national actors such as social community, interest groups, and international organisations in order to make sense of world politics and demonstrate that the state is not the only important unit of analysis but so are sub-national actors. Constructivism as a theory is known for its emphasis on the relationship between identity, norms and values which influence interests of actors including at the domestic level (Kowert 2001:424-425). With regard to actors, even though

constructivists stand by the primacy of states in international politics, they conclude that it does not necessarily mean that dynamics in politics do not emerge as a result of other actors' behaviour or choices in respect of decision-making both at the international and domestic levels of analysis. Constructivism argues that both material and discursive power (discursive implies the power of practice) inform the understanding of global affairs (Hopf 1998:177). The power of practice is the ability to influence and transform social reality within the international and domestic system. Thus, constructivists believe in the power of ideas, culture, language and knowledge that is, discourse.

Both the materialist and ideational view are also crucial aspects of constructivism when making sense of the world (Jackson, 2006:165). The materialist perspective posits that power and national interest are the driving force in international relations, whereas the ideational view argues that ideas are more important as they impact the behaviour of actors. Constructivism however, believes that both ideas and power are important because power cannot exist outside of ideas as these two are mutually constituted. In other words, the "intersubjective beliefs" shared widely among people who share similar values and identities shape the international structure (Jackson, 2006:165-166). Thus, in FPA, identities help us understand who actors are and what interests they have. Identities entail the self-understanding and characteristics of individuals that distinguish them from the rest. These identities influence the interests of people in society.

Theys (2018:1) agrees with Jackson (2006) and posits that constructivists go beyond the material reality by emphasising that ideas and beliefs have a significant influence on international politics because how individuals see themselves influences what they deem as important which ultimately influence their interests (Theys, 2018:1). At a domestic level, this implies that foreign policy decision-makers pursue and prioritise interests which they perceive as important and which are deserving of national attention based on their respective beliefs and ideas. Leaders then leave out interests to which they attach less value. Consequently, reality is continually being constructed, and change therefore is unavoidable. Meanings can be transformed over time in line with the beliefs and ideas that actors hold. Actors (usually powerful ones, like leaders and influential citizens) continuously shape – and sometimes reshape – the very nature of international relations through their actions and

interactions (Theys, 2018:1). Knowledge is not simply transferred from one person to another but each individual makes sense of the world based on their own respective understandings, thoughts and beliefs (Chadwick, 2004: 46). Thus, people constantly construct their own understanding of the nature of the world based on how they see and understand things around them. Knowledge is therefore socially constructed, not a given reality. For constructivists, actors shape their own social context (of shared values and norms), and that this context, in turn, shapes an actor's interests, identity and behaviour. These actions and interactions are based on domestic rules, norms and values (Van Wyk 2004:105).

Van Wyk (2004:105) argues that constructivism is helpful in analysing foreign policy in that it explains change by analysing the power of ideas (including norms, rules and values) in defining various forms of actions and interactions. Also, constructivism emphasises the importance of identity in defining what actors want. Moreover, constructivism studies the recurring relationship between an actor's interests, identities and behaviour and the social context in which the actor exists (Ba & Hoffmann 2003: 15-33).

Constructivists argue that structure and agency are mutually constitutive. Constructivism explores internal societal normative and ideational forces that impact on the foreign policy decision-making process of states (Kaarbo 2015: 1999). International politics, including foreign policy decision-making, are not some fixed exogenous facts of life, but rather are formed by the aggregated consequences of individual and collective decisions of human actors (Bueno De Mesquita 2002:7). This point is connected to the relationship between agents and structures that constructivism explores. According to Hudson & Vore (1995:210), FPA is interested in the actors that are involved in foreign policy decision-making process; it emphasises that human beings are central to this process and that human beings are the source of most change in world politics, including at the domestic level. Thus, FPA is ultimately about human beings and the complexities that underpin how human relations play out in reality (Hudson & Vore 1995:210).

The relationship between agency and structure is informed by some form of structural conditions in which individual action is regarded as a function of social order which means that actions of individuals are limited by structural constraints which condition

operations of decision-makers by the structure (Carlsnaes 1992:248). Thus, actions of agents are influenced by the structure in which they function. This form of reduction in social theory is usually known as methodological holism (Carlsnaes 1992: 248). Therefore, structure is both the medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices because it is constituted by agency as much as it also influences actors. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and exists in the generating moments of this constitution (Giddens, 1979:5). Constructivism as an IR theory posits that structures and agents are mutually constituted and can influence each other through practice (Flockhart 2016:81).

The focus of FPA on the foreign policy decision-making process at the domestic level, as well as the ability of agents to influence foreign policy is significant to this study. This mini-dissertation explores the ability of interest groups to shape South Africa's national interest- setting agenda in the domain of foreign policy. FPA and constructivism therefore offer a relevant theoretical lens to understand the role of South African interest groups in shaping foreign policy.

2.3 Foreign Policy Analysis and foreign policy decision-making

Kaarbo (2015:206), argues that FPA studies the role of actors as a central decision-making unit and the impact of their subjective understandings on international and domestic opportunities and constraints. This includes the dynamics of institutional decision-making processes. These factors are filtered through the subjective understandings of human actors. FPA and constructivism view the agent decision-maker as an important or central unit of analysis —this is their distinct contribution to the study of international politics (Hudson 2005).

Kaarbo (2015:199) posits that the link between constructivism and FPA is natural, given constructivists' notions of agency and ideas. Constructivism argues that the ideas, beliefs and values of actors influence their thinking- and how they make sense of structure. Kubâlkovâ notes that the active mode of foreign policy expressed even in the term 'making', echoes the constructivists' emphasis on the processes of social construction" (Kubâlkovâ 2001a:19). Checkel agrees that constructivists and FPA scholars share a strong focus on agency (Checkel 2008:74). FPA scholarship also points to the complicated relationship between public opinion and values and elite decision making (Kaarbo 2015:202). Thus, FPA tries to explain the impact of power

imbalances between elites who have the authority to make foreign policy decisions and interest groups who rely on foreign policy decision-makers to consider their views when making such decisions.

According to Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, (1954:12), if one is interested in probing the 'why' questions underlying the events, conditions, and interaction patterns which rest upon state action, including the role of sub-national actors, then decision-making analysis is certainly necessary.

FPA provides an alternative to the "black-boxing" of the internal characteristics and behaviour of nations common to actor-general theories such as rational choice theory and game theory inherent in Realism. It unpacks the box by examining foreign policy decision-making as opposed to focusing on structure alone. FPA takes a foreign policy decision-making approach to the study of IR by studying the role of agency in policy decision-making both at the international and domestic level of analysis. The decision-making approach of FPA separates it from the monolithic view of nation-states as unitary actors as argued by realism for instance. It focuses on the people and units that comprise the state (Hudson & Vore 1995:210).

Moreover, for FPA scholars, 'the national interest', which is a concept that lies at the heart of the realist analysis of IR, is more productively viewed as the interests of various players outside the purview of government. Therefore, allowing for the analysis of multiple interests and identities. Thus, decision-making in respect of the national interest is not the business of government alone. Doty (1993:303) explores how particular foreign policy decisions are made by studying how actors generate a particular decision and construct their realities. Doty (1993:303) notes that foreign policy decision making extends beyond official government institutions. Moreover, Doty (1993:304) contends that in a given society, the level of acceptance of certain foreign policy decisions by the general public is determined by the extent to which government has involved representations by sub-national actors during the development of those policies. Even though foreign policies usually address very specific issues that the government wishes to address at any given time, those policies must make sense and fit with what the general public considers as reality (Doty, 1993:304).

FPA tries to explain a multifaceted process that consists of the objectives that governments pursue in their relations with other governments and their choice of means to attain these foreign policy objectives. Thus, foreign policy is about the complex channels of communication within governments and amongst its diverse subnational actors. It is also about perceptions and misperceptions as well as the ideologies and personal dispositions of all actors involved (Kubâlkovâ 2001a:17). A critical component of the study of foreign policy is the nature and impact of domestic politics and perceptions of subnational actors on foreign policy decision-making (Kubâlkovâ 2001a:17-18).

FPA is more inward- looking as opposed to realism. It explores the internal factors that influence foreign policy decision-making. This makes it more relevant to the research question of this study which investigates the role of interest groups in the definition of South Africa's national interest within the domain of foreign policy at a domestic level. Paul Williams (2004: 911) observes that foreign policy is not made in a political vacuum but is influenced by domestic factors such as public opinion, sub-national actors, and communications technology.

Carlsnaes (1992:267) notes that even though state actors may possess various comparable characteristics, they are nevertheless always constituted by different real-world structures. Foreign policy decisions of countries are a consequence of a dynamic process in which both agents and structures causally condition each other over time (Carlsnaes 1992:256). For Carlsnaes (1992:267), domestic and international structures enable and constrain foreign policy actions and are an outcome of human agency. Sub-national actors can restrict the power of foreign policy-makers by challenging their decisions through protests or media campaigns in instances where their perspectives are not reflected in decisional outputs. However, in cases where government has widely consulted in its policy decisions and taken inputs of non-state actors into account when making decisions, these actors can support government policy implementation.

2.4 Understanding national interests and the foreign policy decision-making process

This sections provides a brief discussion of the concept of national interest and how this relates to foreign policy decision-making process more generally. According to

Joseph Nye, “national interest is simply the set of shared priorities regarding relations with the rest of the world” (1999:23). Nuechterlein (1976:246) posits that national interest can be understood as the desires and goals of sovereign states in the international society. According to Miskel (2002: 97), national interest is a contested concept but that there are two schools of thought that have attempted to define the concept. The first school of thought defines national interest in terms of a state’s tangible power and sphere of influence relative to those of other states. The second school of thought, according to Miskel (2002:97), defines national interests more broadly to include intangible, but nevertheless highly regarded values such as human rights, freedom from economic deprivation and freedom from disease.

Nuechterlein (1976:148) contends that the basic national interests of a state may include defence and world order interests amongst other things. Defence interests entail the protection of the state and its citizens against threat of physical violence originating from another state, and/or an externally motivated threat to its system of government. National interest can also include economic interests, thus the expansion of the country’s economic well-being in its relations with other states. Lastly, a country’s national interest may include ideological interests which are the protection and perpetuation of a set of values which the people of a nation-state share and believe to be universally good (Nuechterlein, 1976:148). This implies that a national interest of a state contains a variety of issues on which different interest groups can make a meaningful contribution in terms of formulation. The following section therefore provides a conceptual understanding of interest groups as defined by various scholars.

The constructivist scholar, Finnemore (1998:2), goes a little further to posit that national interest can be defined in the context of universal norms and understandings about what is good and acceptable. The normative context characterized by norms and values impacts the conduct of decision-makers and of mass publics who may choose certain ideas and place pressure on those decision-makers. The normative context transforms over time, and as universally held norms and values change, they create synchronised shifts in state interests and conduct across the system at domestic level. Therefore, this understanding of the national interest is different as it does not focus on material structural factors like realists do.

