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FROM THEORY TO CULTURE: EMERGENT SOUTH AFRICAN STRATEGIC CULTURE[1]

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INTRODUCTION

In spite of expectations to the contrary, armed forces remained a prominent instrument of diplomacy as the 21st century dawned. Following the Balkan cauldron of the 1990s, renewed attention to military solutions is demonstrated by US and NATO forces in Afghanistan (2002-), the US-led Coalition in Iraq (2003-), Israeli operations into Lebanon (2006) and the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia (2006-2007). In contrast to the aforementioned, one finds preferences for the more subtle use of armed forces in more constructive roles that manifest prominently in contemporary interventions to deal with complex emergencies with an indelible humanitarian face. However, not all countries joined the renewed militarization of diplomacy. Some rejected the military option; others like the EU preferred to be more subtle or selective about the employments of armed forces.[3]

One way of explaining why countries are more or less prone to use the military instrument is to explore their strategic culture. To this end, this article draws upon theoretical progress since 1977 in the field of strategic culture to highlight features of post-1994 South African strategic culture. The theoretical debates representing three waves of scholarship are briefly outlined in the introductory section of the article. The second section of the article builds upon the prospects

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[3] See Christoph O. Meyer, Theorising European strategic culture: Between convergence and the persistence of national diversity, *Centre for European Policy Studies Working Paper* 204 (June, 2004).

offered by second- and third-generation theory to explore and critique strategic culture. By drawing upon second- and third-generation theory, a framework is compiled to explain selected features of South African practice over the period 1994-2005. The section on South African strategic culture comprises a brief revisit of the 1994 political transition and new political aspirations. The emergent South African strategic culture is traced through outlining systemic shocks and shifts in political culture, foreign and defence policy. Voids in the practice of South African strategic culture are then reviewed through indicators of a possible declaratory-operational gap before concluding with some final observations.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON STRATEGIC CULTURE

One persistent difficulty in explaining strategic culture is where to start. Harkavy and Neuman[4] offer numerous theories on culture and warfare that fall broadly into two schools of thought: universalists and cultural relativists that depict a predominant Western analysis of the culture-war nexus. The former attempts to explore general explanations that hold across national cultures, whilst the latter holds that strategic culture cannot be explained in such universal terms. However, not one of the thirteen theories or quasi-theories within the universalist or cultural relativist field portrays a general explanation of matters related to strategic culture. As a result, contending theories of strategic culture and ongoing efforts to explain or utilise established ideas continue to depict progress in the field. In broad, the debate on strategic culture unfolds as two fields of academic interest: firstly, attempts to refine the phenomenon as a general concept that can be empirically tested across cases,

[4] Robert E. Harkavy & Stephany G. Neuman (eds.), *Warfare and the Third World* (New York: Palgrave, 1998), p. 234.

and secondly, as attempted in this article, to utilise the theoretical progress to explore and explain practice in particular cases.

In spite of the absence of a general explanation of what strategic culture entails, theorists accept that focussed research on strategic culture emanated first from the RAND Corporation in the USA during 1977. Snyder[5] attempted to define strategic culture by promoting an understanding of Soviet strategic culture through a comparison of Soviet and American attitudes towards nuclear war. This work by Snyder culminated in the seminal RAND Report R-2154-AF that fostered a better and more balanced understanding of Soviet strategic behaviour and intentions during the latter part of the Cold War. Unfortunately, the research by Snyder soon became relegated to "the academic backwater"[6] due to a lack of persistent academic interest. Nonetheless, a renewed interest in strategic culture evolved towards the end of the 20th century.

The first generation of theory, spearheaded by Snyder, featured as the "sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy".[7] This first generation accentuated the nexus between attitudes and behaviour as strong indicators of a particular strategic culture, but even more acutely the need to understand oneself better and to be understood better by others. However, the tenability of the fuzzy attitude-behaviour nexus set the scene for an extended debate. Subsequently, two further waves of theory followed in response to the perceived limitations of the first generation as a general theory of strategic culture.

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[5] Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*. RAND Report R-2154-AF (Santa Monica: September, 1977), p. 8. http://www.rand.org/publications/R/R125/R125.pdf.

[6] John Glenn, Darryl Howlett & Stuart Poore (eds.) *Neorealism versus Strategic Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), p. 45.

[7] Jack Snyder (1977), p. 8.

Second-generation theory on strategic culture did not assume that there is an automatic link between attitudes and behaviour, but rather attended to the alleged break in connectivity between attitudes and behaviour.[8] Johnston[9] expressed this break as follows: "there is potentially a vast difference between what leaders think and say they do and the deeper motives for doing what they in fact do". In essence, second-wave theory deals with strategic culture as a tool of political hegemony and discrepancies between rhetoric and what strategic choice eventually reflects. In spite of what is declared, strengthening the own sense of competency, excluding alternative strategies and the promotion of own solidarity is pursued.[10]

Questioning the reductionism implied by first-generation theorists and the disjuncture theory of the second generation, third-generation proponents turned to the role of more recent matters influencing culture, experience and practice.[11] Third-wave theorists emphasise practice, experience and military organisational culture as ideas, beliefs and norms.[12] They conceptualise culture less rigorously and deem shifts in domestic politics as particularly important for eventual shifts in strategic culture. For the third generation, strategic culture is more fungible over the short term as opposed to the more rigid views held by the first two generations of theorists. The acceptance by certain theorists that strategic culture is more fluid than previously perceived and not dominated by cultural continuity, offers avenues to investigate this fluidity more closely.

