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# **A Poststructural Discourse Analysis of South African Foreign Policy on Palestine-Israel**

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# Table of Contents

<b><i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
Structure of the Thesis.....	6
<b><i>Chapter 2: Literature Review</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
South Africa, Palestine, Israel, and Apartheid.....	7
South African Foreign Policy and Palestine .....	8
Conclusion.....	9
<b><i>Chapter 3: Theory and Methodology</i></b> .....	<b>11</b>
Discourse and Foreign Policy Analysis .....	11
Poststructural Discourse Analysis .....	12
Analytical Framework.....	13
Data Collection and Coding.....	14
<b><i>Chapter 4: South African Foreign Policy Discourse on Palestine-Israel</i></b> .....	<b>16</b>
Self: South Africa.....	18
Similar Other: Palestine.....	22
Radical Other: Israel.....	26
Self in the Other: International Community .....	29
Other: United Nations (UNSC) .....	32
Self in the Other: BRICS .....	35
Discussion .....	36
<b><i>Conclusion</i></b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b><i>References</i></b> .....	<b>41</b>

## Chapter 1: Introduction

On October 7<sup>th</sup> of 2023, Hamas – the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement that governed the Gaza strip—launched an attack on southern Israel. This military operation, called the Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, consisted of rocket fire and ground operations by Hamas members as part of their resistance to Israeli occupation. The attack was reported to have resulted in 1200 (mostly civilian) Israelis killed and 240 taken as hostages into Gaza (Mackenzie 2024). What followed this widely condemned attack can only be described as catastrophic collective punishment. In retaliation to Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, Israel’s minister of defense ordered a “complete siege” of Gaza in which there would cease to be electricity, food, or fuel (Gallant 2023).

Israel’s siege has been devastating to Palestinians in Gaza and the city’s infrastructure. Although some states emphasized Israel’s right to self-defense (US, Germany, amongst others), others (South Africa, Norway, Brazil, amongst others) called on Israel to adhere to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as they criticized the extent and destructive nature of Israel’s war on Gaza. This was characterized by the failure to protect the civilian population in Gaza through seemingly indiscriminate bombing of hospitals and schools, forced starvation and displacement, and lack of safety for fleeing civilians (OCHA 2024; Amnesty 2024). As the war waged on, more governments urged the Israeli state to ensure International Humanitarian Law was followed. Yet, by March 6<sup>th</sup> of 2024, day 151 of the war, 30,717 Palestinians have been killed, 72,156 injured, 1.7 million internally displaced, and 2.2 million are facing crisis-levels of food insecurity (OCHA 2024).

Although evidently disregarding IHL and causing disastrous damage to Gaza, little was done by the international community and the United Nations (UN) to sanction the large-scale military offensive of Israel. Multiple cease fire resolutions that were brought before the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) were vetoed by Israel's Western allies, most prominently the US. Nevertheless, various other states pledged support in terms of aid and advocated for some kind of cease-fire. Yet, much to the surprise of Israel and its allies, South Africa decisively brought an unprecedented court case against Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in which it accused Israel of breaching its obligations as a signatory of the UN ‘Genocide Convention’ (UN News 2024). The ICJ, known as the ‘World Court’, is one of the organs of the United Nations and was established as a non-violent way of settling disputes between states. It is important to note that this case, officially known as the *Application of the Convention on*

*the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip*, is the first contentious case brought against Israel at the ICJ (UN News 2024).

Although this case was the first contentious case brought against Israel, it was not the first case of its kind brought to the ICJ. In fact, there have been other allegations of the crime of genocide brought forth, notably, in the cases of *The Gambia v. Myanmar* in 2019 and *Ukraine v. Russian Federation* in 2022. In 2019, The Gambia filed its case against Myanmar in regard to the crime of genocide against the Rohingya Muslims and set the precedent for a country without direct involvement in the crimes using its ICJ membership to pursue a case against an involved party (HRW 2022). Although ICJ rulings are binding, the court itself cannot enforce its rulings and relies on states to enforce the ruling in the name of international law on its behalf. In the case of *Ukraine v. Russian Federation*, for example, the ICJ issued provisional measures indicating the Russian Federation to stop its invasion of Ukraine, yet this did not happen. Indeed, the impact of the ICJ on state behavior and actual outcomes on the ground is rather inconclusive. However, the cases brought forth can be seen as a growing trend amongst states to pursue such cases as a symbolic means of vindicating collective interests of the international community (Keitner 2024).

