

FOREIGN RELATIONS(HIPS) AS A MEANS TO AN END

A PROCESSUAL-RELATIONALIST APPROACH TO THE THEMES OF
JUSTICE AND RESTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN
RELATIONS

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

- “Diplomatic relations and all related aspects should be a means to an end, namely to promote the well-being of the country and its citizens” (DFA, 1996)
- “Our international relations work must endeavour to shape and strengthen our national identity; cultivate our national pride and patriotism; address the injustices of our past, including those of race and gender; bridge the divides in our society to ensure social cohesion and stability; and grow the economy for the development and upliftment of our people” (DIRCO, 2011:3)
- “The Challenge is to take advantage of opportunities while protecting South Africans - especially the poor... Closer partnership between countries, firms and people would (contribute to) higher rates of growth and development” (NDP, 2012:21)

RELATIONSHIPS AS THE FOUNDATIONS OF IDENTITY

- Value-laden “concepts of self” (identities) determine how states relate to peers, which in turn determines who they enter into alliances with (Kratochwil, 1989; Wendt, 1992; Finnemore, 1996)
- Hollway (2010:118-220): “identity formation is radically relational ... the challenges of relating to reality, how it is distorted, denied, introjected and also accepted ... ensure that identity is always in *process*”, emphasis added.
 - Understanding identity is not simply about understanding how the subject relates to others; it is about understanding that the subject exists *through* its relationship to the outer world, and how the subject accepts or contests its relationship to others
- Constructivist premise that actors’ identities determine their interests and behaviors remains uncontested, relationships as the major causal mechanism is an important qualifier to be added to the equation.

- Study of relationships as causal mechanisms in IR not a novel approach (Jackson & Nexon, 1999; Guzzini 2000; Lacassagne, 2012; Adler-Nissen, 2015; McCourt 2016)
- Processual-relationalism: Takes 'the social interaction as logically prior to the entities doing the interacting'
 - processes are causally linked events that produce change and that are again embedded in configurations – or 'aggregations of processes' – that produce new events in new ways.
 - encourages an understanding of entities as perpetually produced and reproduced (constructed and reconstructed) throughout history by events to which they are participants – active or passive – and which continue to shape their identities throughout the future.
 - agents (entities) also act into systems, rejecting and altering them, or accepting and perpetuating them.

JACKSON AND NEXON (1999:318) '(A)GENCY IS CREATED BY NETWORKS OF RELATIONS, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT POSITIONALITY OVERDETERMINES THE ACTIONS OF AGENTS'

THREE INSIGHTS FROM SA FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSES

1. THE SOUTH AFRICAN IDENTITY IS CONSTRUCTED AROUND A NOTION OF VICTIMHOOD THAT IT SHARES WITH OTHER FORMER COLONIES, WHO NOW COLLECTIVELY MAKE UP THE 'GLOBAL SOUTH' AND WHO FACE THE COMMON CHALLENGES OF POVERTY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT INHERITED FROM COLONIALISM, AND STANDS IN CONTRAST TO THE IDENTITY OF THE NEGATIVE OTHER AS THE PERPETRATOR OF THESE INJUSTICES (NAUDE, 2016)

- “the country has prioritized an Afro-centric foreign policy rooted in national liberation, the quest for African renewal, and efforts to negate the legacy of colonialism as well as neo-colonialism ... championing the cause of developing countries and Africa in particular” (DIRCO, 2011:7)
- “South Africa shares a history of solidarity and current developmental challenges with... the global South. South-South cooperation remains critical for advancing our collective aspirations” (DIRCO, 2015:4)

2. SA'S IDENTITY AS 'DEFENSELESS VICTIM OF COLONIAL INJUSTICE' DETERMINES WHAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE SEES AS ITS NATIONAL INTEREST, WHICH CAN BE ARTICULATED AS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL SYSTEMS SO AS TO MAKE THEM MORE RESPONSIVE TO SOUTH AFRICA'S AND THE REST OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH'S DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

- “Foreign policy, being an extension of national policy and interests, is an important component in South Africa’s strategy for development and social purposes” (DIRCO, 2011:10)
- “South Africa contributes towards the transformation of the global system of governance from power-based to a rules-based system in a just and equitable global order” (DIRCO, 2011:7)
- “Healing the wounds of the past and redressing the inequities caused by centuries of racial exclusion are constitutional imperatives” (NPC, 2012:14)
- “South Africa will persist with its advocacy for a reformed system of global governance (that) should include reform of the global financial architecture” (DIRCO, 2015:7)

