A woman in a dark dress and red shoes stands on a large globe, looking down at the map. The globe is the background for the top half of the page.

South Africa:

A Growing Embrace of Feminist Foreign Policy?

By Jo-Ansie van Wyk

Abstract

In 2014, Sweden became the first country to adopt a feminist foreign policy. Although a new Swedish government abandoned the country's feminist foreign policy in October 2022, Sweden has inspired many other states to adopt such a foreign policy to advance the status of women and girls. These developments have not gone unnoticed in South Africa, where historical relations between Sweden and the country's liberation movements endure in post-apartheid South Africa. Unlike Sweden, South Africa never adopted or declared a feminist foreign policy due to historical and cultural reasons, and different conceptualisations of women, gender, and feminism. Instead, under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) since 1994, South Africa has diplomatically capitalised on its liberation struggle and human rights credentials; the latter which,

to some extent, have for some time superseded a more focused emphasis on women's rights. A more nuanced foreign policy focus on improving the status of women and gender equality emerged partly due to international developments regarding women, peace, and security. Hence, the contribution explores feminist and/or gendered aspects of South Africa's foreign policy of *ubuntu* (human-ness and humanity) and diplomatic practice, and the implications thereof. It has shown that South Africa's growing embrace of elements associated with a feminist foreign policy includes memorialisation and symbolism (i.e. linking the liberation struggle and female stalwarts to foreign policy), positioning women in progressive internationalism, and integrating women in the definition of South Africa's national interests.

Introduction

Sweden–South Africa bilateral relations go as far back as the colonial period in Southern Africa. A truncated historical overview since the 17th century includes Dutch rule at the Cape, and numerous Swedish missionaries, scientists, and sailors stepping ashore and travelling the interior of what is now South Africa. Notable Swedish travellers to and in the Cape Colony included, amongst others, explorer Olof Bergh, missionary Otto Witt, Captain Carl Gustaf Ekeberg, Carl Peter Thunberg, Anders Sparrman (a student of the famous Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus), and Johan August Wahlberg (Sellström, 1999: 118–136; Skott, 2010: 371). Whereas these early contacts were predominantly scientific and commercial in nature, a more political dimension emerged prior to and after the Boer War (1899–1902) in Southern Africa. Besides increased Swedish immigration to the Cape Colony, a volunteer Scandinavian Corps and Ambulance Unit was organized in Sweden and other Nordic states and dispatched to join the Boer side. The Unit was deployed during the Siege of Mafeking and the Battle of Magersfontein where Sweden encountered fatal losses and soldiers were captured. After the war, South Africa erected monuments in memory of the Scandinavian Corps (Gerdov, 2016: 54–78).

In the early to mid-20th century, relations were disrupted by the two World Wars. By now, predominantly economic relations were soon compromised with the onset of legally enshrined apartheid after the South African elections of 1948. Sweden's activism and criticism against apartheid became the dominant feature of bilateral relations, while Sweden invested heavily in South African liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) which came to power in 1994 (Sellström, 1999: 118–136). For decades, Sweden provided humanitarian and financial aid amounting to almost US\$ 400 million to the ANC from the 1970s to mid-1990s, causing a diplomatic rift in official relations between Stockholm and Pretoria (Washington Post, 1996). Diplomatic relations were also severely affected by the assassination of Olof Palme, the Swedish Prime Minister, and a critical anti-apartheid supporter, on 28 February 1986. At the time, South Africa regarded Palme as an 'Enemy of the State' and a decision was taken that 'necessary action' should be taken against Palme (South Africa, 1985). A former apartheid death squad commander,

Eugene de Kock, later testified that the apartheid government was behind the assassination (Sellström, 1999: 28).

As post-apartheid South Africa moves into its third decade, South Africa and Sweden maintain full and extensive diplomatic relations, with elevated bilateral relations through a structured mechanism, the South African–Sweden Binational Commission established in 2000. For South Africa, its relations with Sweden are founded on strong Nordic support and solidarity during the liberation struggle and are based on 'mutually shared values of democracy, equality, and social justice, as well as mutually beneficial bilateral economic trade and cooperation' (DIRCO, 2022).

Given the historical relations between Sweden and the ANC, the focus of this special issue, and mindful of the major differences between these states, it is an opportune time to focus on gender equality and women's empowerment as a declared shared value. Both states have in recent decades taken decisive foreign policy directions. South Africa, for example, has consolidated its African Agenda (i.e. the centrality of Africa in its foreign policy), whereas Sweden's foreign policy has taken a decisive feminist turn from 2014.