Although Israel has been alleged to be in violation of international law before—in previous wars with Palestine, its treatment of Palestinians, its occupation of Palestinian Territories, and its establishment of settlements in occupied Palestine (HRW 2014; OHCHR 2023; UN 2004) – the state has been known to disregard international law and UN resolutions, denying any and all accusations levelled against it, repeatedly citing self-defense. However, the case brought forth by South Africa has proven to be different. Albeit denying the charges of genocide or genocidal intent and labelling them as antisemitic (TOI Staff and Reuters 2023), Israel not only acknowledged the case, but also attended the court proceedings to defend itself. Given that the founding of the state of Israel is linked to the genocide against the Jewish people and that the state is a signatory of the Geneva convention (Wistrich 1997; ICRC Database n.d.), the state could not simply ignore the accusations and had to defend its war on Gaza (and by extension, its treatment of Palestinians) on a global stage. Undeniably, the court case made headlines and was of great discussion. Some called South Africa’s claims “baseless” (Sharon 2024) and “unfounded” (Hernandez 2024), while others applauded South Africa’s act of solidarity. In fact, the Palestinian ambassador to the UK referred to the case as the “first serious international effort” to ending the oppression of the Palestinian people (Shotter 2024).

Post-Apartheid South Africa has been repeatedly vocal in its support of the Palestinian cause as South Africa-Palestine relations date back to Apartheid times. Indeed, while the

Apartheid South African government maintained friendly relations with newly established Israel, the liberation party the African National Congress cultivated ties of solidarity with Palestinian Liberation Organization as they supported each other's causes. More recently, in response to Israel's 2014 Gaza War, South Africa revoked their ambassador to Israel as a form of diplomatic sanction (DIRCO 2018). It can be seen, both through explicit statements of support for the Palestinian cause and through such actions as this revocation, that South Africa-Israel relations have been deteriorating. Therefore, South Africa's positioning regarding this war can be seen as stemming from a longer precedent of South African-Palestinian relations.

Despite this precedent, the decision to take Israel to the UN's highest court can be viewed as inconsistent with previous South African foreign policy behavior. South Africa has been criticized for championing human rights and international law in some cases and not others. Indeed, some critics accuse South Africa of 'picking and choosing' the instances in which it applies its declared values and principles (Orderson 2024). For example, although proclaiming human rights to be central to its constitution and foreign policy, South Africa adopted an approach of 'quiet diplomacy' towards widespread human rights abuses by Robert Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe. More recently, South Africa took a position of non-alignment and refused to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine, yet it declares itself a staunch supporter of international law. Perhaps most striking in the context of this paper, is that the state refused to arrest Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir as warranted by the International Criminal Court for the crime of genocide—the same crime of which it accuses Israel.

Indeed, when considering some of the above (in)actions, it can be argued that South Africa's foreign policy behavior has been inconsistent. In fact, as will be discussed in the literature review, South Africa's foreign policy toward the conflict between Palestine and Israel has also been criticized as duplicitous and non-committed. Therefore, the questions remain: how can a country which is going through much internal political and economic turmoil put itself in the spotlight of a conflict on another continent? Why would South Africa take such a stance of opposition to some great powers when it often chooses 'active non-alignment' as in the UN resolutions condemning Russia for invading Ukraine? Why would South Africa choose to act in this case, when it has chosen to remain silent in other cases of human rights abuses in its own neighborhood? How can we make sense of this event when mainstream IR theories fall short in their explanations?

This paper seeks to understand this act of South African foreign policy which has garnered global attention, support, and opposition. It will do so by conducting a Poststructural Discourse Analysis (PDA) of South Africa's Foreign policy on Palestine and Israel leading up to the ICJ

case. It will problematize what foreign policy analysis papers often do—take for granted the occurrence or possibility of an instance of foreign policy (Doty 1993). Although there are material conditions that had to be met such that bringing the case to the ICJ could be a possibility, this study aligns itself with Poststructural thinking that maintains that it is discourse, that is, it is the language and intricate systems of meaning-making, that can allow for material conditions to be understood. Therefore, as reality and discourse are mutually constituted, a Poststructural lens can allow for an analysis of the discourse that can investigate how this reality is constructed such that the ICJ case could be a possibility of foreign policy action. This thesis will, hence, explore the question: *How can South Africa's ICJ case against Israel be understood from a Poststructural perspective?*