3. SOUTH AFRICA BELIEVES THAT COUNTRIES OF THE GLOBAL NORTH POSSESS THE NECESSARY RESOURCES IT NEEDS TO ACHIEVE ITS NATIONAL INTEREST, AND SO ENGAGES THE NORTH IN EFFORT TO GAIN ACCESS TO THESE RESOURCES

- “South Africa will continue to leverage its strategic partnerships with the EU and its major member states to meet its domestic priorities, open up market opportunities, attract increased foreign direct investment, and support the AU” (DIRCO, 2011:31)
- “South Africa should also continue to engage the USA and Canada to meet development commitments to Africa” (DIRCO, 2011:33)
- “Europe, North America and Japan may continue to be powerful political economic forces in the world for at least the next 20 to 30 years” (NPC, 2012:240)
- South Africa’s “resolve to strengthen relations with strategic partners of the North in order to pursue the African Agenda and the Agenda of the South cannot be overemphasized ... strategic partners of the North are well placed to assist us in narrowing the gap between the rich North and the poor South with a view to diminish the two extremes” (DIRCO, 2015:4)

A CHALLENGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

“AS THE IMAGES OF LIFE LIVED ANYWHERE ON OUR GLOBE BECOME AVAILABLE TO ALL, SO WILL THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR ... IMPELLING THE DEPRIVED TO DEMAND A BETTER LIFE FROM THE POWERS THAT BE ... THE QUESTION THAT ARISES IS WHETHER WE SHALL EMBARK ON THAT ROAD WALKING ALONE OR WHETHER YOU WILL BE WITH US...?” (MANDELA, ADDRESS TO US CONGRESS, 1994A)

- South Africa considers the global past of colonialism an injustice that it continues to suffer through the legacies it inherited from this unjust, exploitative and oppressive system of rule.
 - This legacy is one of underdevelopment, poverty and inequality that exists both inside the country's borders and in terms of South Africa's lack of resources, including power and status deficiencies.

HISTORIC, MORAL OBLIGATION CANNOT BE ABSOLVED

- “Why are we faced with such a reality? ... We will have to accept the legacy of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and the Cold War contributed to Africa’s under-development” (Pahad, 2004b)
- “(O)ver centuries, African resources, human and material, ensured that Europeans live a better life and enjoy the good things of life while the countries of Africa were pushed deeper and deeper into the mire of poverty and underdevelopment” (Mbeki, 2006)
- “Developed countries in particular have a historic and moral obligation to contribute to achieving a fair global economic environment” (Zuma, 2017)
- “South Africa therefore accords central importance to ... working with countries of the South to address shared challenges of underdevelopment, promoting global equity and social justice; working with countries of the North to develop a true and effective partnership; and doing our part to strengthen the multilateral system” (DIRCO, 2011:4)

JUSTICE AND RESTITUTION: SEIZING THE IMAGINED FUTURE SA FEELS ROBBED OF

“THE CONSTITUTION OBLIGES THE COUNTRY TO HEAL THE DIVISIONS OF THE PAST, RECOGNIZING THAT SOUTH AFRICA EMERGED FROM A SYSTEM WHERE THE MAJORITY OF ITS CITIZENS WERE ROBBED OF OPPORTUNITY” (NPC, 2012:35)

- Restitution for the injustices of colonialism takes to forms:
 1. Material reparations for the perceived underdevelopment and impoverishment of the former colonies through the structural processes of colonial administrations; and
 2. The restoration of the African image to its full glory.
- “(O)ur struggle is to engage in both the total emancipation of our continent from the social, political and economic legacy of colonialism and apartheid as well as to reclaim our history, identity and traditions” (Mbeki, 2006)

- Materially, South Africa seeks restitution through continued pressure for countries from the Global North to honour ODA commitments, while driving a campaign for economic justice that aims to restore the balance between the economies of the North and South. This includes:
 - The transformation of global financial structures (the Bretton Woods institutions), particularly as concerns sovereign debts and representation of the global South in international financial decision-making bodies
 - Securing favourable terms on international trade agreements and unfettered access to global markets, while being allowed to maintain trade barriers to protect infant industries
 - The establishment of alternative financial institutions, ie. BRICS Development Bank, DBSA...