Whereas scholarship on global examples of feminist foreign policy has proliferated since Sweden adopted a feminist foreign policy, and whereas scholarship on South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy have proliferated, research on South Africa's foreign policy in the context of the notion and practice of a feminist foreign policy remains scant, with Schoeman and Sadie (2004), Masters (2017), van Wyk (2019), Mbukanma and Strydom (2021: 17696–17712), Haastrup (2020: 199–216), and Magadla and Cornell (2019) notable exceptions. Hence, this contribution aims to fill this gap. Moreover, the rationale for this study is that Sweden's normative entrepreneurship regarding feminist foreign policy is instructive and provides an analytical and practical framework to analyse and assess South Africa's declared domestic and international commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. Moreover, the Swedish experience have instructional value for states embarking on a process to craft and implement

a feminist foreign policy. It is also instructive to determine the outcomes of other states' foreign policy and diplomatic emphasis on the status of women, and the WPS agenda.

Scholarship on the substance, practice, effect of and analytical approaches to a feminist foreign policy differ widely, focusing on, among other aspects, an ethics of care, good states and good global citizenship (Aggestam, Rosamond, and Kronsell, 2019: 23–39); a specific working method, an ability to confront contestation, and normative innovation (Aggestam and Rosamond, 2019: 37–48); and the practice of a feminist foreign policy (Zilla, 2022: 1–7; Cheung et al., 2021: 1–21). Convergence, however, is evident in the position that the number of women in a foreign ministry does not necessarily constitute a feminist foreign policy. Moreover, a masculine and male-driven global order has neglected – even ignored at times – women and gender in the world (Youngs, 2004: 75–87); often contributing to, amongst many other consequences, GBV and gender inequality. These aspects resonate with South Africa's declared foreign policy, gender commitments and WPS agenda, but can South Africa's foreign policy be typed as feminist, and what are the implications thereof?

Using a qualitative analytical methodology and reading of official Swedish and South African sources, the contribution unfolds in four parts. The next section outlines the background to, substance and practice of Sweden's feminist foreign policy. Against the background of the Swedish feminist foreign policy model, the third part of the contribution explores feminist and/or gendered aspects of South Africa's foreign policy of *ubuntu* (human-ness and humanity) and diplomatic practice, especially since the tenure of President Cyril Ramaphosa since 2018. Since assuming office, President Ramaphosa has focused on gender-based violence (GBV) in the South African context. Moreover, during his tenure, South Africa has served in influential international leadership positions, including a third term on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (2019–2020), and chairing the African Union (2020) and the Brazil-Russia-India-South Africa (BRICS) grouping (2023). The fourth part of the contribution reflects on the prospects of a feminist foreign policy for South Africa. The final part of the contribution ends with concluding remarks.

Made in Sweden: Background, Substance, and Practice of Feminist Foreign Policy

Since 2014, Sweden has been widely regarded as the normative entrepreneur and leading practitioner of feminist foreign and trade policy. Under a red-green government coalition, it became the first country to adopt a feminist foreign policy to advance its historical commitment to human rights and gender equality (MFA, 2019: 11). Following elections in October 2022, a more conservative new Swedish government under the Moderates Party abandoned the country's feminist foreign policy (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2022), stating that the notion of a feminist foreign policy 'obscures the content of the policy' but that the focus on gender equality will remain (Sjöbeck, 2022). Despite these changes, the Swedish Socialist Democratic Party and the Green Party coalition that instituted the policy have created a new foreign policy framework (i.e. a feminist foreign policy) that had, for example, been adopted and/or under consideration by other governments around the world.

For Sweden, its feminist foreign policy has responded 'to the discrimination and systematic subordination that still mark the daily lives of countless women and girls around the world', as well as the country's peace, security, and sustainable development agenda (MFA, 2019: 9). Besides the normative substance of its feminist foreign policy, Sweden has also paved the way for the practice of a feminist foreign policy, which, for

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Sweden, entails the application of a 'systematic gender equality perspective throughout foreign policy' (MFA, 2019: 9). Focusing on the 4Rs (Rights, Representation and Resources, and Reality), Sweden has followed an intersectional approach that recognised differences in living conditions, levels of influence, and the needs of women. In recognising this, Sweden has identified seven objectives of its feminist foreign policy:

- Full enjoyment of human rights
- Freedom from physical, psychological, and sexual violence
- Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding
- Political participation and influence in all areas of society
- Economic rights and empowerment
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- Internalisation and the practice of a feminist foreign policy in government (MFA, 2019: 11, 19, 30–48).

To achieve these, Sweden has proposed a practical methodology that entails gender-equality consciousness and gender-balanced domestic and international events, mainstreaming gender in communication, mobilising gender commitment and resources to achieve gender equality, gender awareness in cultural cooperation, and establishing networks and platforms for common gender agendas and practices (MFA, 2019: 59). The country has also identified several subsidiary areas where it has intended to apply this methodology: foreign and security policy (peace and security; human rights, democracy, and the rule of law; disarmament and non-proliferation), international development cooperation, trade, and promotion policy (MFA, 2019: 63–90). In 2017, Sweden released a review of its implementation of its feminist foreign policy. In measuring this, it has used several indicators to determine whether it has achieved the seven objectives of its feminist foreign policy. This was followed in 2021 with the Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) release of an Action Plan, *The Swedish Foreign Service Action Plan for Feminist Foreign Policy 2019–2022, including Direction and Measures for 2021*, i.e. an operational plan for the practice of its feminist foreign policy. The action plan

identified several operational practices, normative commitments, objectives, and actions, namely:

- Analysis and information gathering
- Accountability and influence
- Agenda-setting, events, delegations, and visits
- Alliance-building, platforms, and Groups of Friends
- Dialogues to influence and collect information
- Promotion and skills development
- Negotiations, monitoring mechanisms and reviews
- Procedures for grant management, processes, and reporting
- Positions in multilateral organisations, institutions, and peace support operations (MFA, 2021: 22–28).