For Frieden, (1999:59) national interests are determined by the enduring interests of domestic actors- below the national level- that govern the definition of a country's national interest. Thus, the role played by interest groups, political parties, and bureaucracies - which interact to form national interests should be considered; as opposed to only concentrating on disclosed interests analysed at the international level.

2.5 Understanding Interest Groups

Robert Trice (1978:238) posits that interest groups are actors who are autonomous from government and supplementary to the mass public and are linked to government decision-making system through various forms of communication. Interest groups may submit memorandums of their demands or inputs to government in order for government to incorporate interest groups perspectives into foreign policy decisions. Also, they may express their views through the media or protests or submit their inputs to government when the latter consults and request them to do so. It is through these various forms of communication that interest groups are able to influence government decision-making.

Interest groups are aggregates of individuals who interact with national government at a domestic level in varying degrees in pursuance of common interest (Bill & Hardgrave 1981: 121). Interest groups in advanced, multicultural societies such as the United States of America, are self-governing because they can pursue their interests without being controlled by government because of the democratic values which their governments espouse. Democratic countries recognise peoples' right of association therefore interest groups have a right to exist as independent sub-national actors.

Graham (2013:46) argues that interest groups can facilitate the democratisation of the foreign policy decision-making process; they can support foreign policy implementation by government, and they can bring more coherence and comprehensiveness to the definition of the national interest. Interest groups often interact with ordinary citizens and sometimes conduct research to understand the lives of citizens. Therefore, interest groups have an understanding of lived experiences and they can help government to formulate foreign policy that speaks to the expectations of citizens.

2.6 Conclusion

This study employed constructivist ideas or tenets in order to explain the relationship between interest groups and foreign policy decision making and general assumptions of constructivism in order to explain how the national interest comes about. The value of constructivism is that it explains the mutually constitutive nature of structure and agency. It explains how structure can change agency and how agency can change structure in world politics including at the domestic level. Agents and structures are interacting “they are mutually constituted” (Checkel, 1998:328). As a theoretical approach, constructivism is therefore helpful in understanding FPA and the role of interest groups in foreign policy decision making because FPA focuses on the role of actors or agency in foreign policy formulation. Constructivism provides a useful theoretical framework for conceptualising the role of interest groups in the definition of national interest and its connections to Foreign Policy Analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of scholarly sources and primary documents consulted during the development of this research. It critically evaluates the available literature on how FPA attempts to explain the role of interest groups in foreign policy decision-making more generally and particularly in the South African context. The literature review begins with a general overview of interest group influence in foreign policy decision-making processes in other contexts such as the United States of America, Japan and China in order to get a view of how interest groups shape foreign policy decision-making more generally. The chapter then focuses on the ability of interest groups to influence foreign policy decision-making process in South Africa. This is done in order to focus specifically on the research question raised by this study. Some of the literature argues that in order to have a clearly defined national interest, within a better conceptualised foreign policy, other role players such as South African interest groups need to be included in the decision-making process in order to incorporate the voices that are currently missing in this process (Spies 2010; Alden and Schoeman 2013; Lalbahadur 2014; Notshulwana 2012).

Participation by sub-national actors in South Africa's foreign policy making is very limited, a reality that can be understood as disconnecting communities from their experiences and depriving them an opportunity to shape their destiny (Maphaka 2020:4). This is evidenced by the absence of a regular accessible platform for sub-national actors including interest groups to submit their inputs and influence South Africa's foreign policy making. In other words, ordinary people from South African communities are marginalised from foreign policy making yet decisions by government impacts their lives (Maphaka 2020:4). However, this may not be unique to South Africa. Hence this chapter also looks at the literature more generally in other contexts before exploring the South African context.

3.2 Foreign policy decision-making and interest groups

For Amusan (2014:4), foreign policy making entails continuous interface between administrative, psychological, domestic and sub-national actors including interest groups (Amusan, 2014:4). Though the foreign policy approach involves a democratised push and pull agreement and disagreement between state and sub-national actors such as interest groups, it is the most secretive aspect of government activities, even, in the post-Cold War foreign policy (Amusan, 2014:4). This may contribute to the marginalisation of interest groups in foreign policy decision-making process.

FPA, as part of its domestic level of analysis of foreign policy decision-making, explores the political and government structure of a country including all laws and government agencies, that can either enable or constrain the ability of decision-making units to shape foreign policy making. Even foreign policy decisions taken by policy-makers- including the head of state are impacted by the domestic political environment. The political system will determine the scope and power of policy makers to make foreign policy decisions. Political system can be defined as a set of formal legal institutions that constitute a government or a nation-state (Hussain 2011:2).

FPA explores how governments formulate and implement foreign policy. It also explores other actors at the domestic level who are involved in foreign policy decision- making and what role they play in the process. Thus, FPA studies the role of human actors in foreign policy making and its execution (Ahmed 2020:790). FPA involves the study of specific actors and decision-making units who make up the state.

Foreign policies are designed by the head of government with the aim of achieving complex domestic and international agendas. It usually involves an elaborate series of steps where domestic politics play an important role (Hussain 2011:1). Foreign policies, in most democratic societies, are designed through coalitions of domestic and international actors and groups. Some factors of influence include the leader's own personality and cognition, degree of rationality, domestic politics and international and domestic interest groups. However, out of all the factors mentioned,

it is the domestic political environment that shapes the entire framework of decision-making in a country (Hussain 2011:1).

Interest groups are tied to government decision-making system by channels of communication. It is within these channels of communication that the process of influence takes place (Trice 1978:238). Interest groups play an important role throughout the process of decision-making by seeking to influence policy outcomes through the bureaucracy, politicians, government officials and the population, warning them about problems, opportunities, and policy options (Kingdon 1995).

Stefanidis (2001:9) contends that foreign policy decision-making is usually the prerogative of government. Therefore, interest groups do not have decision-making power. However, ruling elites are constantly engaged in a process of gaining and sustaining legitimacy. Despite the fact that the ruling elite enjoys important advantages in the policy-making process as opposed to other domestic actors, they are ultimately accountable to the electorate; which includes members of various interest groups. The choices of foreign policy decision-makers may not be aligned with policy preferences of citizens and therefore may affect their material interests or provoke their ideological views on values and goals.

Thus, political legitimacy sought by the ruling elite offers interest groups a chance to interfere and influence the foreign policy decision-making process (Stefanidis 2001:9). For Stefanidis (2001:9), interest groups do not aim at coming into power but rather seek to influence those in office to consider their perspectives when making policy decisions. Therefore, what matters for interest groups is the ability to access policy makers in order to have their views considered in decisional outputs. Consequently, the central considerations for influence-seeking interest groups are to find out where and when decisions are to be made, and to then to select the appropriate strategy for effectively communicating with policy-makers (Trice 1978:238).

According to Stefanidis (2001:8), the role of domestic actors such as interest groups cannot be ignored when explaining the behaviour of states and their foreign policy decisions. Even if state behaviour is analysed at an international level, the domestic level of analysis is equally important because the behaviour and actions of domestic actors influences the foreign policy decision making process. However, the influence

of domestic actors on foreign policy is constrained by the political system and its mode of operation (Stefanidis 2001:8). Thus, domestic factors and the internal political system are interconnected as they continuously shape each other. In both democratic and non-democratic societies, government institutions where foreign policy decisions are made, have authority over the foreign policy decision making process thereby limiting the ability of interest groups to shape foreign policy. At a national level, interest groups pursue their interests by placing pressure on government to adopt favourable policies, while politicians seek power by constructing coalitions amongst interest groups.

Interest group strategies can be broadly characterised into 'direct' and 'indirect' attempts to influence foreign policy decisions (Trice 1978:239). Indirect influence is exerted when a group encourages members, affiliates and other publics to engage in political activities themselves. Direct influence occurs when a group communicates with policy makers and administrators through letters and by personal visits to policy makers such as foreign ministries.

Trice (1978:239) posits that indirect techniques are those techniques by which an interest group attempts to use other non-governmental actors such as media or elements such as public opinion, in its political environment, in order to influence policy decisions. These other actors such as media houses are seen to have access channels to decision-makers that are independent of those of the interest group as policy-makers often use these platforms to communicate policy decisions to the public. Therefore, the relationships that an interest group has developed with other domestic actors can be important in determining the success of an indirect strategy.

Other non-governmental groups, such as the mass media, can be used by interest groups to exert indirect influence in two different ways. First, if an interest group can gain direct access to relevant government actors it may attempt to generate additional support for its position from other groups who have their own channels of communication to policy-makers. In this case, an interest group would be using indirect methods to supplement its more direct efforts. Second, if the interest group is unable or does not seek to gain direct access to policy makers, it may attempt to influence other domestic actors through partnerships in the hope that those actors can present the group's policy preferences to government decision-makers through

their own channels of communication. Both indirect and direct strategies share the common goal of attaining the consideration and support of policy-makers.

The major difference between the methods is that indirect efforts involve at least a two-stage influence process, whereas direct methods involve only a single stage process. Thus, instead of attempting to gain support from other domestic elements who in turn try to influence governmental actors as is characteristic of indirect methods, direct techniques are aimed specifically at policy-makers (Trice 1978:239). Moreover, the effects of a 'successfully' implemented indirect strategy are often difficult to attribute to the interest group that employs it, because policy preferences and effects of other domestic actors become intertwined with those of the initiating group. An interest group's decision to rely primarily on either a direct or an indirect strategy, will be shaped largely by its perceptions of the receptivity of policy makers and the relative friendliness or hostility of the political environment within which it operates (Trice 1978:239).

If an interest group can convince the general public and policy makers about the rationale behind its policy preferences, it can enhance the legitimacy and gain support for its policy preferences in the eyes of decision makers (Trice 1978:241). Interest groups that are able to frame their position on specific issues in terms of a long-standing general policy hold an advantage to the extent that they are more likely to elicit supportive reactions from both decision-makers and the mass public alike (Trice 1978:244).

Koch (2019) studied the role of interest groups in the U.S.A sanctions policy against Iran from 2007-2016, and established that there are some factors that allow interest groups to influence foreign policy decision-making in the U.S.A First, the decentralised policymaking structure: The political system of the United States of America provides different access points to interest groups namely; the legislature, executive, and judiciary as well as independent regulatory commissions. National and state government bodies, as well as local authorities also provide access points in the political decision-making process. In foreign policy issues, interest groups evidently concentrate on the Defence and State Departments as well as members of Congress who are influential regarding their respective concerns in the House or Senate (Koch 2019:18). Koch further asserts that political parties have lost some

level of importance in U.S.A politics. In the presidential system of the United States, the president as the executive, and Congress as the legislature have their own electoral mandates (Koch 2019;18). This lessens the importance of political parties because the whole structure of the government does not solely depend on party stability contrary to parliamentary systems. This therefore provides space for interest groups to influence foreign policy making in the US through face to face meetings with decision-makers (Koch 2019:22).

Indirect strategies by interest groups include public campaigns and advocacy. This includes grassroots mobilisation of members of the public, political debates, public meetings, speeches, protests or rallies. Moreover, indirect strategies also involve the media by publishing advertisements and articles aimed at public education. In order to succeed in their indirect strategies, interest groups in the USA also tend to use coalition-building with other interest groups as well as a public endorsement of a candidate or, as a punishment, of the political adversary (Koch 2019:22). Mobilising a variety of actors in a coalition by interest groups can be critical to reach a shared policy (Koch, 2019:27).