This research aims to, not only contribute to the deeper understanding of South African Foreign Policy, but it also aims to contribute to further understanding this instance of foreign policy within wider international relations. The ‘liberal’ global order has been in flux for decades, and the world is now more multipolar than ever. The ICJ case is perhaps a very clear example of it. During the ongoing assault on Gaza, countries in the global south have been the most vocal in their condemnation of Israel. The ICJ case, not supported by multiple powerful Western states, represents collective resistance from states in the global south. Hence, this can be seen as an act contributing to the further deterioration of Western hegemony and should be understood from a South African perspective.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

In order to answer this research question, this thesis will begin by situating the analysis within the current literature on South African post-Apartheid foreign policy and on the state’s foreign policy discourse on Palestine and Israel. Following this chapter will be the theoretical framework and methodology, which will provide an exploration of PDA and its ontological assumptions. This chapter will also introduce some seminal literature in the field of PDA and provide an outline of how the PDA will be conducted for this research. The chapter after this will consist of the presentation of codes and consequent discourse analysis. The last chapter will discuss the findings of the discourse analysis concluding that subjects were discursively constructed such that the ICJ case in response to Israel’s destruction of Gaza emerged as possibility because other pursuing diplomatic avenues and doing nothing were precluded. Finally, the thesis discusses the implications of this foreign policy for international relations.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter explores the limited existing literature on South African foreign policy on Palestine-Israel. On one hand, at the popular level, the literature points to South African foreign policy on Palestine being based on its own historical experiences of Apartheid and decolonization movements—a behavior based on solidarity. On the other hand, while inconsistent with its other human rights related foreign policy behavior, at the governmental level, the African state’s foreign policy on Palestine is perceived to be consistent, more anti-imperialist, yet unclear, duplicitous, and non-committed to the Palestinian cause.

### **South Africa, Palestine, Israel, and Apartheid**

As mentioned above, South Africa’s history of Apartheid and its struggle against the oppressive system is of relevance to this question of South African foreign policy towards Palestine. Apartheid in South Africa was a system of institutionalized racial segregation that called for the separate development of racial groups with the white minority maintaining domination over the non-white majority in all social, economic, and political spheres (Britannica 2023). South Africa and Israel have been subject of comparative studies with regard to both being or having been settler colonies (Mitchell 2000). Although disputed by some like Ellis (2019), pre-1994 South Africa and Israel have also been compared along the line of the two states’ apartheid systems. Bakan and Abu-Laban (2010) argue that the application of the term apartheid to Israeli state formations are a “flashpoint in global politics” (331). These authors claim that this comparison demonstrates a willingness to critique the Israeli state’s actions against Palestinians as an act of solidarity. In addition to the applicability of the term, there have been discussions on whether the international legal definition of apartheid can be applied to Israel with various conclusions. Greenstein (2020), for example, refers to Israel as an ‘apartheid of a special type’ because the regime “combines democratic norms, ethnic hierarchy, military occupation, and exclusion/inclusion of extra-territorial populations,” in a way that differentiates it from the South African case of apartheid (83).

Even though these comparisons are done in more academic spheres, research shows that South Africans see resemblance between their historical struggle against Apartheid and the Palestinian cause as well. Srikanth (2015) explores the reason for South African solidarity with the Palestinians struggle as discussed by South Africans. They pose that the legacy of anti-apartheid resistance, and South Africa’s economic and political realities have all

contributed to the popular support of the Palestinian cause for self-determination by South Africans (Srikanth 2015, 1). To illustrate, South Africa's first democratic president Nelson Mandela stated, "Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians..." (Mandela 1997). This historical connection with Palestine can also be understood as being a solidarity of decolonization as both peoples were seeking their independence from settler colonization. Furthermore, not only do South Africans view their experience of Apartheid as comparable to Palestinians, but they also feel that they are global citizens who owe the world—and Palestine—for their freedom (Srikanth 2015, 12).