It is too early to determine the success of the Action Plan and the overall impact and consequences of Sweden's feminist foreign policy, especially since its termination in October 2022. But how does Sweden's bilateral partner, South Africa, perform?

South Africa and Sweden's 4Rs

As the Swedish experience has shown, a feminist foreign policy is a comprehensive foreign policy that abolishes 'all forms of gender domination and oppression and aims to overcome gender stereotypes. It also seeks to give women the opportunity to participate in decision making, to represent the state, and execute the "hard" issues related to a country's external relations and status' (van Wyk, 2019). A feminist foreign policy thus entails both abolitionism and democracy: abolishing male domination and patriarchy and enabling and maintaining women's access to power at all levels. To achieve this, norms, numbers and practices have to be aligned. Toni Hastrup (2020: 199–216) has explored gender in the context of South African foreign policy by focusing on commitment, substance, and practice: aspects that this contribution builds on. These aspects resonate with Sweden's feminist foreign policy's 4Rs: Rights, Representation and Resources, and Reality (MFA, 2021: 22–28).

South Africa's normative commitment to women's rights, empowerment and gender equality is expressed in its Constitution (South Africa, 1996). Moreover, Chapter 9 of the Constitution has created seven 'state institutions supporting constitutional democracy', including a Commission for Gender Equality. As laudable as this commitment to women's rights and representation has been, contradictions have emerged between the law, society, and reality relating to the concepts of and definition of woman, gender, and feminist/feminism. Legally and socially, in South Africa, a woman is predominantly identified in terms of heteronormativity. The concepts woman and gender are often used interchangeably, creating paradoxical policy, wasted resources, ineffective responses, and outcomes (realities). Moreover, in South Africa, gender-based violence (GBV) is also predominantly regarded as violence against women, stressing the neglect of the nuances of the meaning of woman and gender. As recently as August 2022 and speaking on National Women's Day, President Ramaphosa again equates gender-based violence with violence against women only (Ramaphosa, 2022).

Added to this confusion and conflation have been the notions of, for example but not limited to, feminism and womanism, and their divergent understandings. Feminism in post-apartheid South Africa remains a challenged and a niche political practice, often equated with Western liberalism and denying the role and status of women in an African and traditional context. Besides this, the state of feminism and the feminist movement in post-apartheid South Africa have been questioned, especially in the context of liberation movements' strong women's liberation credentials and agenda. In addition to this, cognitive gaps have emerged. The ruling party's Women's League remains the custodian of the ANC's women's liberation credentials but in practice the Women's League has been accused of endorsing and maintaining heteronormativity and policies that are not advantageous to women (Hassim, 2015). Measured in terms of Sweden's 4Rs, the creation of a Cabinet portfolio on women (coupled with youth and disability) located in The Presidency is laudable but evidently has not added a more nuanced gendered approach to the country's domestic and foreign policy. Moreover, in South Africa, numerical improvements on women's representation and appointments, and on so-called gender mainstreaming, have not

translated into accountable gender policies and outcomes improving women's lived experiences and status. Often, women who have benefitted from women empowerment opportunities have contributed to the further entrenchment of elite interests (Hassim, 2022: 43).

The Swedish model requires women to be present and represented when agendas are set, and decisions made. Moreover, women's issues need to be on the agenda and women have to be appointed to key foreign policy and diplomatic positions, especially to realise the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda.

Since 1994, South Africa has had four female foreign ministers (Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Maite Nkoana Mashabane, Lindiwe Sisulu and the incumbent Naledi Pandor), and two female deputy foreign ministers (Reginah Mhaule and Candith Mashego-Dlamini). Compared to this, South Africa has never had a female president or a female head (i.e. director-general) of the foreign ministry. Besides this, only one woman has served as the chairperson of the parliamentary committee on foreign relations and cooperation since 1994. Within the ruling ANC's foreign policy machinery, women have also played a secondary role. No woman ever led the international relations desk of the party during exile, and it was only recently that women were elected to chair the international relations and diplomacy sub-committee of the ANC. By 2023, Lindiwe Zulu serves in this position but oversees a committee consisting predominantly of men. Ambassadorial appointments are also not reflective of South Africa's gender demographics as women comprise less than 45% of the country's ambassadors. These numerical advancements have not changed the challenges that South African women face. For example, gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa reached war-like proportions during the global pandemic, preceded by, and coinciding with, rampant state capture in South Africa. Sadly, women have been perpetrators *and* victims of state capture, which has had an impact on the country's foreign policy architecture and fabric as connected women benefitted from lucrative contracts and other women experienced GBV in this environment.