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[8] Stuart Poore, "Strategic culture", in *Neorealism versus Strategic Culture,* John Glenn, Darryl Howlett & Stuart Poore (eds.) (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), p. 55.
[9] Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism, Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp.14-15.
[10] Ian Johnston, "Thinking about strategic culture", *International Security* 19/4 (Spring 1995a), pp. 56-58.
[11] Jeffrey Lantis, "Strategic culture and national security policy", in *International Studies Review* 4(3) (2002), p. 96.
[12] Iain Johnston (1995), p. 19.

STRATEGIC CULTURE: FROM STASIS TO CHANGE

An exploration of strategic culture reveals two broad pathways for understanding this phenomenon. A more confined approach is that of Klein[13] who defines strategic culture as the product of "views from the military establishment" with a strong war-strategic culture interface". In some cases, this interface is valid, and Israeli as well as Pakistani strategic culture display this military profile.[14] The strong military sentiment is probably restrictive in that common matters and interdependence of different security sectors as they now manifest are marginalised and brings moral and ethical matters into play . In contrast, a broader view of strategic culture seems more attractive. Johnston[15] suggests that such a broader approach includes the object of analysis, the historic periods in question and the way strategic culture directs strategic choices, and defines this as: "An integrated system of symbols (e.g. argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military forces in interstate political affairs".

The presumed consistency and subsequent stasis of strategic culture (as held by first-generation theory) are challenged in a number of ways. Any one actor can hardly control the paradigm of war that is closely related to the use of armed forces. As the war paradigm changes, actors have to adjust their strategic cultures in order to remain in step. According to Raitasalo and Sipila,[16] the revolution in military affairs is causing the concept of war to assume a new appearance. Technology, asymmetry and new wars together with humanitarian interventions and terrorism are challenging traditional Cold War views of war. The depth and range of these

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[13] Yitzak Klein, "A theory of strategic culture", *Comparative Strategy* 10/1 (1991), p. 5.
[14] Feroz H. Kahn, "Comparative strategic culture: The case of Pakistan", *Strategic Insights* IV/10 (October 2005).
[15] Iain Johnston (1995a), p. 46.
[16] Jyri Raitasalo & Joonas Sipila, "Reconstructing war after the Cold War," *Comparative Strategy* 23/3 (2004), pp. 249-251.

challenges and required responses are demonstrated by the alleged US shift in strategic culture to deal with the evolving discourse on war. Rasmussen[17] argues that a deliberate change to existing US strategic culture is observable – one that is not only visible in the armed forces, but beyond the military domain as well. These shifts by the USA demonstrate both the current need for, as well as the possibility to adjust strategic culture over the shorter term and hereby challenge the idea of undue stasis in strategic culture.

Deciding to embrace a particular paradigm on war plays a role as well. Metz[18] outlined these as: attempting to keep war within the state-upon-state paradigm, expanding the boundaries of war beyond any traditional confines such as the state or military targets or, constraining the use of war as a policy instrument. These paradigms and the challenges they hold are unfolding parallel to the rise of China and that of *Al Qaeda* on the strategic landscape.[19] Migrating between these three domains implies some shift in strategic culture to confine, expand or constrain the role war, and therefore also the use of military forces as a policy instrument. Subsequently a preference for harder military or softer non-military options in the execution of policy being directed by strategic culture can be observed. However, shifting strategic culture towards one of the aforementioned paradigms is not easy. Even if progress is claimed, such progress remains vulnerable to the criticism of second-generation theory on the declaratory-operational disjuncture thesis, the discourse-practice interplay[20] and norm stretching.[21]

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[17] Mikkel V. Rasmussen, "A new kind of war: Strategic culture and the war on terrorism", *Institute for International Studies Working Paper no 1*, Danish Institute for International Studies (2003), pp. 3-5.
[18]Steven Metz, Comments on future paradigms of war by Dr Steven Metz, Professor of War Studies, US Army War College, Carlysle, (2006).
[19] Thomas Donnely, "Containing aggressive rising powers", *Orbis,* (Summer, 2006), p. 416.
[20] Iver B. Neumann & Henrikki Heikka, "Grand strategy, strategic culture, Practice. The social roots of Nordic Defence", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 40/1 (2005), p. 11.
[21] Theo Farrell, "World power and military culture," *Security Studies,* 14/3 (July-September 2005), p. 460.

Challenges to strategic culture do not imply easy change, but offers some leeway to utilize third-generation theory and to temper it with the consistency and norm-stretching argument of second-generation theory. Viewing strategic culture beyond military factors affords opportunities to investigate matters such as a state identity, political culture, grand strategy, economic factors and diplomatic efforts. While some analysts attempt to retain the military focus, others widen this in order to investigate this admittedly difficult concept.[22] However, change can be explored along a number of avenues if strategic culture is viewed more inclusively as a concept that draws upon other entities as a dynamic and not a static concept.[23] As a more dynamic concept, strategic culture is shaped by how a state views international society and this relates not only to major powers, but also to smaller and middle powers (such as Finland, Denmark, Israel, Pakistan and South Africa) as well.[24] These views typically unfold along the following lines.

- *Realist strategic culture*. Maximising own security in the international system that operates in an anarchic mode.
- *Liberal strategic culture*. Maintains, breaks or forms coalitions, reforms military institutions and establishes international rules to defend international society from breaking down.
- *Revolutionary strategic culture*. Targets those actors and arrangements that uphold order in the international system to create a new system based on different principles in a forceful way.

[22] Darryl Howlett & John Glenn, "Epilogue: Nordic strategic culture", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 40/1 (2005), pp. 124-15.
[23] Iver B. Neumann & Henrikki Heikka (2005), p. 11.
[24] Henrikki Heikka, "Strategic culture and the English School: Conceptualising strategic adjustment in the Nordic region", *UPI Working Papers* 33 (Paper presented at the Nordic Network for Security Studies Seminar, Oslo, 12 April 2002), pp. 23–24.