There are interesting lessons to be drawn from the U.S.A context which stimulates interest to explore what happens in other contexts. According to Cheng (1990:252), one of the unique characteristics of Japanese interest group behaviour is the extent to which voluntary organisations, whether they function specifically for political purposes or not, work from within the National Diet and party systems rather than from outside. The National Diet is the Japanese legislature which is composed of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors. Interest groups pursue direct representation in the Diet by promoting their own candidates for political office as members of reputable parties (Cheng 1990:252).

What is interesting in the Japanese context is the practice of 'dual office holding' where politicians hold leadership positions both within interest groups and the legislature either as long-serving executives of these organizations or as designated advisers or executives of one sort or another, providing an instant political connection to the central organs of power (Cheng 1990:252). For example, the Japanese farm lobby is well represented in the House of Councillors and the House of Representatives by executives from the Agricultural Cooperative Organization

(Nokyo). In the upper house, the number of Nokyo executives has been consistently high enough for them to sustain an informal but permanent group called the Nokyo Diet Members Council. In addition, other agricultural organizations are also directly represented in the Diet including the Central Livestock Council, the National Beef Association, the Federation of Land Development Corporations, and the National Chamber of Agriculture (Cheng 1990:252).

In Japan, electoral support is the connecting element between Diet politicians to outside groups; it includes funds, votes, formal recommendation of candidates, and other types of campaign assistance (Cheng 1990:253). Indeed, interest groups are often used as a launch pad into politics, with the core of a support base built around organisational membership (Cheng 1990:254). The critical factor determining access to the policy process, however, is party affiliation- the number of supporters an interest group has in the ranks of the governing party. Therefore, the policy influence of an interest group is dictated by the nature of its political allegiance (Cheng 1990:257). The crucial function that Japanese interest groups perform in the electoral context, and the subsequent reliance of Diet members on interest groups for electoral success, encourages politicians to view themselves as much more directly representative of outside groups than is the norm in Western democracies. The relationship between political parties and interest groups is also much closer, and there is a much clearer identification of specific politicians as spokespersons for specific interests (Cheng 1990:255).

Horowitz & Marsh (2002:61) studied interest group influence on China's foreign policy and they observed that interest groups activity has been mainly limited to economic and trade issues - given China's political system where power is centralised in the Communist Party of China. Thus, manufacturing and trade are critical aspects of China's foreign policy. Interest group activity has broadly therefore been limited. The most important concentrated interest groups include manufacturing industries subject to international competition. Other potentially important concentrated sectors include large-scale services, such as banking and utilities, or large branches of the state administration (Horowitz & Marsh 2002:117).

In China, politicians seek support from interest groups and in turn interest groups take this as an opportunity for political institutions or persons to consider their policy

preferences in return for political support (Horowitz & Marsh 2002:119). Where politicians have a strong desire to retain power, it may pay them to use backing to retain the loyalty of concentrated interest groups, or to pursue broad economic growth to acquire legitimacy among dispersed interest groups (Horowitz & Marsh 2002:119).

Despite the non-democratic system in China, consensus building remains an important characteristic in decision-making because the Chinese government recognises that the pressure exerted by interest groups cannot be ignored. Despite the recognition of interest group pressure by Chinese authorities and the need to make policy decision-making inclusive and flexible, government still assumes significant autonomy (Cai 2014:112). New social changes in China require an understanding of the policy-making process by examining the interactive dynamics between decision-makers and external actors in areas that directly affect the latter's interests (Cai 2014:112). However, not all groups benefit equally from the opening of the political space or inclusiveness, and some groups are better positioned than others in terms of interaction with government given that they represent big businesses or have long standing connections with politicians (Cai 2014:113).

According to Akhakpe (2014:1), Nigerian interest groups were hardly integrated into government policy decision-making, including foreign policy, due to many years of military rule. However, since its independence in 1960, Nigeria has considered it appropriate to include interest group perspectives when making policy decisions contrary to what happened during the periods of military rule. Thus the democratization processes gave stimulus to the activities of interest groups (Akhakpe 2014:41).

However, Ebegbulem (2019:53) highlights that despite efforts by Nigerian interest groups to shape foreign policy and the national interest, they have not been immune to challenges as they also face limitations. This is because those in power determine what constitutes Nigeria's national interest. It is the elites who constitute the leadership of the nation who determine what should constitute the national interest of the country. Thus, interest group influence on Nigeria's foreign policy and national interest has also been limited (Ebegbulem, 2019:53).

Interest groups in Nigeria have attempted to put pressure on the government institutions of policy making- either in the legislative or the executive arms of

government. They engage policy in advocacy, sponsoring candidates into the National Assembly and lobby those in committees of the National Assembly to pass bills and policies favourable to their interests. Sometimes, monetary incentives by interest groups are used to ensure favourable policies are formulated and passed into laws by decision-makers (Akhakpe 2014:42). Also, interest groups in Nigeria have had to develop associational networks that cut across traditional, social cleavages of ethnicity and religion that have been so markedly exploited by political and military leaders to perpetuate neo-colonial rule (Aiyede 2005). Under democratic rule, interest groups exert influence on the policy process from the stage of policy initiation to formulation and implementation. This is necessary for there to be policy development, efficiency, and effectiveness by including interest groups. Interest groups keep their eyes on these processes for their interests to be met. In this way, interest groups help bring government closer to the people by sharing important information with policy makers that could improve and shape policy outcomes (Akhakpe 2014:43).

Malik & Medcalf (2011) studied the influence of interest groups in India's foreign policy and they established that Indian citizens are historically more concerned with domestic issues than foreign policy matters. Despite India becoming more of a trading nation since its economy began to open up in 1991, the bulk of its consumer market remains domestic. Aside from tiny business elites, few demographic groups see value in monitoring overseas societies (Malik & Medcalf 2011:3). However, there has been steady interest group activity putting pressure on government to integrate interest groups into the foreign policy decision-making process. Three new sources of pressure on India's diplomatic establishment include a determined business community, a vocal diaspora and a high-spirited and aggressive news media. These have positioned interest groups as important parties in India's foreign policy decision-making process which the government has had to recognise (Malik & Medcalf 2011:1).

India's business community, particularly those Indian companies that are exporting capital and investing overseas, or those that depend on overseas markets and clients, such as the Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITES) industries are able to influence foreign policy decision makers. Also, the Indian diaspora, especially those who have been educated and are politically influential in

their country of residence, as in the United States of America; or who are connected to specific states in India are also key in shaping foreign policy decisions to incorporate their interest (Malik & Medcalf 2011:2). The news media, specifically the many television news channels that cater to middle and lower classes of Indians, are also influential interest groups in India's foreign policy decision-making process. These news channels are able to reach millions of people and shape public opinion on government policy as they command enormous audiences in a country of more than a billion people (Malik & Medcalf, 2011: 4).

3.3 Challenges faced by interest groups in foreign policy decision-making

Interest groups also come across challenges when attempting to exert influence on policy makers. When interest groups join policy debates, they are by no means the only actors, nor are they among the most powerful (Dietrich 1999:284). By definition, the President and his cabinet (in the case of a democratic state) will always have more authority due to the Constitutional provisions which centralise power in the President and the Executive. So, when these actors are determined and willing to use their resources, they can adopt foreign policy without the views or perspectives of interest groups. Disappointed interest groups can resort to public criticism of policy choices and they can attempt to impact electoral outcomes. However, especially on foreign policy issues in which public attention is low, and when many organisations are non-profit groups with limited financial resources, only in unusual circumstances will such tactics worry elected officials (Dietrich 1999:284).

When it comes to interest group resources, the literature (Hojnacki and Kimball 1999; Dür 2008c; Eising 2007; Mahoney 2007a; 2007b) points out that financial resources, size of the staff team, membership representation, the tactics employed (direct and indirect), and the type of influence exerted, play a role in the ability of interest groups to influence foreign policy decision-making. In other words, a well-funded interest group might employ more tactics, put more money into an issue and/or even assign more specialists to a case. Thus, with these characteristics, it is more likely that interest groups succeed in influencing policy. The staff size, according to Mahoney (2007a), might be a strong indicator of the level of financial resources, as well as the membership size, which can indicate the level of legitimacy of an interest group. Therefore, a wealthy association with a high degree of legitimacy is more likely to

influence policy outcomes as opposed to another interest group with small representation and scarce financial resources.

In terms of challenges faced by interest groups in the Nigerian context, centralisation of policy decision-making by the government in Nigeria is one of the key challenges limiting the ability of interest groups to influence foreign policy decision-making (Akhakpe 2014:40). This observation is based on the provisions of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution which stipulates that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. In pursuance of this goal, political institutions such as parliament and the executive arm are created to enact policies to actualize this mandate (Akhakpe 2014:40). Equally important are state bureaucracies that are capable of directing public policy to serve the national interests and the articulation of a body of moral doctrines which disciplines the competition for private advantage (Akhakpe 2014:40).

One of the challenges faced by interest groups in India is that the country lacks a strong culture of foreign policy think tanks. The few that do exist in India's capital, New Delhi, are mostly quasi-governmental organisations with a hybrid of both government and private legal characteristics, and it is not difficult to find mixed reviews of their research and policy inputs, including from government officials (Malik & Medcalf, 2011:4). Indian business has in some way attempted to close the gap. The two leading chambers of commerce, namely the Confederation of India Industry (CII) and the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), are among the more restructured and intellectually resourceful private entities in India.

Business leaders representing these groups join crucial ministerial or other governmental delegations abroad. CII in particular has positioned itself as a kind of officially declared 'Track 2' interlocutor (Malik & Medcalf 2011:5). CII has been opening trade offices abroad for many years, including one in Saudi Arabia in 1977 and in London in 1991. The initial charter was purely for lobbying purposes for Indian business abroad, winning export orders and the like. (Malik & Medcalf 2011:6). For instance, meetings of the India-Japan-US strategic dialogue have been hosted in all three countries. Japanese delegates have included members of think tanks and business leaders such as the Chairman of Mitsubishi. Indian delegates have also been granted audiences with political leaders in Tokyo (Malik & Medcalf 2011:7).

3.4 Sub-national actors and South Africa's foreign policy post-1994

In 1996, the then Department of Foreign Affairs launched the '*Foreign Policy for South Africa Discussion Document*' and sought inputs from academics and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) alike. Also from 1995-1996, the South African government created the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs (PCFA) which proved to be a successful platform for the promotion of public debates on a number of foreign policy issues such as human rights (Nel & Van Wyk 2003:60). The PCFA was tasked with assessing the conformity of legislation that impacted on the conduct of South Africa's foreign policy with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This was a positive start in involving sub-national actors in foreign policy decision-making in post-apartheid South Africa (Nel & Van Wyk 2003:60). The rationale behind this was that foreign policy should not be treated as different from any other public policy and should not be the business of elites alone (Nel & Van Wyk 2003:60).