In the absence of a declared feminist foreign policy, South Africa can, at best, be described as a state that values and contributes to the improvement of the

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role and status of women (Haastrup, 2020: 199–216). However, normative commitment and practice have not translated into qualitative improvements in the lives of most South African women. More female parliamentarians have been elected and women have been appointed to major Cabinet portfolios such as international relations and cooperation, and defence and state security. However, these women oversee bureaucracies and systems that maintain an entrenched gender bias. The country’s foreign policy bureaucracy illustrates this. The director-general of the foreign affairs department has always been male, and its internal structure follows a conventional masculine geographic approach to international affairs. In fact, a review panel of the department consisted mainly of men (MIRCO, 2019: 1), a trend followed predominantly by the parliamentary oversight portfolio committee.

The said review panel, under the heading ‘*Some Salient Observations by The Panel*’, mentioned women twice only:

31. South Africa has also played an important role on the promotion of the rights of women as exemplified by the roles played by a number of South Africans in the UN and other multilateral bodies. This includes roles in the CSW [Committee on the Status of Women], Beijing Conference, CEDAW [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Against Women], UN Women and in UN Peace Missions. The challenge is to ensure consistent and reliable support for all those working in global structures (MIRCO, 2019: 10).

Despite this disappointing little reference to the status of women in a major foreign policy review, some tangible and symbolic developments have since become evident of a practical commitment and routinisation to improving the role and status of women, aspects that are not necessarily out of step with the ideals of a feminist foreign policy. As indicated earlier, Sweden has identified seven objectives of its feminist foreign policy (MFA, 2019: 11, 19, 30–48). All, but one (Internalisation and the practice of a feminist foreign policy in government), of Sweden’s objectives converge with South Africa’s declared foreign policy objectives and principles. Besides this, as outlined in the next section, evidence suggests new developments – in line with Sweden’s 4Rs – regarding the status of women in South African foreign policy.

New Thinking and Practices Regarding the Status of Women in South African Foreign Policy

The remainder of this contribution focuses on three major developments in South Africa’s foreign policy practice that resonate with the 4Rs of Sweden’s notion of a feminist foreign policy. The first development relates to the memorialisation of the liberation struggle and linking it to the country’s international status and human rights credentials. This is not new as, for example, the memorialisation of Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo through a UN Day and the naming of the foreign ministry headquarters has shown. However, a new development is the practical memorialisation of women liberation personalities and linking it to South Africa’s foreign policy, illustrating a substantial and practical shift to symbolise and improve the status of women in foreign policy. The second development relates to the ANC’s foreign policy discussion document released in anticipation of the party’s 55th National Conference in December 2022, and third, the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation’s (DIRCO) release of the *Framework Document on South African National Interest and Its Advancement in a Global Environment*.

Memory and Symbolism: Linking the Liberation Struggle Female Stalwarts to Foreign Policy

Besides the reported increase of women in South Africa's foreign policy architecture (Mbukanma and Strydom, 2021: 17696–17712), another development within the country's foreign policy arena has been the recognition, remembrance, and veneration of, especially, high-profile women in the liberation struggle.

Memory and symbolism are powerful foreign policy sources and resources that reflect a state's identity, values and interests. Non-material in nature, memory and symbolism recalls past realities to address current realities and challenges. Memory and symbolism can be mobilised to compensate for the lack of material resources, justify a particular foreign policy position and indicate intention and direction. The examples of Gertrude Shope and Charlotte Maxeke are illustrative of this.

In response to UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) which affirms the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, and peacebuilding, DIRCO has operationalised the resolution by memorialising ANC struggle stalwart Gertrude Shope by establishing the Gertrude Shope Women's Mediation Network and the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum. Annually, DIRCO hosts the Gertrude Shope Women's Mediation Network training in August (Women's Month in South Africa) which is followed by the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum where women peace-builders and mediators from Africa share their experiences and best practices in peace and security efforts. According to DIRCO, it had been training 350 African women mediators since 2015 (SAGNA, 27 August 2021). Shope has thus come to symbolise South Africa's peace diplomacy, and a practical response to UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000).