Decisions to operate in one of the three modes presented above, also affords some latitude to adjust strategic culture. When viewed in a more inclusive manner and beyond the military confines, some avenues of change can be investigated. Norm transplantation (including transnational norms) takes place in three ways: external shock, norm entrepreneurs, and personnel change.[25] External shock is effected through wars and revolutions whilst norm entrepreneurs play their role through close access to decision-makers that push through new ideas. In addition, personnel change allows innovative thinkers with new ideas to access the policy process that eventually informs strategic culture.

Generational change also drives changes to strategic culture. Over time and from a historical perspective, different generations do not share a common understanding of power in the international system. For some, a more internal (domestic) focus directs strategic culture.[26] In reality, ideas originating from both domains are bound to challenge a reigning strategic culture. The impetus for generational change is viewed to originate from either a reconfiguration of power in the international system, or, primarily domestic events. One outcome is that of competing paradigms of strategic culture within a generation, or between successive generations – each reflecting its own adherents. These paradigms allude to the role of war and/or power and change of the international system.

The broad contours presented above for tracking changes in strategic culture are tested ultimately by the declaratory-operational interface. If changes can be inferred from third-generation theory, can we assume that discourse and practice are in equilibrium, or not? Second-generation theory outlines the declaratory-operational void as either resulting from constraints imposed by a previous culture, or that a

[25] Darryl Howlett & John Glenn (2005), pp. 127-128.
[26] Darryl Howlett & John Glenn (2005), pp. 126, 129.

hegemonic group is more interested in maintaining its interests.[27] This void unfolds by attempting to strengthen own interests, to prevent an alternative strategy or to promote in-group solidarity.[28]

Before moving to the focus upon South African strategic culture, some observations on strategic culture need to be demarcated. Firstly, strategic culture is probably more mutable than supposed by first-generation theorists. Secondly, third-generation theory exposes the possibility of shorter-term changes and second-generation theory offers leeway to criticise practices stemming from strategic culture. Thirdly, strategic culture seemingly comprises more than military matters, but a possible declaratory-operational void remains between what is stated, and eventually practiced. Fourthly, history and experience, transnational norms, political culture and structures, membership of regional organisations as well as defence policy present entry points to explore dynamics of strategic culture. Finally, the operational-declaratory void from second-generation theory and norm stretching assist to determine whether there are in fact voids between declared culture and eventual practice.

TOWARDS A POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

Exploring strategic culture remains a void in South African academic literature. Although culture is often cited or alluded to, strategic culture remains marginal at best. In an attempt to address this void, the following indicators are selected from the earlier discussion to explain the emergent practice of South African strategic culture:

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[27] Ian Johnston (1995a), p. 40.
[28] Ian Johnston (1995a), pp. 56-58.

- Shocks that effect changes to strategic culture originate from external and domestic disturbances. Not only historic, but also recent developments play a role with crisis in domestic politics being a particularly important driver of change.
- Shifts and changes in political culture can be observed as a new generation of politicians emerges. New incumbents and norm entrepreneurs are important agents of change and become more visible by reviewing foreign and defence policy.
- In spite of declared successes to adjust strategic culture, its operational side is often less impressive. Reinforcing own competency and legitimacy, blocking alternative strategies and challenges to authority and promotion of in-group solidarity are judged to complicate the practice of changing strategic culture.

SHOCKS IMPOSED UPON THE REIGNING POLITICAL SYSTEM

The fading of the Cold War facilitated a significant international shift away from power politics and its reliance upon the military policy instrument. The military-security paradigm was challenged by a softer paradigm that accentuated the limitations of military power in an envisaged future strategic environment.[29] The erosion of the military-security connectivity in the external strategic environment had a fundamental impact upon the pre-1994 Total Strategy that governed strategic thinking in South Africa.[30]

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[29] Barry Buzan, *People States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the post-Cold War Era*. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 368-369.

[30] Republic of South Africa, *Foreword: White Paper on Defence and Armaments Production* (Pretoria: Department of Defence, 27 March 1975), Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Production* (Pretoria: Department of Defence 1977), pp. 4-5.

The pre-1994 security paradigm was not only deeply imbedded in viewing threats predominantly in military-state terms, but it also relied upon armed forces to sustain state policy internally and externally. Embedded in a political dispensation that allowed little leeway for change, reigning political and strategic culture also reflected little room for change. This militarised outlook fell out of favour with the decline of the Cold War and the rise of new international norms that had more to do with ousting war, unilaterism and competitive national attitudes. Marginalising war, promoting cooperation and multilaterism did not go unnoticed and influenced South African national strategic outlooks in a significant way[31] and became a way for ousting the undesired pre-1994 paradigm. In effect, post-Cold War security thought accentuated non-military and particularly human matters in the emergent security architecture considered by states.[32] The ending of the Cold War and the events of 1994 within South Africa also accentuated the disequilibrium between emergent South African strategic reality and the practices stemming from the reigning strategic culture.[33] Subsequently, internal and external shocks created room for the rise of a competitive sub-culture of new incumbents and advisors that viewed security and insecurity in softer and non-military terms.

Most post-apartheid South African departmental policy papers pay tribute to the external and domestic shocks and the need for adjustment and transformation of all policies. Two policy domains that also have a close nexus with strategic culture, namely foreign affairs and defence, clearly illustrate this predisposition. From a foreign policy perspective, South African transition took place amidst a world in

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[31] See Gavin Cawthra, "From 'Total Strategy' to 'Human Security': The Making of South Africa's Defence Policy 1990-98" *COPRI Working Paper*, 8 (1999). http://www.diis.dk/graphics/COPRI_publications/COPRI_publications/ publications/8-1999.doc.