However, during 1997-1998, public participation in the policy decision-making process started to decline significantly. During the Mbeki administration, Parliament's role as watchdog was severely limited and the PCFA had difficulty in ensuring that its oversight and review function was properly executed (Le Pere & Van Nieuwkerk 2004:125; Van Wyk 2004:121). The parliamentary committee entrusted with foreign policy matters became less influential due to the greater inputs in the process of foreign policy formulation by former president Mbeki (Butler 2004:161). Law-making and oversight became characterised by ceremonial debate in the National Assembly. Difficult issues were hardly ever placed on the agenda and most of the debating was left to the opposition.

Mbeki and the Executive regularly attended ANC caucus meetings, which had a constraining effect on debate, as decisions were taken by the President, who was also occupied with these caucus meetings (Lodge 2004:209; Butler 2005a:721). Ahmed (2009:291-292, 304-305) claims that Parliament's lack of engagement on international issues was caused by an uncertainty about its role in the foreign policy-making process and the executive's domination of the process. The dominance on policy decision-making by former President Mbeki led to elitist foreign policy where decision-making and influence became the business of the Presidency alone.

During Jacob Zuma's Presidency, the Executive continued to proclaim the national interest and defined what should constitute it. During Zuma's Presidency, the national interest was pursued under the broad theme of 'new' development (Landsberg 2010: 275). This theme included consolidating the African agenda, deepening South-South cooperation, expanding South-North relations and strengthening foreign political and economic ties with partners globally. According to Amusan (2018:88), South Africa's national interest under the Zuma administration was aimed at promoting development by adopting a foreign policy that contributed to sustainable economic growth and development. During this period, the Office of the President was in charge of foreign policy formulation and execution through the International Relations, Peace and Security Cluster (Amusan 2018:91).

Chris Landsberg posits that there was still a 'lacuna' during Zuma's Presidency as it was not exactly clear what the national interest was. The challenge was to move beyond the rhetoric and intentions and to define the national interest and articulate a coherent foreign policy (Landsberg 2010).

President Cyril Ramaphosa became South Africa's President in February 2018. Ramaphosa's foreign policy approach has been that of inclusiveness, a commitment to a revival of Mandela's idealism (which implies strengthening ties with all countries and regions of the world) without choosing special allies (Hamill 2019). However, Africa remains a priority for his administration. As a result, Ramaphosa's administration continues to prioritise commercial ties with other African countries.

One of the strong focus areas of President Ramaphosa diplomacy is the notion that there is a need to consolidate economic diplomacy (IGD, 2018:1). In his first State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa clearly indicated that strengthening the economic engagements around the world would be the focus of his administration. This was highlighted by the two main reference points in the speech, that is, the Continental Free Trade Agreement and the enhancement of intra-BRICS trade (IGD, 2018).

President Cyril Ramaphosa had an opportunity between January 2019 and 2021 to recalibrate South Africa's foreign policy, given that the country held a rotating seat on the United Nations Security Council -and served as chair of the African Union during this time (IISS 2021). Ramaphosa chose to take a more pragmatic approach to

international issues than either of his predecessors- who sided reflexively with China and Russia. This stance is more consistent with South Africa's traditional non-aligned position. However, it is still a long way away from the policy under Mandela, when the country was seen as a global leader on human-rights issues. Under Ramaphosa, the national interest is still not clearly defined, and the role of interest groups remains limited in shaping South Africa's national interest.

Amusan (2018:9) argues that the South African foreign policy environment is intricate and contradictory. This is because on the one hand, the constitution confers a more significant role to the President (a centralised approach), while on the other hand DIRCO, Cabinet, and parliament specifically, through its committee of international relations, have a significant role to play in foreign policy actions (a democratic approach). For a functional foreign policy that will have an impact on the national interest of the state, many stakeholders should be involved in determining what core, medium and long term interests of the state should be. Going by the basic attributes of national interest, it should be the interest of citizens irrespective of the government in power (Amusan 2018:97).

The next section will therefore discuss how the 2011 White Paper on South Africa's foreign policy attempts to define the country's national interest.

3.5 South Africa's national interest as outlined in the 2011 White Paper on Foreign Policy

In 2011, DIRCO working together with some members of the private sector and think tanks such as the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), developed the White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy. The aim of the White Paper was to provide direction on what South Africa's foreign policy should focus on and how best the country could position itself globally. The paper also speaks to what South Africa's national interest is. It is for this reason that the White Paper is being explored in this section in order to understand how it attempts to articulate South Africa's national interest.

The White Paper was the first of its kind to pay particular attention to the definition of South Africa's national interest and the need to actively involve sub-national actors

in foreign policy decision-making. South Africa views itself as a central part of the African continent and therefore defines its national interest as being inherently linked to Africa's stability and unity (White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy, 2011: 3). In order for South Africa to become a winning nation in the 21st century, its international relations work must endeavour to shape and strengthen the country's national identity, instil values of national pride and patriotism in its people and address injustices of the past including issues of race and gender. Addressing these challenges will contribute significantly to achieving a better life for all South Africans and for all people in the region and the continent (White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy 2011:3).

According to the White Paper (2011:10) South Africa's national interest can be understood as people-centred, including promoting the well-being, development and empowerment of South Africans; protecting the planet for future generations; and ensuring the prosperity of the country, its region and continent.

In the White Paper on SA's Foreign Policy (2011:3), DIRCO recognises that the definition of the national interest cannot be the responsibility of government alone. Rather, it can encourage an enabling environment of dialogue and discourse among all stakeholders including actors outside of government to interrogate policies and strategies to improve foreign policy implementation, and their application in the best interests of the people. DIRCO therefore undertook to conduct its business of managing South Africa's international relations ever mindful of its responsibility to the people it represents, even beyond the nation's borders (White Paper 2011:3). In a fast-changing and interdependent world, it is essential for South Africa to constantly evaluate and revise its foreign policy and to ensure that its national interests are maximised.

Foreign policy is not an abstract matter separate from domestic policies and as such South Africa ensures that these inform its foreign policy (White Paper 2011:6). Despite what the White Paper articulates it seems that interest groups continued to be marginalised in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process because government has not taken practical steps to incorporate interest group perspectives in the country's foreign policy decision-making process as articulated by the White Paper (Van Wyk 2004, Notshulwana 2012, Maphaka 2020).

Hudson (2010:114) posits that historically in the South African context, foreign policy decision-making and implementation has been the responsibility of national government namely, the Executive (that is the President and the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation). The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has recognised that sub-national actors such as local government and interest groups can play a valuable role in foreign policy decision-making and implementation as outlined in the DIRCO'S 2011 White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy. However, constitutional limitations remain the dominant barrier to wider and more meaningful participation by sub-national actors because decision-making power is given to government alone (Van Wyk 1998:29). Geldenhuys (1998:5) shares Van Wyk's sentiment and posits that in South Africa, foreign policy decision-making authority has been centralised around the Executive to the exclusion of interest groups.

Another government policy document that tries to articulate South Africa's national interest is chapter 7 of the National Development Plan (NDP) adopted by government in 2012. The following section therefore explores how the NDP attempts to explain South Africa's national interest.

3.6 Chapter 7 of the National Development Plan (NDP): Positioning South Africa in the World

The National Planning Commission (NPC) was established by former President Jacob Zuma in May 2010 and it consists of a group of experts in finance, business, politics, sociology, technology, science and demographics which advises the South African government on policy matters including foreign policy. The NDP (2012:239) stipulates that South Africa's foreign policy decision-making should take into account global shifts and developments in soft, smart, hard and mental power from the West to the East. This would help South Africa make strategic foreign policy decisions that respond to contemporary global challenges and developments. Given South Africa's geographical positioning, its foreign policy should be informed by a clear understanding of the national, regional and continental priorities in a multipolar world (NDP 2012:236).

The NDP goes on to argue that South Africa's foreign policy decision-makers need to be aware of the global competition for Africa's natural resources and its market.

As such, the country needs to have a clear strategy of positioning itself in the region, continent and beyond. Thus, South Africa's national interest needs to be clearly defined in order to have a foreign policy that is strategic and would benefit its domestic constituency (NDP 2012:236).

The NDP was adopted in 2012 and it is a guiding policy document that outlines specific targets and goals to help the country eliminate poverty and reduce inequality amongst its people by 2030.

According to the NDP, South Africa needs to define its national priorities to its partners abroad. Moreover, government needs to engage the wider society including the private sector and interest groups on its national interest-setting agenda (NDP 2012: 237). The National Planning Commission recommended in the NDP that DIRCO should work with other stakeholders including research institutions, business and academic institutions as well as civil society when developing foreign policies (NDP, 2012:239). The NPC also recommended that the South African Government should urgently convene a high-level, high-impact task team to investigate South Africa's foreign relations. Amongst other things, the task team should clearly define South Africa's national interest (NDP 2012:241). The NPD specifically states that a high-level discussion about the nature of the national interest that is practical, honest and principled is needed in order to shape South Africa's foreign policy practice (NDP 2012:241).

Notwithstanding government's attempt to explain South Africa's national interest through the 2011 White Paper on South Africa's foreign policy and chapter 7 of the NDP, issues of centralisation of power around the President and the Executive- as well as changing administrations that bring different policy agenda to government- have further marginalised interest groups and perpetuated the incoherence of the national interest. The following section further discusses some of these issues which continue to pose challenges as a result of the country's vaguely defined national interest and incoherent foreign policy.

3.7 The dominance of the President and the Executive in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making

Hudson (2010:115) argues that South Africa's foreign policy making is characterised by Presidentialism. Presidentialism refers to the centralisation of power in one office and/or person. According to the South African Constitution (RSA 1996), power to govern South Africans rests upon the President and the cabinet. In practice, though, there is a clear hierarchy which places the President as the head of the executive. In the South African context, centralisation in the office of the President is needed in order to promote stability and prevent fragmentation against the backdrop of political conflict between the Executive and the Committee on International Relations for instance, which would result in different policy positions if authority was not centralised around the President (Hudson 2010:115). Such a political conflict would delay or prevent policy decisions from being taken due to differing views.

Hudson (2010: 116) posits that under the Mbeki regime (1999-2008), South African foreign policy was given greater clarity by highlighting the central role of the then Department of Foreign Affairs, especially in respect of matters pertaining to security and wealth creation. On the other hand, the introduction of an integrated governance system and the clustering of policy areas exposed the democratic deficit in foreign policy making further as parliament's role was minimised in this regard (Hudson 2010:116). Consequently, foreign policy making became centralised in the office of the President where a Policy Coordination and Advisory Service (PCAS) was created in which one of its five chief directorates was responsible for International Relations, Peace and Security.

Foreign Affairs was placed under the International Relations, Peace and Security cluster (IRPS) (Van Wyk 2004:122; Le Pere & Van Nieuwkerk 2004:126-133). This centralisation tendency made foreign policy even more inaccessible to the general public and reinforced the perception that Mbeki's administration was indifferent and unresponsive. This practice also validated the perception that South Africa's foreign policy was personalised. There are many examples where the Presidency dominated the cluster of International Relations Peace and Security. Sometimes the President intervened heavy-handedly in foreign investment promotion, the Lockerbie diplomatic

efforts, the Lesotho invasion in 1998, the African Union's (AU) creation, the Zimbabwe crisis and NEPAD (Butler 2004:161).