Another example of the memorialisation of women liberation leaders is that for some years, the South African government has declared certain years in memory of a struggle stalwart, declaring, for example, 2021 as the Year of Charlotte Maxeke. Foreign minister Naledi Pandor (2022) provided some insights into this practice, its symbolism and how her ministry has linked this to South Africa's foreign policy and the status of women in foreign policy. Once The Year of Charlotte

Maxeke was declared, DIRCO initiated a legacy initiative, The Charlotte Maxeke African Women's Economic Justice and Rights Initiative in memory of Maxeke (1871–1919) as 'an embodiment of her values and leadership qualities' and describing Maxeke as, amongst other descriptions, an internationalist, Pan-Africanist, and human rights activist, thus connecting South Africa's foreign policy principles and practices to the liberation struggle, and the status of women in the foreign policy context:

As an Internationalist she travelled to at least two continents when travelling was not as easy as it is today. This gave her exposure to other cultures and a broader view of the world beyond the shores of South Africa. Ma Maxeke was an early ambassador of our country, forging people-to-people ties. Throughout the choir tour, she exchanged ideas with her contemporaries, shared information, and used art to bring South Africa to the world. She also worked with suffragists both in Europe and the US during the tour. After she returned home, she participated in a number of international conferences, where she highlighted the plight of African women. She advocated for cooperation and understanding between the people of South Africa and those friends she made through the tour and during her studies abroad. For example, she used her relationship with WEB Du Bois – one of her lecturers at Wilberforce University – to continue to inform the world about the conditions of Africans in South Africa. This is documented in some of her letters with this outstanding Pan Africanist.

Ma Maxeke was also a powerful Advocate for women's rights. She led the first women's march of 1913 in Bloemfontein against the early introduction of passes. Maxeke was a pioneer in one of the greatest of human causes, working under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, in the face of prejudice – not only against her race, but against her gender. Her courage and leadership allowed her to transcend religious and cultural barriers (Pandor, 2022).

Foreign Minister Pandor (2022) has also reiterated that The Charlotte Maxeke African Women's Economic Justice and Rights Initiative 'is anchored in South Africa's foreign policy, which is Pan Africanist in form

and internationalist in content'. Elaborating on the foreign policy and diplomatic relevance of the Initiative, Pandor explained it as South Africa's contribution to the Global Acceleration Agenda to empower women and girls, stating that The Charlotte Maxeke African Women's Economic Justice and Rights Initiative is 'an important component' of South Africa's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda and a practical expression of our diplomacy of Ubuntu, as it aims to strengthen South Africa's international solidarity work. It is an affirmation and a validation of women's economic justice rights as fundamental human rights. South Africa recognises that while more efforts have gone to advocating for the civil and political rights of women, the economic rights of women and girls have been largely neglected. It is for this reason that South Africa chose to focus its efforts under the Generation Equality Forum on Economic Justice and Rights.

Furthermore, Pandor indicated the significance of the Initiative by explaining that President Ramaphosa has attended the Paris Generation Equality Forum in 2021 that adopted the Global Acceleration Plan (GAP) for the empowerment of women and girls globally. In Paris, Ramaphosa outlined South Africa's commitments to the GAP for the next five years that includes The Charlotte Maxeke African Women's Economic Justice and Rights Initiative as one of the programmatic commitments. In fact, the Paris Generation Equality Forum has endorsed the Charlotte Maxeke Initiative as a collective commitment, thus recognising Maxeke as 'a global icon and symbol of women's economic empowerment' (Pandor, 2022). For Pandor, this endorsement has created an opportunity for international collaboration with global stakeholders to mobilise global support for women's leadership (Pandor, 2022).

Commenting on the work of the Charlotte Maxeke Institute (a Maxeke-related family non-governmental organisation), Pandor (2022) explained that the Institute plans to build the Charlotte Maxeke African Girls School of Excellence, which Pandor described as aligned with DIRCO's programme, *Africa Future Leadership Development Program*, to develop future leaders, and inculcating:

[T]he values of Pan-Africanism, integrity and selflessness through mentorship and training opportunities for youth on foreign policy and

diplomacy work. A platform will be created for women diplomats to share perspectives and explore opportunities to promote the empowerment of women and girls in Africa.

Besides the Charlotte Maxeke African Women's Economic Justice and Rights Initiative, DIRCO also hosted the African Women's Leadership Award in May 2022 in recognition of African women leaders who have advanced African development (Pandor, 2022). In addition to recognising women, DIRCO has established several short-term projects to enhance the status of women, as well as their role in foreign policy. These include the:

- Establishment of the African Women's Leadership Training Program on Economic Justice and Rights for African women leaders to provide insight on Economic Justice and Rights, and a networking platform for African women leaders to share best practices and experience.
- Hosting of a Women's Trade Fair to showcase African women's products and services to continental and global markets, and to raise awareness about the opportunities provided through policy initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- Establishment of an annual Fellowship for African Women in Diplomacy in honour of Maxeke, 'targeting African women in diplomacy', offering degree and non-degree education opportunities to the 'next generation of African women in diplomacy...to groom female public servants inspired by the values of Charlotte Maxeke, such as ethical leadership, empathy and excellence' (Pandor, 2022).

The liberation struggle has also been a women's struggle. Due recognition is given to women stalwarts that are memorialised as symbols of South Africa's foreign policy principles, practices and objectives, but it remains to be seen if these initiatives will produce a marked shift to a feminist foreign policy or a qualitative improvement of Sweden's 4Rs relating to the status of women in South Africa as both Shope and Maxeke could be regarded as traditionalists in whose name a feminist foreign policy would seem misplaced.