[32] Gavin Cawthra (1999), p. 4.

[33] Ken Booth & Peter Vale, "Critical security studies and regional insecurity: The case of Southern Africa", in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, Keith Krause & Michael Williams (eds.) (London: UCL Press Ltd 1997), pp. 334, 336-337.

transition of which the repercussions reached into the domestic lives of countries.[34] In step with Foreign Affairs, the Defence White Paper (1996) acknowledges the shocks imposed upon the strategic environment, the decline of the military instrument and the reconfiguration of South African strategic responses.[35] These acknowledgements in the founding documents of Foreign Affairs and Defence in fact admit to the shocks effected by two important events: externally, the collapse of the bipolar world and its paradigm for using armed forces, and internally, the collapse of the Nationalist government in South Africa with its reliance on military coercion. These events defined and redirected South African strategic thinking and were in no uncertain way augmented by parallel shifts in domestic political culture.

EVOLVING CONTOURS OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

A commitment to democracy, morality of the use of force, individual rights, a disposition towards the role of the country within the international system, and the utility or futility of war infiltrated South African political culture – understood as "… that subset of beliefs and values of a society that relate to the political system".[36] In a normative sense, these indicators can be argued as traits of a liberal strategic culture and reside in the transition from authoritarian to democratic forms of governance and a security perspective that migrated from competitive to cooperative security. This South African shift is directed by moral and normative beliefs that are regulated by the 1996 South African Constitution. These beliefs derive from the constitutional values and principles reflected in Chapter 1 of the 1996 South African

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[34] Department of Foreign Affairs, *South African Foreign Policy*. Discussion document. (Pretoria: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996), Sections 3.2 &3.3, http://www.info.gov.za/greenpapers/1996/foraf1.htm.

[35] Department of Defence, *South African White Paper on Defence* (Pretoria: Department of Defence, 1996 Approved May 1998), Ch 4, par. 1-3. http://www.info.gov.za/whitepapers/1996/defencwp.htm#chap4.

[36] Gabriel A. Almond & Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* as quoted in Jeffrey Lantis (2002), p. 90.

Constitution and, contrary to 1994, reflect strong humanitarian overtures that are embedded in the rule of law :[37]

- human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom;
- non-racism and non-sexism;
- supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law; and
- universal adult suffrage, a national common voters' roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.

The South African Constitution also explicitly stresses democracy, an open society, and fundamental human rights in its preamble. The use of military force is rigidly demarcated and confined by law (including international law) and controlled through civilian oversight.[38] On the morality of the use of force, the stance is that it remains the very last option and that it should be mediated by cooperative and preventative measures.[39] These normative outlines are important elements of emergent South African political culture and the politico-strategic outlook regarding the use of coercion. In no uncertain way and contrary to previous practice under apartheid, any military prominence in practices directed by strategic culture is severely circumscribed by constitutional values and principles.

The political shift away from a prior culture of coercion is perhaps best explained by a move to pluralism. Pluralism draws upon exercising influence, not power, and particularly not military power. The pluralist approach is informed by first

[37] South Africa, *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, Act 108 of 1996 (Date of commencement 4 February 1997).
[38] South Africa (1996), Sec 199(8), 200(2), 201(1) & (2).
[39] Department of Defence (1996), Ch 2, 11.1-11.5.

resolving the domestic situation and for an embryonic democracy to emerge.[40] Pluralism thus accentuates the South African move away from power politics and military coercion to execute policy[41] – a declared intent of the new South African political leadership. Avoiding a slide towards hegemony (a threat alluded to by second-generation theorists) regularly featured in early strategic thinking of the South African transition. Hence, pluralism with its swing away from power politics inherently also facilitates the South African preference to avoid regional hegemony.[42]

A political culture emerging from a shocked strategic environment becomes subject to new groups appearing and recrafting politics. Such restructuring typically unfolds through writing, words, phrases, debates and literature. In the Mandela era (1994–1998), the normative profile of policy featured strongly with human rights and human security rhetoric characterising his tenure.[43] Under President Mbeki (1998–), a more salient profile of *realpolitik* is found, with matters of Africa, anti-imperialism and democracy being important features of this era.[44] Mbeki's Africa-first approach toned down African apprehension towards South Africa as the more general and ever-increasing African agenda grew.[45] President Mbeki also shifted the (perhaps unavoidable) personal and normative influence of Mandela as a determinant of strategic culture back into the arena of collective and cooperative African ventures. This latter shift became particularly salient with the 2002 official launch of the African Union.

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[40] Paul-Henri Bischoff, "External and domestic sources of foreign policy ambiguity: South African Foreign Policy and the projection of pluralist middle power", *Politikon* 30/2 (November, 2003), pp. 183-184, See also Anton du Plessis, "Geopolitical context. A sea change from old to new geopolitics" in *Change and South African External Relations*, Walter Carlnaus & Marie Muller (eds.) (Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishing, 1997), p. 26.

[41] Kader Asmal (Chairperson of Portfolio Committee on Defence), *Defence in the 21st Century*, Speech at the Extended Public Committee Meeting of the National Assembly, South African Parliament (8 April 2005), pp. 16-17.

[42] Maxi Schoeman, "The hegemon that wasn't: South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe", *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* XXIII/1 (May, 2001), pp. 1-2.

[43] Paul-Henri Bischoff (2003), p. 191.

[44] Gavin Cawthra, "Security governance in South Africa", African *Security Review* 14/3 (2005), p. 96, Laurie Nathan, "Consistency and inconsistencies in South African Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs* 81/2 (2005a), p. 363.