In her 2010 article titled "*Continuity and Change: an evaluation of the Democratic-Foreign Policy Nexus in post-apartheid South Africa*", Hudson studied the democratic deficit of South Africa's foreign policy under Thabo Mbeki's administration from 1999-2008 with some reference to foreign policy under the Zuma administration from 2009-2012. Hudson (2010:108) contends that if foreign policy is determined by both external and internal factors then it is both relevant and important to study how domestic actors such as interest groups influence foreign policy decision-making.

Agency in foreign policy decision-making needs to go beyond issues of representation in democratising foreign policy (Hudson 2010:108). Active participation by sub-national actors in foreign policy decision-making including interest agenda- setting are also important. Hudson (2010) studied the involvement, or lack thereof, of numerous foreign policy actors at the local level, and also assessed the role and position of interest groups within the foreign policy procedures in South Africa. Hudson established that in South Africa, interest groups have played a very minimal role in the foreign policy decision-making process. The South African government has therefore dominated foreign policy decision-making.

Maphaka (2020) studied the role of provinces as sub-national actors in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making. South Africa's interim Constitution of 1993 and the 1996 Constitution laid a foundation for provincial engagement in foreign affairs. In Chapter 14, Section 231 (1), the Constitution it stipulates that the negotiation and signing of all international agreements falls within the purview of the national executive (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). However, such agreements need to be approved by the two national Legislative Houses before they can be legally binding on South Africa (Hudson 2010). Foreign policy decision-making cannot be the responsibility of national government alone, sub-national actors including interest groups also have a role to play (Maphaka 2020:3). Maphaka believes that interest groups and national governments should take collective responsibility to implement national interests and values without deviating from the fundamental foreign policy framework (Maphaka 2020:3).

3.8 The unclear definition of South Africa's national interest

Similarly, to arguments made by other authors referenced before, such as Landsberg (2010) and Amusan (2018), Notshulwana (2012:1), posits that the key challenge in defining South Africa's national interest, and understanding its foreign policy formulation is the crafting of a clearer and comprehensive national interest. This challenge is as a result of government taking foreign policy decisions independently whilst excluding other sub-national actors. Some authors such as Lalbahadur (2014) have argued that South Africa's foreign policy lacks focus and coherence because what government has defined as its national interest in its policy document is not clearly explained.

On the whole, it is difficult to articulate specifically what South Africa's national interest is all about (Amusan 2018:88). This is when looking into what the state is doing on the issue of the general welfare of South Africans. The social contract between South Africans and the governments under consideration is to among others, create a conducive environment for the general development of the people and to ensure human security in general (Amusan 2018:90). South Africa's national interest should be people-centred; a priori in conception, in design, and in implementation so that it can be the business of every South African and be collectively protected (Amusan 2018:94).

Maphaka (2020) posits that interest groups have had a very limited role in South Africa's foreign policy formulation and decision-making post-1994, a continuation of what was happening during the apartheid regime. Interest group perspectives have thus been excluded in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process. This has contributed to the incomprehensive nature of South Africa's foreign policy because other important voices have been excluded. This is because foreign policy decision-making has been in the Executive domain which has led to the marginalisation of sub-national actors such as interest groups. This is not a good practice especially by a democratic government such as South Africa's which claims to govern according to the will of the people. Graham (2013: 49) agrees and contends that in the post-apartheid era, interest groups have been marginalised in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making because the President and the cabinet have dominated foreign policy decision making to the exclusion of interest groups.

The appointment of Jackie Selebi as the then Director-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1998 led to an attempt by the DFA to redefine its operational focus, restructure its internal process and increase the accountability of the Department to the taxpayer. This transformation was followed by a series of consultative conferences and workshops in which the DFA involved a wide variety of civil society and media actors. Blindingly, however, the consultative workshops and conferences focused almost exclusively on transformation matters in the then DFA, and not so much on the substance of South Africa's foreign policy, (Van Wyk, 2004:121).

A country's national interest relates to the shared, and a combination of all the other interests in all the economic, political and social spheres of national activity (Notshulwana 2012:3). Notshulwana further contends that defining the national interest of a country based on one perspective of a single actor (government) is not only inappropriate, but also restricts the ability of the state to engage with the public when defining a national interest. This disregard of the views of interest groups leads to an incoherent and exclusionary foreign policy.

Interest groups such as think tanks, including the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and the South African Institute for international Affairs are some of the interest groups which could also make a meaningful contribution to South Africa's interest- setting agenda and foreign policy formulation. However, these could not be covered in this mini-dissertation as it was impossible to cover each and every South African interest group. This offers an interesting opportunity for further research on the topic of the role of interest groups in defining South Africa's national interest.

According to Hudson (2010:124), the South African government needs to do more to educate the public about South Africa's foreign policy and instil a culture of people taking public hearings, committee submission and people's forums seriously. A rigorous and long-term effort is required to educate the public about the link between foreign policy and their everyday lives. With the limited public awareness by ordinary South Africans on what government is doing in its foreign relations, it is doubtful that foreign policy actors in the medium term will regain the agency they enjoyed in the early 1990s (Hudson 2010:124).

3.9 Conclusion

According to the available literature on the role of interest groups in the definition of South Africa's national interest, government has been dominating the foreign policy making process in South Africa. Despite the adoption of government policy documents such as the 2011 White Paper on South Africa's foreign policy and chapter 7 of the NDP, interest groups continue to be marginalised in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process and the definition of the national interest. This is because policy decision-making power is centralised around the President and the Executive. Also, different administrations that come into government often introduce new foreign policy focus which may not be consistent with that of previous administrations. This further perpetuates the incoherence and incomprehensive nature of South Africa's foreign policy. Personalities of different Presidents also impact on issues of continuity as different Presidents may wish to focus on particular issues, marginalising others. DIRCO and the Presidency have therefore achieved minimum results in respect of engaging interest groups in the interest setting agenda within the domain of foreign policy.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the role that interest groups have played or not played in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making processes and the definition of the country's national interest as defined both by government policy documents explored in this study and as understood by members of interest groups. The proposition of the study is that for various reasons, interest groups in South Africa have been marginalised in foreign policy decision-making generally and in the crafting of the national interest in particular. As a result, there are challenges which arise because of an incoherent foreign policy and ill-defined national interest. Some of these challenges include a lack of understanding of South Africa's national interest by South Africans. Therefore, this study attempted to understand how South Africa's foreign policy is constructed and how interests are understood in the formulation of foreign policy.

For Hudson (2011:1), it is the domestic political environment that shapes the entire framework of foreign policy decision-making in a country even in international contexts. Thus, the domestic context and our understanding of it is crucial when analysing foreign policy decision-making. Consistent with Hudson's observation, this study has employed FPA to understand the role and relevance of interest groups in decision-making and how their exclusion has consequences for foreign policy. FPA is actor specific because everything that happens in international politics is based on human decision-makers whether acting independently or as a group (Hudson, 2005: 1). FPA views the agency of the decision-maker in the presence of potential structural constraints because agency and structure are mutually constitutive. Therefore, it is not only political structures and institutions that determine foreign policy but also human beings through their ideas and beliefs which shape the system.

FPA helps us to understand why states undertake certain foreign policy decisions by studying foreign policy decision-making processes at the domestic level (Wicaksana, 2009: 2). According to FPA, human decision makers are the primary units of analysis as they have the ability to influence what happens in the world around them through their ideas and values including at the domestic level. It is within this context that this

study is grounded in constructivist theory and why the study employed a FPA lens in order to understand the value that interest groups can add in the formulation of South Africa's foreign policy and the definition of the national interest- if their perspectives could be incorporated by government.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to present and analyse findings obtained from secondary sources such as books, journal articles and primary sources, including relevant government policy documents, and also from primary data collected from interviews conducted. Interviews were conducted with representatives of South African interest groups such as the One South Africa Movement, the Foundation for Human Rights, Members of Executives and Vice Chancellors of selected universities and an academic. These participants are sub-national actors who have knowledge and interest on matters of foreign policy and the national interest obtained from both their practical experience and research work they conduct on a continuous basis- which allows them to interface with the general citizenry. Their insights based on their perceptions therefore gives us a more nuanced view of South Africa's foreign policy decision-making processes.

This study has employed a constructivist theoretical lens to understand how foreign policy decisions are taken, including the national interest setting agenda. For Checkel (1998:325), constructivism studies the fundamental conceptions of how foreign policy decisions are made and argues that both human agency and structures such as government institutions shape the world. This is different from other theories such as realism and liberalism which often focus on the role of the structure in understanding world politics and ignore the role of human beings and their ideas and beliefs. It is concerned with the power imbalances in the domestic environment in which agents act and argues that this environment is both social and material. Constructivism explores internal societal normative and ideational forces that impact on the foreign policy decision-making process of states (Kaarbo 2015: 1999).

Checkel goes further to posit that for constructivists, material structures such as bureaucracies and government institutions, where foreign policy decisions are made, beyond certain biological necessities, can be understood only through the social context through which they are constructed (Checkel,1998:326). International politics, including foreign policy decision-making are not some fixed exogenous facts

of life but rather are formed by the aggregated consequences of individual and collective decisions of human actors (Bueno De Mesquita, 2002:7). This point is connected to the relationship between agents and structures that constructivism explores and the actor specific and agent focus of FPA.

4.2 Results and Analysis

After reviewing existing literature on South Africa's foreign policy decision-making, actors and processes, studying theoretical assumptions of constructivism about foreign policy making and FPA as well as transcripts of the interviews conducted with representatives of interest groups, five dominant themes have been identified by the researcher. They are:

- (i) Unclear definition of South Africa's national interest as perceived by the participants and the literature;
- (ii) Centralisation of policy decision-making authority to the President and the Executive in South Africa;
- (iii) Democratisation of South Africa's foreign policy decision-making;
- (iv) Understanding of South Africa's foreign policy by the general citizenry; and
- (v) Value-add by interest groups on the definition of South Africa's national interest.

The following section will present findings and analysis for each of the identified themes listed above in order to understand perceptions and lived experiences of participants regarding their exclusion from South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process and the definition of the national interest. The section will also triangulate against the other sources of data which has been used in the study to identify convergences and divergences in these themes.

4.2.1 Unclear definition of South Africa's national interest

The general view emanating from the literature reviewed reveals that South Africa's national interest is not clearly defined by government and it is vague. For instance, Notshulwana (2012:1) posits that the key challenge in defining South Africa's national interest, and understanding its foreign policy formulation, is the crafting of a clearer and comprehensive national interest due to the exclusion of interest groups in the foreign policy decision-making process. Exclusion of interest groups implies that

government is missing rich content which interest groups would contribute on what should form the national interest based on their knowledge and expertise. Government has therefore relied on its own officials who may not possess all the knowledge to craft a comprehensive national interest. The absence of some experts from this process implies that some information or perspectives is missing. Some authors such as Lalbahadur (2014) have argued that South Africa's foreign policy lacks focus and coherence because policy decisions have been mainly made by government excluding other perspectives of non-state actors which could enrich the debate on the content of what ultimately forms part of South Africa's national interest.