Foreign Minister Pandor's (2022) reference to Maxeke as an internationalist is linked to a second development, progressive internationalism, regarding the positioning of women in the foreign policy context.

Positioning Women in Progressive Internationalism

In preparation of the ANC's 55th National Conference in December 2022, the party, as it always does prior to a national conference, released various discussion documents, including a document on the country's foreign policy and international relations. These discussion documents are important future policy indicators. Titled *'In Pursuit of Progressive Internationalism in a Changing World'*, the discussion document on foreign policy outlines, amongst others, an analysis of the 'international balance of forces' (ANC, 2022: 83). It has acknowledged that this has a 'gender dimension with patriarchal systems' that remains globally entrenched while deepening poverty among women (ANC, 2022: 83). In its assessment of the 'international balance of forces', the ANC (2022: 83) has acknowledged it has:

[a] gender dimension with patriarchal systems remaining entrenched the world over, that deepens poverty among women. Women bear

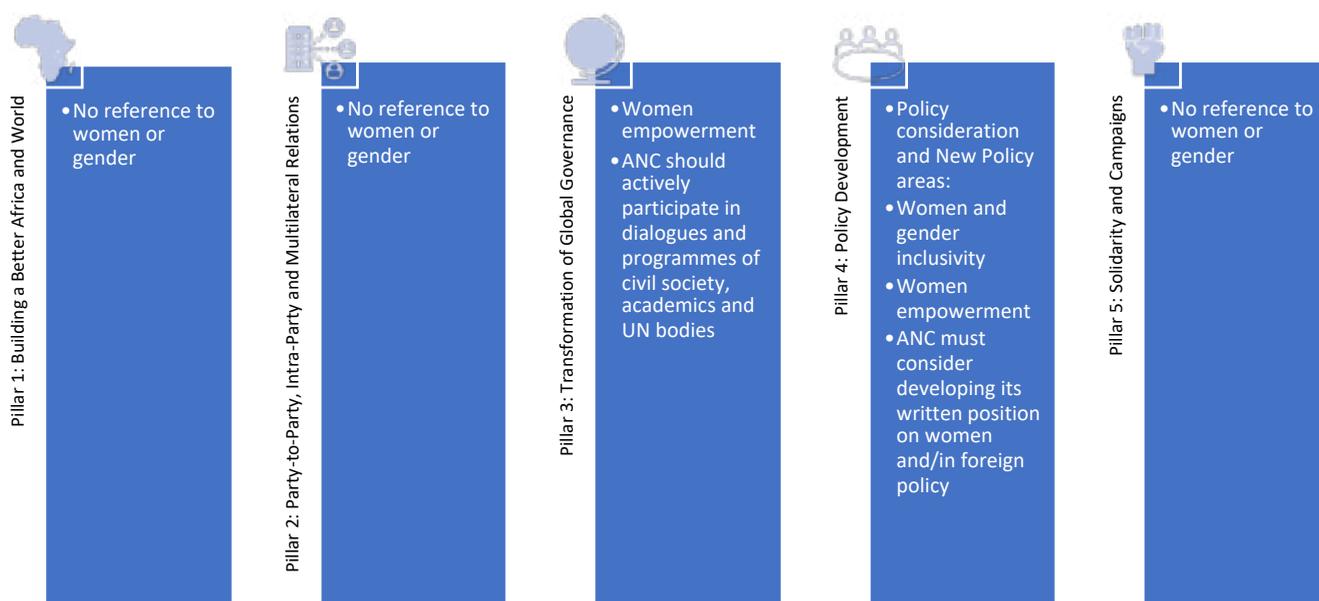
the brunt of global trends in socioeconomic inequality, conflict and violence, environmental degradation, exploitation, and oppression.

However, while acknowledging increased international calls for women's inclusion in the economy, politics, and global decision, it has lamented the failure to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted in 1995. The ANC (2022: 83) has observed that:

the need for a progressive feminist movement across the world has become even stronger. Discussions on the meaning of feminist foreign policy in theory and practice have also gained momentum across the world, including in South Africa.

The discussion document has further outlined the foreign policy organisational programme of the ANC and has reorganised its foreign policy position around five pillars outlined in Figure 1, which also indicates the reference to women and gender in terms of this reorganisation.

Table 1: The Five Pillars of the ANC's Foreign Policy Reorganisation, 2022



(Source: Author's own compilation adapted from ANC (2022: 84–89))

In terms of its foreign policy organisational programme's five pillars (see Figure 1), Pillar 4 (Policy Development) has identified women and gender inclusivity, and women empowerment as foreign policy considerations and new foreign policy areas. However, the ANC has stated that women and gender inclusivity into foreign policy should take the global focus on the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into account. Moreover, such a foreign policy should also be mindful of the UN, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and unspecified other international bodies' focus on women empowerment 'through climate change and technology and financial and economic inclusion' in line with the African Union Decade on African Women Financial and Economic Inclusion, adopted in 2020 (ANC, 2022: 88).