[45] Paul-Henri Bischoff (2003), p. 191.

Explaining an emergent South African strategic culture and resultant practices cannot ignore the explicit cooperative, non-confrontation and non-offensive focus that crept into the country's foreign and defence policies.[46] Although alluded to after the 1994 political watershed, the African agenda soon became the defining focus. This African focus is quite apparent in the 2005 strategic plan of the Department of Foreign Affairs. As for Foreign Affairs, the vision and mission of the Strategic Plan 2005–2008 explicitly place the African agenda at the apex of South African interests. This focus is underscored by the statement of the Foreign Affairs Minister that asserts, "In the first instance, our greatest challenge in this regard is to consolidate the African agenda and, in this way, to contribute to the victory of the African Renaissance".[47]

A similar refocus is visible in defence policy as a domain where the saliency, preparation and employment of armed forces are directed by foreign policy. The 2005 Defence Budget Vote and the current review of defence policy both echo the African focus of South African foreign policy. Initially, the African focus appeared somewhat subdued in the 1996 Defence White Paper with Southern Africa receiving most attention. A scrutiny of South African Defence Votes after 2000 reveals a growing African agenda that dominated by 2004 and 2005. African insecurities overshadowed not only the 2005 Defence Vote, but also effected the realignment of South African defence towards African security.[48] In this regard, defence policy is kept in step with foreign policy and dovetails with the constitutional provision to honour international responsibilities through employing the South African National

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[46] See Evert Jordaan, *South African Defence since 1994: A Study of Policy-Making*, Unpublished Masters thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa (April, 2005).

[47] Department of Foreign Affairs, *Department of Foreign Affairs Strategic Plan 2005–2008*. (Pretoria: Department of Foreign Affairs, 2005), pp. 10, 18-19. http://www.dfa.gov.za/department/stratplan05-08.pdf.

[48] Department of Defence, *Budget Vote by Minister of Defence, Mosiuoa Lekota*, MP, National Assembly (Cape Town: 8 April, 2005a). http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2005/05041116151001.htm., Department of Defence, *White Paper on Defence and Defence Review. Defence Update*. Edited Report 1 (15 August, 2005b), p. 14.

Defence Force (SANDF), as acknowledged in the 2005 Defence Update and the Constitution.[49]

Operationally, the African focus already featured prominently in the 1999 White Paper on Peace Missions that states, "Although South Africa acknowledges its global responsibilities, the priority afforded to Africa in South African foreign policy makes the continent the prime focus of future engagements."[50] At the military-strategic level, the geographic focus of security and defence mirrors the African context in the leading role of South Africa in the African Union. Although the mission profile and strategic concepts were initially generic and normative by nature, Defence Reviews of 2004–2005 and the 2005 Defence Update turned the focus of defence more acutely to Africa.[51] This becomes visible through the shift of military diplomacy to Africa, as acknowledged in the 2003/04 Annual Report and the 2005 Defence Update. As a leading member of the African Union, South Africa soon became the largest single contributor of peacekeeping troops in Africa.[52]

South African foreign policy became comprehensively demilitarized in the aftermath of 1994. Matters of defence followed suit with armed forces being viewed in terms of utility rather than morality. However, the softer and more human-centred security paradigm accepted at policy level influenced South African practice of using armed forces (or refraining from their use).[53] Consequently two features began to govern the role of defence after 1994: domestic and international employment and defence being subject to civil oversight and international law.[54] The refocus also leans

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[49] Department of Defence (2005b), p. 15., South Africa, (1996), Section 201(2c).

[50] Department of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions*. (Pretoria: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1999), p.20. http://www.info.gov.za/whitepapers/1999/ peacemissions.pdf.

[51] Kader Asmal (2005), p. 12.

[52] Department of Defence, *Annual Report 2003–2004*. (Pretoria: c2005), p. 13. http://www.dod.mil.za/documents/annualreports/AnnualReport2004.pdf., Department of Defence (2005b), pp. 12, 35.

[53] Mikkel Rasmussen, "What's the use of it?' Danish strategic culture and the utility of armed force", *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association,* 40/1 (2005), p. 69.

[54] South Africa (1996), Sec 200(2) & 201(2).

towards defence within the softer security parameters and new international norms preferred by incoming political appointees who had to accept and put into practice the new security thinking embraced by the architects of policy.[55] The use of armed forces for peace missions, not warfighting, became a defining factor of shifts in South African strategic culture.

Norm entrepreneurs that forged the post-1994 defence policy solidified the introduction of a new and less militaristic paradigm as envisaged by the political principles.[56] As pointed out by Rasmussen,[57] a careful pathway between cosmopolitanism (no use for armed forces) and defencism (no country is special and exempted from threats) is crucial, and South Africa is no exception. As opposed to the narrow military definition of strategic culture as portrayed by Klein (1994), South African outlooks and practice leaned ever more towards a wider view. As opposed to the realist and revolutionary strategic cultures, the liberal strategic culture paradigm of upholding the state system of a society of states[58] is reflected in emergent practice of South African strategic culture. In addition, the reform of global government institutions[59] features prominently alongside a South African preference for protecting the international system and the rules governing it – that of international law in particular. A preference to promote the international agenda is also visible in the guiding principles of the White Paper on Participation in Peace Missions, which clearly advocates:[60]

- a commitment to the promotion of human rights;

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[55] Kai Michael Kenkel, *Academic Experts and the Policy Making Process: The Case of the 1996 South African Defence White Paper*. Paper presented at the 19th International Political Science Association World Congress (Durban: 29 June-4 July 2003), pp. 15, 30.
[56] Kai Michael Kenkel (2003), p. 12.
[57] Mikkel Rasmussen (2005), p. 69.
[58] Henrikki Heikka (2002), pp. 23-24.
[59] Department of Foreign Affairs (2005), pp. 2-5, 10.
[60] Department of Foreign Affairs (1999), p. 20.