Van Wyk, (2004:121) agrees and suggests that the lack of engagement on the substance of South Africa's foreign policy between government and sub-national actors has led to challenges of unclear foreign policy and an ill-defined national interest in post-apartheid South Africa. Government needs to explain its foreign policy decisions further, consult sub-national actors to incorporate more views and educate citizens better on foreign policy matters including the national interest because public participation remains unacceptably low (Van Wyk 2004:122). These are some of the arguments put forward by other authors in trying to explain South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process.

In order to confirm or disprove these views, this study conducted interviews with representatives of selected interest groups in South Africa. During the interview, participants were asked about their perceptions and lived experiences regarding South Africa's foreign policy decision-making and their understanding of South Africa's national interest. They were specifically asked whether it was clear to them what the national interest is as it is currently defined by government. In the *2011 White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy*, government defines the national interest as based on the Diplomacy of Ubuntu and values of human rights. But the White Paper does not go deep enough to explain clearly how these values of human rights would define the country's national interest. Therefore, there are some gaps in terms of understanding clearly what that national interest is.

Four out of six respondents indicated that South Africa's national interest was unclear and difficult to understand as it is defined by the government. This was consistent with the literature reviewed which posited that South Africa's national interest was ill-

defined and it was vague. However, respondents gave different reasons to account for the unclear definition of South Africa's national interest. The fifth respondent, a representative of a Vice Chancellor of one of the universities that participated in the study had a vague idea of what the country's national interest was.

Ms Janet Love, the Vice-Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and also the former National Director of the Legal Resources Centre, indicated that it was not surprising that sometimes South Africa's national interest seemed unclear and confusing. She believed that some foreign policy positions of the country may be difficult to understand for the general citizenry due to the complexities associated with the process of negotiation in diplomacy. Negotiations involve a 'give and take' process where countries make some gains and lose some positions at the same time. However, she argued that DIRCO needed to be able to contextualise, if not justify, its foreign policy positions in line with the country's constitution. For her, positions taken by government on various foreign policy issues ought to be understood by all South Africans and currently this is not the case.

Mr Mmusi Maimane, the founder of One South Africa Movement, indicated that it was a challenge to understand South Africa's national interest. His view was that whatever the national interest was, it should be based on the constitution of the country because the constitution speaks to the need to uphold values of human rights and democracy but in practice that is not always the case. Government sometimes behaves contrary to the constitution and aligns itself with positions that do not necessarily uphold values espoused by the South African constitution. Mr Maimane made an example of South Africa aligning itself with countries such as China- which is known to violate human rights. He also added that the country's voting behaviour in the United Nations Security Council on issues such as the conflicts in Syria and Libya, as well as quiet diplomacy towards Zimbabwe, are questionable in terms of what the South African constitution says about upholding human rights. Mr Maimane argued that South Africa's national interest is defined by those who wield power, and what they want to do and it is not always clear.

Mr Hanif Vally, the Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights acknowledged that interests are not stagnant but change from time to time. He argued that it is not always clear what the South African government is doing abroad

and positions taken by government on foreign policy issues are often not explained. Sometimes government has made big mistakes especially on human rights issues and has behaved contrary to the constitution. Mr Hanif Vally made an example of the issue of sexual violence as being a war crime. He said that this was an issue that his organisation took up with DIRCO for years. He shared Mr Maimane's sentiment as he indicated that in the case of South Africa, whatever those interests are, they should be grounded on constitutional values especially the Bill of Rights which should inform South Africa's foreign policy at any given point. However, in practice DIRCO sometimes takes positions that are contrary to what the constitution stipulates.

Mr November (pseudonym) also agreed with the other participants and said that South Africa's national interest was unclear. For him, the national interest is a complex matter that needs public debate so that it is exposed to the public. But because of the lack of public engagement on South Africa's national interest, it becomes a challenge to understand it. He said that more awareness is needed.

In his response, Mr London (pseudonym) argued that national interests are very dynamic. Like Mr Hanif Vally, Mr London believed that national interests do not stay the same. As the domestic political environment changes, so do national interests. This is consistent with constructivism's understanding of how national interest can and do change. In terms of South Africa's national interest, Mr London seemed to have some understanding of what the government may be pursuing abroad currently although he did not have a comprehensive understanding. He mentioned that what is of national interest for South Africa today is to take people out of poverty.

Mr Hanif Vally's and Mr London's response that national interests are not stagnant but are dynamic and change over time depending on who is in power is consistent with the ideas expressed by Martha Finnemore, a constructivist scholar who wrote on the phenomenon. According to Finnemore (1998:2), state interests can be defined in the context of universal norms and understandings about what is good and acceptable; the normative context characterized by norms and values impacts the conduct of decision-makers. Finnemore contends that the normative context transforms over time, and as universally held norms and values change, they create synchronized shifts in state interests and conduct across the system at domestic level (Finnemore, 1998:2).

Mr Hadebe, who is a scholar in political economy had interesting views when he was asked about national interest and whether South Africa's national interest was clear to him. He did not comment on the issue of the national interest being clear or not because he argued that the concept of 'national interest' had no place in South African scholarship. He said that it is a concept informed by Eurocentric thinking that should not be applied in the South African context. He believed that national interest was a selfish and greedy concept that should not be used to understand South African politics. This was an interesting finding from this respondent as it was not articulated by authors in the literature reviewed.

4.2.2 Centralisation of policy decision-making authority in the South African President and Executive

As outlined earlier in this study, Section 83 (a) and 85 (2c) of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa gives authority to the head of government, who is the President to formulate and implement government policy including foreign policy. As a result, Hudson (2010:115) argues that South Africa's foreign policy making is characterised by Presidentialism. Presidentialism refers to the centralisation of power in one office and/or person. According to the Constitution (RSA 1996), power to govern South Africa rests upon the President and the cabinet. This sentiment is shared by Geldenhuys (1998:5) and Van Wyk (1998:29) as they argue that constitutional limitations in the South African context remain the dominant impediment to wider and more meaningful participation in foreign policy decision making by subnational actors because decision-making power is given to government alone.

For Amusan (2014:9), the South African foreign policy environment is complicated because the constitution centralises policy decision-making authority around the President, while in practice DIRCO, cabinet and parliament, through its committee of international relations, have a significant role to play in foreign policy matters. Yet interest groups are excluded in this process. Trice (1978:238) has argued that domestic actors including interest groups do not have authority to formulate foreign policy but rather employ different channels of communication through media campaigns or protests to communicate their policy perspectives to decision-makers. Stefanidis (2001:9) has argued that foreign policy decision-making is usually the prerogative of government. However, ruling elites are constantly engaged in a

process of gaining and sustaining legitimacy. Stefanidis (2001:9) has posited that despite the fact that the ruling elite enjoys important advantages in the policy-making process, as opposed to other domestic actors, they are ultimately accountable to the electorate; which includes members of various interest groups.

Jackson and Sorenson (2006:165) contend that everything in the social world in which people live, is created by them: all the beliefs, concepts, thoughts, and ideas generate an understanding between people and especially between groups of people, such as states. According to Jackson and Sorenson (2006:165) the social world is partly made up of physical entities such as states but the physical entity matters only in so far as its meaning is derived from the intellectual element that uses it. Moreover, actors such as interest groups have limited ability to influence foreign policy decision making due to structural constraints such as policy decision making authority ultimately remaining within the government domain. Constructivism, as an IR theory, posits that structures and agents are mutually constituted and can influence each other through practice (Flockhart 2016:81). Consequently, the central considerations for influence-seeking interest groups are to find out where and when decisions are to be made and then to select the appropriate strategy for effectively communicating with policy-makers (Trice 1978:238).

Moreover, Maphaka (2020) has argued that interest groups have had a very limited role in South Africa's foreign policy formulation and decision-making in the post-apartheid era. This is because foreign policy decision-making has been in the Executive domain which has led to the marginalisation of sub-national actors such as interest groups. Graham (2013: 49) agrees and contends that in the post-apartheid era, interest groups have been excluded in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making because government has dominated the foreign policy decision-making process. This interest group challenge is not unique to South Africa. Interest groups face similar challenges in other countries such as Nigeria, Japan and China- as argued in chapter 3. Akhakpe (2014), Cheng (1990) and Ebegbulem (2019) are some of the authors who have been cited to highlight this point.

Despite interest groups not having authority to formulate South Africa's national interest, constructivism assumes that both government institutions (structure) and interest groups (agents) can shape foreign policy. Notwithstanding power imbalances

that may exist between these two, constructivism argues that one cannot exist without the other. Thus, social structures need to be understood from meanings that agents attach to their actions (Wendt, 1987:359).

Theys (2018:1) agrees with Jackson (2006) and posits that constructivists go beyond the material reality by emphasising that ideas and beliefs have a significant influence on international politics because how individuals see themselves influences what they deem as important which ultimately influences their interests (Theys, 2018:1). At a domestic level, this implies that foreign policy decision-makers pursue and prioritise interests which they perceive as important and deserving of national attention based on their respective beliefs and ideas. Leaders then leave out interests to which they attach less value.

Constructivism explores not only how particular interests come into existence, but also explore why some interests do not exist based on identities and values of actors (Hopf, 1998:176). Constructivism, instead, theorizes about the meaning of absent interests. Thus, some interests are prioritised and exist while other interests are excluded because interests are decided upon based on the preferences and choices of actors who decide on those interests. Just as identities and interests are produced through social practices, missing interests are understood by constructivists as being deliberately excluded or omitted from the stated interests because decision-makers are not interested in them and such interests do not form part of the identities and values of decision-makers and therefore they are omitted (Hopf 1998:176). This argument helps us to understand that South Africa's centralisation of policy decision making authority around the President and the Executive has led to the exclusion of perspectives of interest groups in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process and the national interest setting agenda. Interest groups have been unable to influence government foreign policy decisions and the national interest as a result of their exclusion.

Furthermore, Maphaka (2020:4) has argued that participation by sub-national actors in South Africa's foreign policy making is very limited, a reality that could be understood as disconnecting communities from their experiences and depriving them an opportunity to shape their destiny (Maphaka 2020:4). This is evidenced by the absence of a regular accessible platform for sub-national actors, including interest

groups, to submit their inputs and influence South Africa's foreign policy making. In other words, ordinary people from South African communities are marginalised from foreign policy making yet decisions by government impacts their lives (Maphaka 2020:4).

Hudson (2010:115) has argued that there are explanations why the centralisation of foreign policy decision-making is needed in the South African context. She believes that centralisation is needed in order to promote stability and prevent fragmentation against the backdrop of political strife. However, she also contends that a presidential system must be counter-balanced by stronger oversight capacities in Parliament and civil society. These are some of the arguments made by authors in the literature reviewed.