### **South African Foreign Policy and Palestine**

At the popular level, the question of solidarity with Palestine is clear and consistent. However, as this thesis will explore foreign policy, it is necessary to explore this question of solidarity with Palestine at the governmental level. Since 1994, South African government's foreign policy has been subjected to critique.

Borrer and Mills (2011) argue that since 1994, South African Foreign Policy is best described as "one of disparity between commitment and action" (77). The authors explore South African Foreign Policy through both constructivist and neoliberal/realist lenses and argue that South African identity is based on history and its understanding of itself (82). Furthermore, as a country which, like Srikanth's (2015) observation, remains in debt to the international community for its support in ending the apartheid regime, the protection of human rights was at the core of the South African state's identity (Borrer and Mills 2011, 82). So, having declared its commitment to human rights on a global level, post-apartheid South Africa could be considered an exceptional state or rather "a state expected to do exceptional things" (82). Despite this, South Africa's foreign policy has often aligned with more traditionally defined national interests, which are more associated with neo-liberal or neo-realist economic policies that come at the expense of its declared interest in supporting human rights (83).

More recently, South Africa's declared national interest included challenging racial discrimination, prejudice and extremist ideologies through an intercontinental approach which emphasized a desire for multilateralism and observance of international law (Rapanyane 2019, 3). Nevertheless, Nathan (2005) contends that, while having had a coherent foreign policy with idealist, internationalist, and emancipatory tendencies, South African foreign policy application seems to be inconsistent illustrating this point with the country's expressions of

support for ZANU-PF – Zimbabwe’s ruling party— during the state’s repression, its abuse of the rule of law and human rights violations (362; 367).

The disparity between commitment and action in South African foreign policy in relation to the Palestine-Israel question has also been explored. Jordaan (2008) argues that although having a desire to be a mediator and proponent for multilateralism, South Africa’s foreign policy to the Middle East has had anti-imperialist tendencies and has therefore been less likely to be considered impartial at international level. Benjamin and Gruzd (2018) extend this argument in relation to Palestine and Israel, posing that South Africa’s clear support for Palestine and criticism of Israeli action and policies has made South Africa’s aspiration to be more than a peripheral-peace broker doubtful due to the perception of this bias by other states (185). Notwithstanding, there is a general consensus and understanding that South Africa consistently tends to support Palestine while criticizing Israel. Yet, it has also been argued that, although seemingly consistent, the South African government’s positions regarding Palestine-Israel seem to be duplicitous as they both advocate for Palestinian freedom, but maintain relations, such as trade relations, with Israel (Srikanth 2015, 2; Rapanyane 2021, 2). Here, again, the disparity between South African foreign policy commitment and actions—verbal commitment vs concrete actions—in the case of Palestine becomes visible.

Although relations with Israel have never been friendly, they have been diplomatic (Rapanyane and Maphaka 2022); that is, until 2018 when South Africa recalled their ambassador from Israel in a more concrete act of solidarity. Considering the Palestinian historical experience and Israel’s continuous violations of international law, South African foreign policy towards Palestine from this angle can be understood as solidarity.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the literature highlights some main points regarding South African foreign policy towards Palestine and Israel. Firstly, South Africa does have a coherent foreign policy with clear ideals and values. Secondly, the state’s support for Palestine and criticism for Israel has been consistent and based upon historical solidarity. However, in relation to the republic’s other foreign policy behavior—especially regarding the championing of human rights in other contexts – the support for Palestine is inconsistent. Furthermore, the support for Palestine has been regarded as duplicitous and non-committed due to the absence of actions following vocalized commitments and support. The ICJ case can then be seen as action addressing the

disparity that characterized South African support for Palestine previously, which makes it an interesting case to explore to deepen our understanding of this foreign policy.

This thesis seeks to add to the literature on South African foreign policy on Palestine-Israel by exploring the state's foreign policy discourse through a Poststructural lens. A Poststructural Discourse Analysis allows one to understand foreign policy behavior as mutuality constituted by discourse. Through this analysis, the paper can add to the existing literature by uncovering how subjectivities were constructed in this discourse so as to make possible the ICJ case against Israel as an act of solidarity with Palestine. While other theoretical lenses might find South Africa's act of foreign policy as inconsistent with its other foreign policy behavior, Poststructuralism can make sense of South Africa's foreign policy as consistent in light of its discourse.