- a commitment to the promotion of democracy;
- a commitment to justice and international law in the conduct of relations between nations;
- a commitment to international peace and to internationally agreed-upon mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts;
- a commitment to the interests of Africa in world affairs; and
- a commitment to economic development through regional and international cooperation in an interdependent world.

The commitment to the UN and its transformation to ensure a better international dispensation for all countries is a further important manifestation of the liberal trait.[61] The deliberate infusion of international law into the South African Constitution indicates a definite preference for international best practice to inform emergent South African strategic culture and subsequent practices.[62] Commitment to the UN and similar bodies is stated unequivocally in the White Paper on Peace Missions. This White Paper acknowledges the UN as the governing authority, that regional and sub-regional mandates should derive from the UN, and that the sole focus of participation should be human security.[63]

A recognition of new security thought also features explicitly in the 1996 White Paper on Defence that states, "There has been a reorientation of thinking on security and threats to security. These concepts are now viewed in a holistic way". As outlined in the Defence White Paper (1996), "the security of people and the non-

[61] Thabo Mbeki, State of the Nation address of the President of South Africa, Houses of Parliament (Cape Town: 14 February 2003), http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03021412521001.htm., Department of Defence (2005a), p. 10.
[62] South Africa (1996) Sections 198(c) & 199(5).
[63] Department of Foreign Affairs (1999), pp. 14, 16, 20.

military dimensions of security have gained prominence".[64] This view is in step with that of foreign policy that holds, "The present policy and execution of policy represent a break with the past".[65] These indicators, which are manifestations of where South African defence policy is heading, are refined by Chapter One (*A Changed Security Environment*) of the 2005 Defence Update[66] and it invariably influences strategic culture. The redefinition of focus is in no small way also directed by strong elements of democratisation.

A move towards "defence in a democracy" as elaborated upon in the above section was effected through the involvement of norm entrepreneurs such as Nathan. According to Kenkel,[67] Nathan contributed to the defence debate by effecting the shift from a state-based military outlook to that of defence as an extended concept that turned upon the security of people and one not limited to military threats. Nathan linked the concept of extended security to Southern Africa and established the notion of defencism.[68] The relevance of Nathan's inputs was supported by the normative underpinning of defence in a democracy as outlined by him in *Principles of Defence in a Democracy*.[69]

Nathan's normative and principled policy approach set South African defence policy within a democratic paradigm for control purposes. Subsequently, both the 1996 White Paper as well as the 1998 Defence Review reflect an early optimism to have defence issues as open and transparent as possible[70] and under civil control. The progressive nature of the emergent defence policy becomes apparent through the inclusion of matters concerning women, homosexuals and unionisation within the

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64 Department of Defence (1996), Chapter 4 (5.5).
65 Department of Foreign Affairs (1996), Sec 3.2 & 3.3.
66 Department of Defence (2005b).
67 Kai Michael Kenkel (2003), p. 12.
68 Kai Michael Kenkel (2003), pp. 13-14.
69 Kai Michael Kenkel (2003), p. 24.
70 Gavin Cawthra (2005), pp. 97, 100.

SANDF – matters that were inconceivable before the 1994 watershed.[71] The practice of strategic culture thus became infused with a liberal trait and was strongly demarcated by defencism and humanitarian matters within a democratic regulatory framework.

A second norm entrepreneur was the late Dr. Rocklyn Williams.[72] By 1998 Williams recognised the secondary nature of threats. As opposed to warfighting, Williams promoted the secondary focus within the defence realm[73] and that of peace operations in particular.[74] Williams[75] remained critical about the assumption that the secondary roles of peace building and peace missions could be derived from the primary role of warfighting (defence against aggression) and the durability of such an approach. Keeping defence within the realm of expanded security thinking with human security at its apex, seemed a better interface and a step away from the admittedly questionable threat of warfighting.

The critical approach by Williams eventually materialised in 2004. The 2004 Defence Vote acknowledged that the scope of operations for the SANDF was not accurately foreseen and in need of a revisit. This matter dominated the 2005 Defence Update with the minister conceding that the SANDF is at its tether as far as secondary commitments are concerned.[76] Although reflected in both the Defence White Paper of 1996 as well as the Military Strategy of 2002, it is the prominence of the secondary role(s) that remained tenuous and "… [where] the SANDF is most

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[71] Gavin Cawthra (2005), p. 97., Lindy Heinecken, "South Africa's armed forces in transition: Adapting to the new strategic and political environment", *Society in Transition* 36/1 (2005), pp. 85-86.

[72] The late Dr. Williams was a senior defence analyst, member of the former Military Research Group and one with strong links to the governing ANC party.

[73] Rocklyn Williams, "The South African Defence Review and the redefinition of the parameters of the national defence debate: Towards a post-modern military", *Contemporary Security Policy* 21/1 (April 2000), pp. 118-119.

[74] Laurie Nathan, Electronic response to question by the author on the contribution of the late Dr Rocklyn Williams as a norm entrepreneur (9 November, 2005b).

[75] Rocklyn Williams (2000), p. 123.

[76] Department of Defence (2005b), pp. 15-16., Department of Defence, *Parliamentary media briefing by the Minister of Defence, Mosiuoa Lekota*, MP (Cape Town: 9 September 2003).
http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03090914461006.htm.

operational".[77] It is therefore conceivable that operationally a dual-role SANDF (and the difficulties of a dual-role military) is emerging as a result of the prominence ascribed to soft security within the evolving South African strategic culture.