- In another sense, material reparations for perceived losses incurred through colonization include securing greater power and status by negotiating a permanent seat (and Veto power) at the UNSC and other important decision-making bodies:
 - South Africa impresses that it will continue to fight for the reform of the global governance architecture, stressing what it considers “the historical injustice perpetrated against Africa in the composition of the Security Council” (Zuma, 2009)
 - South Africa conducts its international relations “conscious that the Global System of Governance is not efficient and representative of all the people and demographics of the world” (DIRCO, 2015:3-4)
- However, this transformation is about much, much more:

“WHAT WE SPEAK OF IS THE EVOLUTION OF THE OBJECTIVE WORLD WHICH INEXORABLY SAYS TO ALL OF US THAT WE ARE HUMAN TOGETHER OR NOTHING AT ALL (CREATING) THE CONDITIONS WHICH WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR ALL PEOPLES TO ENJOY THE RIGHT TO FULL HUMAN DIGNITY” (Mandela, 1994b)

- MOHANTY (2010:532-538): “THINKING WITH IDENTITY IN STRUGGLES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ... REQUIRES THIS PHILOSOPHICAL FORMULATION OF THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY, SPECIFICALLY AS IT IS LOCATED WITHIN THE UNEVEN GEOGRAPHIES AND ECONOMIES OF THE PRESENT. (JUSTICE) DOES NOT NECESSARILY ERASE LEGACIES OF RACISM, COLONIALISM, AND ECONOMIC DOMINATION (BUT) IT DOES PERHAPS MEAN THAT WE CAN INHABIT OUR HISTORIES AND IDENTITIES DIFFERENTLY”.

- The issues of economic and political transformation are a matter of human dignity for South Africa.
 - Mandela (1994b): “political leaders are challenged to build a nation in which all people ... can assert fully their human worth”
 - Pahad (2004a): “The false pre-colonial and colonial characterisations of African as either ‘child-like noble savages’, or worse, as ‘sub-human, barbaric, dirty, stinking savages’, can once again be seen as a reality ... Once again our leaders have taken up the mantle of revolutionaries for the African rebirth”
- Residing in this call for Africans to restore their legacy, is a cry for justice and restitution for the *glory* the African continent was robbed of during centuries of interactions with peers from around the globe.
- This forces us to reconsider what “a better South Africa (and) a better and a safer Arica in a better world” (DIRCO, 2011:10) really means...

“(EMANCIPATION) CANNOT BE ACHIEVED AS LONG AS WE DEFER TO OUR FORMER COLONISERS THE IMPORTANT MATTERS THAT AFFECT OUR COUNTRIES AND PEOPLE ... WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH AS LONG AS WE ARE NOT FREE TO MAKE OUR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT OUR OWN DESTINY” (MBEKI, 2006)

- For South Africa, the exclusion of the Global South from decision-making processes at the international level entrenches the historic narrative that non-Europeans are somehow less worthy of the trust of the international community – incapable of making sound decisions about the safety, security and prosperity of the world's states.
- Thus, the transformation of the global system is as much about reclaiming a destiny, as much about rewriting history to restore glory to non-Europeans, as it is about recuperating riches.
- More importantly, if agency is considered a property of personhood, then transforming the global system is about reassuming *personhood*.

A PROCESS VIEW: REDIRECTING DESTINY

- South Africa is very vocal about its perception that colonial oppression has not ended, and that the old imperial system of global politics has simply been replaced by a neo-colonial system of similar oppression, marginalization and exploitation
 - “The struggle against racism and other forms of discrimination is far from over and South Africa’s commitment to fight racism and to promote human rights will remain strong” (Ebrahim, 2014)
 - “The developing world, especially Africa, has a limited voice and participation in the decision- and policy-making processes of global trade, economic and financial institutions” (DIRCO, 2011:14)
 - “The increased interdependence between countries and people is a fact of global life which is not matched by efforts to strengthen global governance” (DIRCO, 2015:16)
- From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that justice for the non-Western world cannot be assumed complete until agency is acknowledged as a defining characteristic of personhood, and restored to the South as an acknowledgment of the worthiness of human dignity.
- At its core, South Africa’s foreign relationships are about the redefinition and ownership of a destiny denied by an unjust past that has also become an unjust future.

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