In this regard, the party has mentioned that calls for women's inclusion in the economy, politics and global governance have grown and that the role of UN Women is critical in this. It also recalled the failure to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted in 1995. Following this, the ANC has asserted that the 'need for a progressive feminist movement across the world has become even stronger' (ANC, 2022: 83). The party has acknowledged that 'discussions on the meaning of feminist foreign policy in theory and practice have also gained momentum across the world, including in South Africa' (ANC, 2022: 83). However, the discussion document did not mention any specific sources or signs pertaining to this.

Regarding feminist foreign policy, the ANC has offered no details on and commitment to adopting such a foreign policy. Instead, it has noted 'the growing embrace of the idea of a feminist foreign policy' amongst its international 'progressive partners' (ANC, 2022: 88). It has noted 'the danger that this is being hijacked by powerful western forces for reasons that have little to do with the interests of women of the world' (ANC, 2022: 88). However, the party has noted that it 'must consider developing its written position on women and/in foreign policy' (ANC, 2022: 88). The ruling party's 2022 foreign policy document and its reference to women in the context of foreign policy has been a marked departure from the party's 2017 discussion document on foreign policy (ANC, 2017) that made only two references to women and none

to gender issues. Despite these changes, the ANC seems to sit uncomfortably with 'powerful western forces' that may have hijacked feminist foreign policy. On a more positive note, the ANC has expressed its intention to consider the development of a position on women 'and/in foreign policy' (ANC, 2022: 88). The ANC comes short of committing itself to the notion of feminist foreign policy but it has surely taken note of international feminist foreign policy initiatives since Sweden declared its policy in 2014.

Integrating Women in the Definition of South Africa's National Interests

A third foreign policy development relating to women has been South Africa's release, on 1 August 2022, of the '*Framework Document on South Africa's National Interest and its Advancement in a Global Environment*', which proposes:

[a] definition of South Africa's national interest and its elements, the means to pursue these interests and their practical application in the domestic and global environment (DIRCO, 2022: 3).

The Framework Document, released by DIRCO, has been the first foreign policy document that has been released since the publication of the Zuma cabinet's approval of a foreign policy white paper, '*Building a Better World: The Diplomacy of Ubuntu*', in 2011 (DIRCO, 2011). The latter includes only two references to gender (in the context of addressing past injustices and changes in global demographics) and none to women (DIRCO, 2011: 3, 12). The 2022 Framework Document, however, contains more references to women. It refers to the historical role of women in the country's liberation, which resonates with the memorialisation and symbolism of women in the foreign policy context mentioned. The Framework Document refers to, for example, safety as one of the elements of South Africa's national interests. Regarding this element, the document focuses on women in the context of GBV, gender equality, the WPS agenda, and women's empowerment (DIRCO, 2022b: 6, 10, 11, 14, 15). Under the heading of means to promote and pursue the country's national interest in relation to other states, the Framework Document refers to the country's values and principles (including a reference to the WPS agenda), the social dimension of economic diplomacy (including the plight of

women in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa), the role of women in country's defence and security diplomacy, and health diplomacy (DIRCO, 2022b: 17, 18, 26).

The Framework Document returns to the liberation struggle and describes the liberation struggle as, inter alia, against patriarchy, while it also refers to Pan-Africanism as a reaction to, for example, patriarchy (DIRCO, 2022b: 8, 10). This is clearly aligned with the ANC discussion document (ANC, 2022) released a few months prior to the Framework Document. The DIRCO policy document outlines the negative impact of GBV on the status of women, and South Africa's commitment to gender equality, and women's empowerment, as well as reiterating the role of women in the WPS agenda and economic development in Africa (DIRCO, 2022b: 10, 12, 14).

The Framework Document signals a clear departure from South Africa's previous foreign policy statements, i.e. that the status of women and gender equality are regarded as integral elements of the country's national interest. Women's historical exclusion and activism is highlighted, as well as the value attached to the role of women. However, it is clear from the Framework Document that, for South Africa, the status of women remains a challenge despite the aspirations and efforts to improve it and to achieve gender equality. The document is silent on improving women's representation, role and influence in foreign policy decision making but in a section under the heading '*South Africa's Approach: Past, Present and Future*,' the document:

[r]ecognises the important role that women should play in all aspects of peace processes, prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. South Africa continues to champion the Women, Peace and Security Agenda at a UN and continental level, advocating for their inclusion and leadership in decision-making during peace processes (DIRCO, 2022b: 18).

South African foreign policy and diplomatic practice regarding women is often complemented with reference to and practice of gender. The South African government has repeatedly declared the promotion of women as a major focus of its domestic

and international agenda. Historically, the ANC as the ruling party has been resistant to the notion of feminism and feminist policies as understood elsewhere. Instead, the women/gender normative commitment and practice has been contextualised in the country's broader constitutional context that focuses on addressing historical injustices, and the promotion of human rights. The developments regarding women in the context of South Africa's foreign policy confirms South Africa's principled position on women's rights, as well as a growing embrace of women in/and foreign policy.