Over time – as reflected in the Defence Budget Votes of 2004 and 2005 and the Department of Foreign Affairs strategy of 2005 – "dealing with the past" – seemingly began to fade and a more prospective approach entered. The more proactive approach coincided with the demilitarisation of foreign affairs and pursuit of a "foreign policy of peace".[78] The foreign policy mode moved to that of an ambitious African and global agenda, with "idealist, internationalist and emancipatory tendencies".[79] The coherence of this prospective foreign policy is sustained by a number of themes, namely Africa and the Africanist inclination, democracy, human rights and good governance, understanding security as a holistic inclusive concept, a soft and quiet approach to conflict resolution, and multilaterism.[80] Toning down the prominence of the military option and elevating softer non-coercive forms of conflict resolution for Africa is now a trademark of South African strategic practice and probably directed by an emergent, albeit immature, strategic culture.

A CRITIQUE OF EMERGENT SOUTH AFRICAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

Indicators of a declaratory-operational void should be juxtaposed to matters that mitigate a perceived void, but changes to strategic culture and resultant practices need to be recognised. The dominant strategic culture that now directs the use of South African armed forces, emanate from changes in norms. The acceptance by political decision-makers of democracy, human security and

[77] Lindy Heinecken (2005), p. 75.
[78] Anton du Plessis, "The military instrument in South African foreign policy: A preliminary exploration", *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* XXV/2 (2003), p. 116.
[79] Laurie Nathan (2005a), p. 362.
[80] Laurie Nathan (2005a), p. 363.

international law typify new norms and their presence in foreign affairs and defence can be demarcated.

The response of the Defence Portfolio Committee on the 2005 Defence Budget Vote, bring some images of declaratory-operational consistency into focus. The declared intent to transform the security institutions is claimed to be quite successful. Asmal[81] also alludes to South African contributions as portrayed in its leading position in the African Union and NEPAD contributions in terms of payments together with Libya and Nigeria to fund activities by the Union, support to Burundi, the 2006 elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Comoros, as well as the ongoing mission in Darfur. These activities demonstrate a close declaratory-operational interface of African and democratic commitments. Moving defence to a more cooperative, multifaceted and multilateral profile is claimed as well. The refocus on peace missions also supports the notion of a South African strategic profile more attuned to cooperative and collective security – a matter explicitly recognised and refined in Chapter 2 of the 2005 Defence Update.

Identifying indicators of the declaratory-operational void is more difficult. Investigating this imbalance in the South African case is threatened by biases towards the real or perceived voids in domains that inform strategic culture. However, norm stretching is an additional argument to explain further the presence of inconsistencies. Norm stretching refers to extending the boundaries of newly accepted norms in order to keep in step with challenges.[82] Accordingly, adjustments to heed to the norms accepted, are not uncommon. Bearing in mind that mere indicators of inconsistency or norm stretching are explored, the following profile can be compiled.

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[81] Kader Asmal (2005), pp. 7-9.
[82] Theo Farrell (2005), pp. 452, 460.

Nathan, as an important norm entrepreneur of changes in defence policy, admits that South African foreign policy contains contradictions that have to be noted. The first aberration is the vulnerability of the declared democratic paradigm to the Africanist and imperialist agendas when in competition.[83] Such vulnerability casts some doubt upon a persistent democratic imperative in political culture and foreign policy – two important domains informing South African strategic culture. No rejection of democracy is argued, but rather a cautiousness to embrace it unequivocally or stretching the democratic norm beyond its traditional understanding.

Embracing multilaterism is a stated norm of South African political practice. However, Lesotho (1998) and Burundi (2002) as well as the South African stance on human rights in Africa show some unilaterism and coercion by South African efforts towards promoting peace[84] – a matter (according to some analysts) that does not go unnoticed by African leaders. Included are the South African stance on the Nigerian dictatorship in 1995[85] and its recent involvement in the Ivory Coast with images of a Mbeki-South African venture.

As opposed to the enthusiasm to intervene reflected in the above section, one matter that promotes a perception of deeper inconsistency is the South African response to the events in Zimbabwe – a matter noted by Herbst[86] and Nathan. Transgressions of democratic practice, human rights, the rule of law and regular recourse to state violence remain unattended. Here declaratory and operational voids are perhaps most salient as democratic imperatives clashed with the African and anti-imperialist paradigms of South African decision-makers. By persistently

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[83] Laurie Nathan (2005), p. 363.
[84] Paul-Henri Bischoff (2003), p. 184.
[85] Laurie Nathan (2005), pp. 366, 368.
[86] Jeffrey Herbst, "A tale of two countries", *Foreign Affairs*. 84/6 (November/December 2005) pp. 3, 16. http://plinks.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=5&hid=101&sid=86c65adf-9630-4d1f-acfe-b5070a7d139d%40sessionmgr4#toc., See also Roger Southall, "Introduction. South Africa, an African peacemaker", in Roger Southall (ed.) *South Africa's Role in Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa*, (Cape Town: HRSC Press, 2006) pp. 10-11.

avoiding those norms explicitly weaved into political culture and foreign policy of post-apartheid South Africa, criticism of these inconsistencies emanated from across the domestic and international spectrum.[87]

A more critical stance on South African progress is that of Herbst who argues that there are two cultures prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa. One is the professed new South Africa with its democratic and progressive profile – a view shared in some way by Bischoff.[88] The other culture is that of an armed liberation movement[89] that competes with democracy and the professed transparency of the emergent political culture. In effect, Herbst argues that when challenged, the governing party tends to sway towards resistance politics and invokes racism as the cause of problems and racial solidarity as the answer.[90] Subsequently the question arises whether a democratic culture or that of a liberation movement with a more closed and black solidarity agenda informs South African strategic culture and the actions that emanates from it.