Some of the most important claims presented by scholars under this theme include the centralisation of policy decision-making authority around the South African President and the Executive which limits the ability of interest groups to shape foreign policy and the national interest. Also, authors such as Maphaka, Van Wyk and others have agreed and contended that interest groups have been marginalised in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process and the crafting of the national interest. Authors have argued that the centralisation of power around the President and the Executive has led to power imbalances between interest groups (agents) and government institutions where foreign policy decisions are made (structures). In order to validate or challenge these claims from the different authors, respondents were asked to share their views on the issue of foreign policy decision-making being centralised around the President and the Executive despite South Africa having a parliamentary system.

Mr London (pseudonym) said that even though South African citizens may want to think of democracy and principles of openness and fairness, at the end of the day those who wield power decide what happens. He highlighted that this is a challenge which limits the ability of interest groups to influence foreign policy decision-making. Ultimately, it is ultimate decision-makers that decide what is important. South African citizens are bound to listen to leaders because of the social contract that citizens have with government. Mr London also said that it is important to look at the nature of the regime at any given time because each and every administration that comes

into power attempts to redefine the national interest to align with the objectives of its tenure. Thus, the nature of leadership also determines the pursuit of national interest according to Mr London.

Although Mr November (pseudonym) agreed with Mr London, that it is those in power that define the national interest, he argued that involving other voices outside government, such as interest groups, would enrich the national interest debate. He said that there were expert voices outside government, such as researchers at universities who interact with citizens on the ground, whose voices and knowledge would help enrich the definition of South Africa's national interest. This was despite the fact that policy decision authority remained with government. Mr November believed that public discourse was important. Government needed to actively engage the interest groups in conversations around foreign policy and the national interest in order to allow for nuancing which would enable citizens to understand South Africa's foreign policy decisions.

Mr Hanif Vally of the Foundation for Human Rights also indicated that although policy decision making power rested with government, engagement with interest groups such as the Foundation for Human Rights on issues that respective interest groups worked on was necessary as this would help augment decisions taken by government.

Ms Janet Love agreed with other participants and said that she strongly believed that engagement by any state institution with civil society was very desirable and had huge potential to contribute positively. She argued that sub-national actors had expertise related to their work. For instance, civil society organisations deal with different thematic matters, and their expert knowledge would help government deepen its knowledge when taking specific policy decisions.

Mr London (pseudonym) said that it was important to include the epistemic community in the definition of South Africa's national interest in order to have a participatory approach. He said that the voice of interest groups in policy making is very important as they look at the substance of decisions to be taken, unlike politicians who often take decisions looking at the number of votes that they can get from society. That is why even if they consult with citizens, what they do in practice is different from what is supposed to be done because they employ a political lens.

Mr Hadebe had a different view and argued that international law held states as subjects, and not as sub-national actors. He said that there was no international law that managed interest groups. So, for him, there was nothing wrong with centralising foreign policy decision-making authority around the President and the Executive. He also said that interest groups were often funded outside the country and may carry certain mandates coming from their sponsors. Therefore, including them in foreign policy decision-making might not be a good idea.

The sentiment shared amongst participants, except Mr Hadebe, is that even though the constitution gives power to the President and the Executive, South Africa is a constitutional democracy defined by values of public participation and openness, and therefore including interest groups in the foreign policy decision making process is necessary. This argument is consistent with the constructivist proposition that interest groups can influence foreign policy decision-making based on norms and values. According to Weber (2007:98), sub-national actors under certain circumstances and constraints, are able to influence and alter domestic politics as well as foreign policy decision-making and national interests based on norms, values and identity. This is despite the fact that non-state actors in some contexts do not have decision-making authority.

4.2.3 Democratisation of South Africa's foreign policy decision-making

Some authors in the literature have argued that incorporating the perspectives of interest groups in South Africa's foreign policy decision making process will make the process more democratic - as opposed to decisions being taken by government alone. Hudson (2010:116) has argued that the introduction of an integrated governance system and centralisation of policy decision-making authority around the President and the Executive has further exposed the democratic deficit in South Africa's foreign policy making (Hudson 2010:116). This argument implies that there is a need to make the process more democratic by including other voices. It is in this context that Graham (2013:49) has posited that interest groups can facilitate the democratisation of the foreign policy decision-making process, support foreign policy implementation by government, and by bringing more coherence and comprehensiveness to national interest formulation. Even policy documents by Government, such as the National Development Plan (NDP), that was adopted by

government in 2012, agrees and posits that government needs to engage the wider society, including the private sector, and interest groups, on its national interest-setting agenda (NDP 2012: 237).

In light of the above arguments around the democratisation of foreign policy decision-making process, respondents were asked to share their views on whether their involvement would indeed make South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process more democratic. In his response, Mr Mmusi Maimane indicated that involvement of interest groups would definitely make foreign policy decision-making democratic. He said that, it was vital for government to incorporate perspectives of interest groups on the content of the national interest, in order to have a comprehensive policy. Mr Hanif Vally agreed and said that this would not only make it democratic but also interest groups would add a rational discussion which government needs. Janet Love also argued that the involvement of interest groups is absolutely necessary, not only for the democratisation of South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process, but also for enriching policy implementation and positioning civil society organisations better to hold government accountable especially on international obligations that the government has to fulfil. She added that interest groups come with a variety of skills and expertise which government can draw from. In her view, this would change the country for the better. Interest groups should continue to do their work of holding the government to account. Interest groups should also place more pressure on government to include them in the foreign policy decision-making process and actually incorporate their perspectives into foreign policy decisions.

Mr November (pseudonym), also agreed, and further indicated that bringing interest groups closer to the definition and articulation of the national interest would yield positive results for foreign policy decision-makers. Mr London (pseudonym) furthermore said that government needed to broaden the scope beyond the tripartite alliance by including interest groups such as universities and members of academia when deciding on matters of national interest. He believes that government would benefit a great deal from what he calls the epistemic community. Therefore, respondents agreed with the literature that involving interest groups and incorporating their inputs into what ultimately becomes South Africa's national interest would make

foreign policy decision-making process democratic. This is desirable as it enriches the debate and content in respect of defining South Africa's national interest.

When analysing this theme from a constructivist lens, it is possible for both agents (interest groups) and government institutions (structure) to work together to define or construct South Africa's national interest. The domestic political system is not a given, but a product of intersubjective consciousness amongst human beings who live in that world (Wicaksana, 2009:4). From this point of view, the arena of states interaction is also social in nature and more flexible (Busse, 1999:44). Therefore, each system is founded on human thoughts and not on material forces alone. Thus, human beings create their own body of thought and a set of norms to define and make sense of their world system (Sorensen & Jackson, 2007:162).

The sentiment by respondents for interest groups to be included in South Africa's foreign policy decision making process is in line with Doty's (1993:304) argument which contends that in a given society, the level of acceptance of certain foreign policy decisions by the general public is determined by the extent to which government has involved representations by non-state actors during the development of those policies. When government involves citizens, including representatives of interest groups, in the foreign policy decision-making process, and incorporates their ideas into policy decisions, such foreign policy decisions are likely to be understood and supported by the general citizenry. This could even help improve policy implementation by government as there would be less hesitancy from society.

4.2.4 Value add by interest groups on the definition of South Africa's national interest.

Under this theme, this research sought to explore the value that interest groups can add to the definition of South Africa's national interest in the event that their perspectives are incorporated into decisional outputs by government. In the literature, some authors have argued that interest groups have an important role to play in foreign policy decision-making process, including the definition of the national interest. According to Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), interest groups can make a meaningful contribution to the process, by warning government about possible

challenges, opportunities and policy options in terms of policy decisions that government needs to make by engaging with and getting the views of general citizens on various policy options. Maphaka (2020:3) shares this sentiment and posits that foreign policy decision-making cannot be the responsibility of national government alone- interest groups also have a role to play.

Maphaka (2020:3) believes that South African sub-national actors, and national government, should take collective responsibility to implement national interests and values. This argument is in line with a sentiment shared by Doty (1993:303) who argues that foreign policy decision-making extends beyond the official government institutions. Actors outside government institutions can also contribute to foreign policy decisions by sharing policy ideas with government based on their values and beliefs.

According to Amusan (2018:88), it is difficult to state categorically what South Africa's national interest is all about. For a clearly defined and comprehensive foreign policy that will have an impact on the national interest, many stakeholders should be involved in determining short, medium and long-term foreign policy goals which should inform national interest. Going by the basic attributes of the national interest, it should be in the interest of citizens, irrespective of the government in power (Amusan 2018:97). In the 2012 NDP, the National Planning Commission also recommended that DIRCO should work with other stakeholders including research institutions, business and academic institutions as well as civil society when developing foreign policies (NDP, 2012:239). Moreover, the 2011 White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy also stressed this point. It argued that the definition of the national interest cannot be the responsibility of government alone. Government needs to create an enabling environment of dialogue and discourse among all stakeholders to interrogate policies and strategies, and their application in the best interest of the people (White Paper 2011:3).

Despite the NDP and the 2011 White Paper recognising the need for government to include interest groups in the definition of South Africa's national interest, it seems that that is not the case in practice. When respondents were asked about their involvement in the formulation of South Africa's national interest, the general feeling amongst them was that they have had a very limited or no role at all in this process.

For instance, Mr London (pseudonym) indicated that interest groups, in particular universities, had been largely marginalised, yet they can make a significant contribution to the foreign policy decision-making process in South Africa.

He said that from a participatory point of view, ideally a progressive government should consult interest groups widely and actually incorporate their inputs into decisional outputs when making policy decisions. Mr London is of the view that the involvement of epistemic communities in the definition of South Africa's national interest would enhance the conceptualisation of the national interest. Interest groups would bring the necessary analysis into the South African foreign policy decision-making process. Mr November (pseudonym) agreed and added that universities in particular are a source of expert knowledge and that they understand the complexities associated with foreign policy. Also, interest groups in general have rich knowledge and varied experience which would enhance discussions around the national interest and foreign policy. They are therefore a source of diverse knowledge which government needs in order to have a comprehensive foreign policy that can be understood- even by the general citizenry.

Mr Hanif Vally and Ms Janet Love also agreed with the other respondents and argued that interest groups would add great value to foreign policy decision-making. It is important for government to hear and include perspectives of interest groups into the formulation of South Africa's national interest. This would enrich the national interest debate by bringing other nuances into the content of what ultimately becomes the national interest so that new ideas are brought to the table for government to consider. Ms Janet Love argued that different interest groups specialise in certain thematic areas. For instance, some deal with human rights issues, migration and pandemics while others work with issues relating to human settlements and homelessness etc. Therefore, their expert knowledge would improve the foreign policy making process as they would be able to even challenge some policy decisions because their role is to challenge decisions and not always take what government presents to them. This is what enriches the debate.

In terms of the overall finding under this theme, both the literature and interviewees believe that active involvement of interest groups in foreign policy decision-making and national interest setting agenda is necessary in order for the national interest

definition to benefit from the expertise and experience of interest groups. This would help enrich the definition of South Africa's national interest.

The failure by government to include interest group perspectives when making foreign policy decisions leads to challenges of incomprehensive foreign policy and a vaguely defined national interest because other great minds with expert knowledge are left behind. For instance, universities who conduct research and produce rich knowledge on foreign policy issues and members of interest groups who work directly with the South African citizens are left behind in the foreign policy decision-making process. Therefore, government is bound to face challenges if it continues with its unilateral approach when crafting the national interest and taking foreign policy decisions. Interest groups are needed to bring more ideas and take the foreign policy debate forward and align it with international best practice too.