Conclusion

The contribution has started with contextualising South Africa and Sweden's relations. It has distinguished Sweden's notion of a feminist foreign policy as an approach to South Africa's foreign policy and the status of women therein. Convergences have been found but South Africa remains hesitant to adopt the notion of a feminist foreign policy. However, South Africa's growing embrace of aspects of what a feminist foreign policy entails have been identified.

Since the announcement of its feminist foreign policy in 2014 until its termination in 2022, Sweden has provided a new analytical, conceptual, and practical foreign policy framework to understand and improve women's status and gender equality by, inter alia, highlighting 4Rs (rights, representation, resources, and reality) in this context (MFA, 2019). It is too soon to assess the impact of Sweden's feminist foreign policy, and whether it has indeed achieved its intended objectives. Sweden has inspired several states to reconsider their foreign policies, development aid, and practices. In South Africa, given the close historical and contemporary links between Sweden and the ANC, the ruling party has taken note of these developments, and called for a consideration of the notion of a feminist foreign policy and to develop a written position on 'women and/in foreign policy' (ANC, 2022: 88).

South Africa does not have a declared feminist foreign policy but normatively, as indicated, the country's foreign policy converges with the objectives of Sweden's feminist foreign policy. An ethics of care underlies the principle of *ubuntu*, and South Africa's declared diplomacy of *ubuntu*. Women have been

and remain in top foreign policy positions in South Africa. The country's normative commitment to the improvement of the situation of women and girls has been expressed repeatedly. However, the practice of this commitment, and the country's status as a good international citizen, remains a concern when it remains silent on human rights issues in, for example, China. Moreover, the country's WPS agenda seems to be counterfactual in the context of its position on Russia's war on and in Ukraine since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

South Africa is unlikely to institute a state-driven and endorsed feminist agenda as exemplified by Sweden's declared and practiced foreign policy. As indicated, the notion of feminism has somewhat lost traction in the ruling party's greater emphasis on human rights, gender equality, and women's rights. It is also unlikely that the country will adopt a feminist foreign policy as it is currently understood. However, the status of women in the country remains a concern as GBV runs amok and counters South Africa's credentials as a good state where human rights are upheld as a break with the country's past.

These developments, notwithstanding, have not arrested South Africa's engagement with and on women's issues. Numerical improvements in women's representation in the country's foreign policy establishment are not sufficient to aspire to be a good state or a good international citizen. Global consensus converges on the practical recognition and visibility of women. Three recent developments in South Africa's foreign policy context have been presented. These developments have been linked to Sweden's notion of the practice of foreign policy. Here, the practice of remembering, recognising and the visibility of women have been presented by focusing on linking the liberation struggle to women's struggle through the operationalisation of the legacies of women liberation stalwarts, Gertrude Shope and Charlotte Maxeke. Secondly, the contribution has shown the extent of Sweden's feminist foreign policy as it manifested in the ANC's discussion documents for its 55th National Conference. The last example referred to focused on South Africa's consideration of its national interests, a consideration aware of the WPS agenda, and the domestic context in South Africa. These examples

have illustrated South Africa's own 'growing embrace' of key notions of a feminist foreign policy. Irrespective of the nature of a state's foreign policy, it must strive to and achieve improvements in the status and representation of women and the abolition of all forms of gender domination, oppression, and gender stereotypes. Post-apartheid South Africa's growing embrace of elements associated with Sweden's formulation and practice of feminist foreign policy is evident. This contributes to the evolution of foreign policy in general and feminist foreign policy specifically. First, the South African case, over time, has shown that positioning women in high profile foreign policy positions matters. It makes women visible and ensures that they are present at the table. Second, South Africa has also shown that women's numerical representation matters. Over time, the number of women in the South African foreign policy establishment has increased and given substance to South Africa's commitment to women in/and foreign policy. In the third instance, the South African case has shown that non-material resources such as memorialisation and symbolism can be an important element to recognise, empower, and promote women. The cases of Gertrude Shope and Charlotte Maxeke have shown how this has become institutionalised in the South African foreign policy context. Unlike Sweden, South Africa has been hesitant to adopt the term and full substance of a feminist foreign policy for the reasons mentioned earlier but this has not prevented South Africa's own growing embrace of notions of feminist foreign policy.

Finally, the South African case offers insights into avenues for future research on the substance and practice of feminist foreign policy. The Swedish case has shown that specifically formulated foreign policies can be disrupted by changes in government. Moreover, the notion of feminist foreign policy has also evolved since Sweden's adoption of it, showing the impact of Sweden's normative entrepreneurship. For South Africa, Mexico's intention to adopt a feminist foreign policy will also be instructive as Mexico also represents a non-European country. The expectation is that Mexico will not just transplant the Swedish model but adapt it to domestic realities.