The strategic defence packages acquired recently raise a further question about a declaratory-operational void. Contrasted against the defensive and non-threatening norm of defence policy[91] and that of human security, the scope and nature of the acquisitions are viewed as inconsistent. Prominent funding of new systems for the primary role amidst an acknowledgement of peace missions becoming problematic and expensive demonstrates some contradiction.[92] The emphasis upon peace missions that accentuates changed priorities towards

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87 Laurie Nathan (2005) pp. 367-369.
88 Paul-Henri Bischoff (2003), p. 190.
89 Jeffrey Herbst (2005), p.7., See also Krista Johnson, "Liberal or liberation framework. The contradictions of ANC rule in South Africa", in Henning Melber (ed.) *Limits to Liberation in Southern Africa*. The Unfinished Business of Democratic Consolidation, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2003), p. 221. http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za.
90 Jeffrey Herbst (2005), pp. 3, 6.
91 Department of Defence, (2005b), p.15.
92 Department of Defence (2005b), pp. 9-10., Laurie Nathan (2005), p. 368.

international obligations and those on the African continent in particular strengthens the perception of inconsistency.[93] Some of the systems acquired (submarines and fighter aircraft) have no obvious nexus with peace missions and help to sustain criticism of an apparent declaratory-operational void. With the secondary functions now enjoying priority,[94] preparing the SANDF for its primary role with expensive armaments might only be consistent by stretching the non-offensive norm artificially to include the new weapons systems.

The rising profile of military means in executing foreign policy also raises images of some inconsistency. The observation by Du Plessis[95] of an increased military dimension in South African foreign policy at the dawn of the 21st century (albeit one characterized by caution and prudence), is highlighted by two subsequent developments. Firstly, there is the practice of South African commitment of military forces towards African conflict theatres that grew significantly since 2003,[96] and secondly, the arrival of the first ships and aircraft of the controversial arms deal, as well as the decision to purchase long-range transport aircraft. A third matter is the leading South African profile in the establishment of the SADC Brigade of the African Standby Force.[97] These developments coincided with a shift in defence policy to support foreign policy initiatives into Africa more comprehensively with military forces. As in the case of European countries, such as Denmark for example, the growth in these "Projects for Peace" becomes the new face of armed forces and can be construed as the "militarization" of policies. This militarization unfolds within clustered military and non-military decision-making and operational policy

[93] Department of Defence (2005b), p. 15.
[94] Department of Defence (2005b), p. 16.
[95] Anton Du Plessis (2003), p. 135.
[96] Department of Defence (2005a).
[97] Cheryl Hendricks and Kaye Whitman, "South Africa in Africa. The post-apartheid decade", *Seminar Report*, (Stellenbosch: 29 July-1 August 2004), pp. 20-21.

environment that affords the use of armed forces a renewed focus within an emergent South African strategic culture.[98]

CONCLUSION

In this article an attempt was made to present some first impressions of South African strategic culture and practices after the events of 1994. The total absence of South African literature and the acknowledged difficulty of the theoretical debate on strategic culture underline the intricacy and limited findings that stem from this attempt.

Theoretical progress on strategic culture is reinforced by ordering the debate on strategic culture into three sequential waves of theory. Sequentially each wave contributes much to promote conceptual clarity, analysis, and offer frameworks for investigation. The progress offered by wave theory on strategic culture was employed to identify and explain selected elements of South African strategic culture, some practices emanating from it and to present come criticism.

Employing third-generation theory brings to the fore shifts in the character and practice of South African strategic culture. External and domestic shocks set in motion a range of events that accentuated the limitations of the pre-1994 South African politico-strategic dispensation. Subsequently, wider forces to transform the strategic outlook were set in motion. As new political incumbents took office, changes to norms in three important organising domains of South African strategic culture become visible, namely:

[98] Department of Defence (2005b), p. 9.

- The establishment of a normative framework for politics through the acceptance of a constitution that stressed international norms such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In combination with the liberation culture of new political appointees, political culture was set to change.
- Foreign policy became deeply embedded in multilaterism and with an "Africa first" priority. In practice, these priorities moved foreign policy from confrontation to cooperation with a lesser military profile.
- Emergent political culture ensured that defence policy was adjusted towards that of defence in a democracy. The military instrument was no longer the policy instrument of first choice and neither did coercive and unilateral military actions find any conceptual room. A culture of threat, coercion and military destruction was slowly transformed into one declaring and practicing collective protection through prevention, soft intervention and reconstruction.

Second-generation theory assisted to bring some inconsistencies into focus and thus to critique the emergent practice of South African strategic culture. Although the hegemony argument cannot be maintained, norm stretching seems plausible. Most of all, some declaratory-operational voids catch the attention. The declared democratic imperative is perhaps not as universal and deeply entrenched as so often declared. Subsequently, the democratic, defence and foreign policy nexus and execution strategies become suspect if democracy is a matter of choice, not principle. In addition to the latter criticism, an element of unilaterism seeped into demonstrating the African commitment. A further inconsistency relates to the growing profile of using armed forces to deal with African insecurities. This practice

diverges from the idea that the SANDF is not the instrument of first choice and is further reinforced by the nature of the strategic defence packages that highlight military coercion as more important than declared. A final observation is that the perceived inconsistencies spell trouble as they migrate between stark unilaterism and accepted multilateral profiles, stark military options and soft humanitarian interventions, and inexplicable and even harsh stances for the sake of solidarity and liberation sentiments.