4.2.5 Understanding of South Africa's foreign policy by the general citizenry

Hudson (2010:124) posits that the South African government needs to do more to educate the public about South Africa's foreign policy and to instil a culture of people conducting public hearings, committee submissions and people's forums seriously. Hudson believes that a rigorous and long-term effort is required to educate the public about the link between foreign policy and their everyday lives. With the limited public awareness by ordinary South Africans on what government is doing in its foreign relations, it is doubtful that foreign policy actors in the medium term will regain the agency they enjoyed in the early 1990s when government then made an effort to include interest groups in the foreign policy decision-making process (Hudson 2010:124). Amusan (2018:94) has argued that South Africa's national interest should be people-oriented, a priori, in conception, in design, and in implementation, so that it can be the business of every South African and collectively protected.

Van Wyk (2004: 122) argues that despite the presence of parliamentary monitoring groups, and Parliament's repeated attempts to involve the public in the law-making process, South Africa has no culture of public debate about foreign policy issues including the national interest. Therefore, government needs to explain more, educate better and consult more widely on foreign policy issues because public participation in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making remains disappointingly

low especially because citizens are not knowledgeable about foreign policy and have less interest (Van Wyk, 2004:123).

In order to confirm or disprove sentiments from the authors cited above, respondents were asked whether it was necessary for South African citizens to understand and be involved in foreign policy matters. Mr Mmusi Maimane of the One South Africa Movement suggested that it is absolutely necessary for South Africans to know what government is doing abroad. He emphasised that citizens needed to understand foreign policy outside manifestos of political parties. They needed to know what their country's national interest is so that government can be held accountable by the people it governs. It is the constitutional right of citizens to know what their government is doing. But sadly, this is not the case at the moment.

Mr November (pseudonym) also agreed and said that in many instances, foreign policy touches upon the daily lives of citizens therefore it is important that they know and understand it. He argued that foreign policy affects the quality of people's lives, their economic circumstances, and how they exercise their votes. So it is absolutely necessary that they are brought on board as far as foreign policy and the national interest is concerned.

Mr London (pseudonym) argued that whatever constitutes the national interest, its primary focus should be the people, the end user. The national interest should improve the lives of the people and therefore they need to understand what it is. Mr London's opinion is that citizens need to be empowered with knowledge so that they understand foreign policy and the national interest and not be confused when it comes to foreign policy matters. Therefore, government needs to improve people's knowledge of foreign policy, it must have effective communication strategies with the citizens through workshops, dialogues etc.

Janet Love's response was that understanding of the national interest and foreign policy by citizens would get South Africans to have a much greater appreciation of what is happening in the world. She said that people have to be outward-looking so that they can understand global dynamics and how government responds to such dynamics. She believes that without this perspective, South Africa would be poorer as a country.

Mr Hanif Vally of the Foundation for Human Rights indicated that in line with the constitution, citizens including interest groups, needed to know what government is doing in its foreign policy. Government is accountable to the people. Therefore, it is vital for citizens to know and be involved in foreign policy decision-making. Mr Hadebe argued that the majority of South Africans are not involved in policy making and government has not done much to address this issue. For him, foreign policy in South Africa has been the domain of the elite to the exclusion of the general citizenry. Despite foreign policy being elitist in South Africa, Mr Hadebe believes that it needs to be socialised in order to bring the citizens on-board.

All participants agreed that understanding of foreign policy by South African citizens is important because government needs to involve the people it governs in what it pursues abroad.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has presented some convergences and divergences in terms of the theoretical lens it employed, the literature reviewed as well as the primary data collected from the interviews. In terms of the unclear definition of South Africa's national interest, findings from the interviews confirmed arguments by the different authors that indeed South Africa's national interest is unclear and ill-defined. This is partly due to the exclusion of interest groups from South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process. With regards the centralisation of foreign policy decision-making authority around the President and the Executive, the authors in the literature reviewed, and the participants that were interviewed, acknowledged that this is consistent with Section 83 (a) and 85 (2c) of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa which gives authority to the head of government who is the President to formulate and implement government policy- including foreign policy.

There is consensus between the literature and the participants that this constitutional provision limits the ability of interest groups to influence foreign policy. Participants have gone further to argue that despite this constitutional provision, it is desirable for the government to incorporate interest group perspectives when making foreign policy decisions and crafting the national interest because interest groups also have an important role to play. With their rich expert knowledge, interest groups can bring interesting ideas and perspectives to South Africa's foreign policy making that would

help enrich the country's foreign policy and the national interest. Participants argued that both government and interest groups can work together to formulate and implement South Africa's foreign policy. This could help address the challenges of an incoherent foreign policy as well as a vaguely defined national interest. This would also make South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process more democratic and easier for government to implement. These views are consistent with constructivism which argues that both agents (interest groups) and structure (government institutions) can construct foreign policy because both material and ideational forces are important in foreign policy making.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The central aim of the study was to understand the reasons why interest groups have played a limited role in the formulation of South Africa's national interest and foreign policy decision-making process from 2015-2020. This study employed Frieden's (1999: 59) definition of the national interest as it offers an understanding of the role of interest groups in the crafting of the national interest. National interests are determined by enduring interests of domestic actors below the national level that dominate the definition of a country's national interest. Interest groups are actors that are autonomous from government and supplementary to the mass public who are linked to government decision-making system through various forms of communication. It is through the various forms of communication that interest groups are able to influence government decision-making even though they do not have formal policy-making authority and rather depend on the authorities to translate their policy preferences into decisional outputs.

This study proposed that for various reasons, interest groups in South Africa have been marginalised in foreign policy decision-making generally and in the crafting of the national interest in particular. This has led to challenges of a vaguely defined national interest and an incoherent foreign policy. Therefore, this study attempted to understand how South Africa's foreign policy is constructed using a FPA lens and how interests are understood in the formulation of foreign policy. Therefore, this research contended that it is important that interest groups actively participate and

influence South Africa's foreign policy decision-making process in order to ensure coherence and comprehensiveness of a vaguely defined and incoherent foreign policy.

The literature reviewed helped the study discover that South Africa's foreign policy making in the post-apartheid era has been elitist, as decisions have mainly been taken by government- at the exclusion of interest groups. This has led to the challenges of an incoherent and incomprehensive foreign policy as well as a vaguely defined South Africa's national interest. The exclusion of interest groups from South Africa's foreign policy decision-making has been unfortunate as these groups can add great value to the process. Amongst other things, the study has argued that interest groups can facilitate the democratisation of foreign policy decision-making process, support foreign policy implementation by government, and bring more rationality and completeness to national interest formulation.

This study employed a constructivist theoretical lens in order to understand the role of interest groups as agents in foreign policy formulation. Constructivism expands the scope of International Relations by embracing sub-national actors such as social communities, interest groups, and international organisations. With regard to actors, even though constructivists stand by the primacy of states, they conclude that it does not necessarily mean that dynamics in the world politics do not emerge as the result of other actors' behaviour or choices in respect of decision making. Sub-national actors under certain circumstances and constraints are able to influence and alter international politics as well as foreign policy decision-making and national interests based on norms, values and identity. The study argued that the agency of actors is important in foreign policy making despite structural constraints evident. Hence the study employed constructivism which holds this view. Structures and agents are mutually constituted and can influence each other through foreign policy practice.

This research was particularly interested in the role that has been played by the One South Africa Movement, Vice Chancellors of selected universities as well as the Foundation for Human Rights in the definition of South Africa's national interest. As a result, semi-structured interviews were administered with representatives of these selected interest groups. In terms of key findings from the interviews, the study concluded that South Africa's national interest is indeed vaguely defined as outlined

in the literature and articulated by participants in this study. According to the literature and participants, the vagueness is due to the exclusion of interest groups in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making which has led to some perspectives from expert voices being excluded by the South African government.

Moreover, South Africa's foreign policy decision-making authority is centralised around the President and the Executive which further perpetuates the marginalisation of interest groups. The study found that despite the constitution giving policy decision-making authority to the President and the Executive, interest groups can still contribute to the process as they possess expert knowledge which can improve foreign policy making. Interest groups work closely with the community and often conduct research which foreign policy can benefit from. Therefore, South African policy-makers can address the challenges of an ill-defined national interest and incoherent foreign policy by tapping into the knowledge of members of interest groups.

Moreover, the study found that the South African general citizenry is not aware of foreign policy and this is a challenge that government needs to address. Government needs to educate its people better and explain more in terms of its foreign policy positions so that citizens who vote government into power can be better positioned to hold government accountable. This would strengthen South Africa's democracy.

However, there was a unique finding on this theme from one of the participants. The participant in question argued that international law holds states as subjects, and not as non-state actors. The participant indicated that there was no international law that managed interest groups. So, for him, there was nothing wrong with centralising foreign policy decision-making authority around the President and the Executive and exclude interest groups. He also said that interest groups are often funded outside the country and may carry certain mandates coming from their sponsors therefore including them in foreign policy decision-making might not be a good idea. This view was not found in the existing literature reviewed and therefore this is an area for further research in order to expand literature on the topic of interest groups and foreign policy decision-making power not just in South Africa but in other contexts too.

In terms of how participants in this study made sense of the concept of national interest, there was a general consensus, both from the literature and participants, that national interests change over time and those who wield power greatly influence what ultimately becomes the national interest. There was however, a different view expressed by one of the participants who argued that the concept of the national interest was a selfish concept inspired by Eurocentric thinking which should not be employed to understand South African politics. He believed that the concept had no place in African politics and therefore should not be employed to study Africa politics. This was yet another unique finding which could be probed further in research to produce more knowledge on how to conceptualize or study African interest groups.

In terms of the value that interest groups can add if they are included in South Africa's foreign policy making, the literature and all participants, except Mr Hadebe, argued that interest groups can help address issues of incomprehensiveness and lack of focus in South Africa's foreign policy. Therefore, there was consensus in the theoretical lens, literature reviewed and data collected from interviews that interest group perspectives should definitely be incorporated into South Africa's foreign policy making and the definition of the national interest.

5.2 Recommendations

In light of the key findings of the study, the research recommends that South Africa's foreign policy decision-makers- namely the President and the Minister of DIRCO, who are the ultimate decision-making units in South Africa's Foreign Policy, should play their role more effectively going forward and include interest groups in foreign policy formulation and decision-making. This will ensure that decision-making is not left to the elites in government which has led to challenges of an ill-defined national interest and a foreign policy that lacks focus and coherence.

The current administration needs to organise an engagement forum with interest groups (including think tanks), that focus both on the short and long-term which will allow for effective engagement that will lead to perspectives of interest groups being translated into decisional outputs so that the content of what ultimately becomes South Africa's national interest can improve. This engagement forum should yield tangible results so that consultation with interest groups is not done just for government to tick the box but there must be political will to actually incorporate views

and ideas of interest groups into South Africa's foreign policy and national interest. This engagement forum should also be sustainable and not disappear when administrations change.

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