## **Chapter 3: Theory and Methodology**

The overall aim of this paper is to understand (how) South Africa's ICJ case against Israel as an act of foreign policy (was made possible) through a poststructuralist perspective. A discursive approach to foreign policy analysis seeks not to explain why certain foreign policy occurs, but it aims to problematize foreign policy as a given (Doty 1993). In seeking to denaturalize foreign policy behavior, these Poststructural approaches to foreign policy analysis seek to understand the discursive construction of reality within which these foreign policy actions emerge as a possibility. In this case, a Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (PDA) allows for understanding how South African foreign policy discourse and behavior mutually construct a reality of South Africa, the world, and other states in international relations such that the ICJ case against Israel was a possibility. The following chapter will outline the theory and methodology of the paper. It will briefly explore some of the most relevant points of Poststructuralism for this study, and it will outline PDA and some of its assumptions. After this, it will provide a framework for a PDA of foreign policy. The chapter will then move onto the practicalities of data collection and coding of the discourse for analysis.

### **Discourse and Foreign Policy Analysis**

Discourse can be defined as, "a system of statements in which each individual statement makes sense, [and] produces interpretive possibilities by making it virtually impossible to think outside of it," (Doty 1993, 302). Discourse is intimately intertwined with power as it is both productive of certain realities, but it is also through power that discourse is shaped. In foreign policy analysis, discursive approaches mostly explore how a certain political discourse shapes foreign policy (Mello and Ostermann 2023, 101). These approaches are helpful in explaining "the social foundations of foreign policy, its construction, and the meanings and ideas attached to it," while also demonstrating *how* societal structures and accepted norms impact foreign policymaking (102).

The study of discourse to understand foreign policy situates itself more towards the ideas or linguistic side of IR and can therefore be understood as a more constructivist approach to IR. Constructivist approaches to foreign policy analysis share the ontological assumption that the world is socially constructed (Warnaar 2013, 12). Consequently, foreign policy itself is a social construction. As such, these policies, and international relations at large, only gain meaning through social interactions which produce and reproduce meaning. These

constructivist approaches to Foreign Policy Analysis investigate how foreign policy is rendered socially meaningful through social practice and interaction (Mello and Ostermann 2023, 102). As such, constructivists emphasize the ‘ideational’ as a factor impacting ‘material’ world politics. In the context of this thesis, then, the ICJ case brought forth by South Africa as foreign policy is shaped by political discourse and only gains meaning through social interactions and practice.

There are various approaches through which constructivists can conduct Foreign Policy Analysis. One of the ways in which this can be done is by exploring discourse and how it constructs a world in which foreign policy can be understood. Constructivist discourse analysis approaches have explored the link between identity, interests, and behavior in foreign policy analysis (Mello and Ostermann 2023, 26). Poststructuralist approaches to discourse analysis are similar to a certain extent but are considered more radical than the constructivist approaches.

## **Poststructural Discourse Analysis**

A Poststructural discourse analysis can be considered to be a constructivist approach to discourse analysis. Some, like Hansen (2006), argue against it by citing that PDA is inherently separate from constructivist approaches as discourse is different from the ideational factors that constructivism often emphasizes, because discourse encompasses both material and ideational factors (15). A Poststructural approach to discourse analysis, therefore, merits a brief introduction to outline some of the assumptions that make this approach useful for foreign policy analysis.

In PDA, discourse and reality are mutually constituted, meaning that they co-construct each other and as such are inseparable. To the poststructuralist, there is no distinction between the discursive and nondiscursive realm (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 39). The poststructuralist also believes that everything can be studied as a text – as discourse—and that there is nothing existing outside of text (39). Although rejecting an objective truth or reality, poststructuralists do not deny that there is a material world, rather, they maintain that the material only gains meaning through discourse which constructs and makes subjects or objects knowable to us (40). Another assumption is that, in Poststructuralism, discourse or texts do not refer to shared templates, but rather, texts refer to other texts and weave a never-ending web of meaning that has no fixed meaning but is constantly in flux (Hansen 2006, 18). PDA, thus, highlights the inherently unstable nature of meaning in Foreign Policy Analysis.

Poststructuralist research into Foreign Policy Analysis is centered on the relationship between identity and foreign policy (Hansen 2006, 1). Foreign policy and identity are seen to be constitutive of each other. Foreign policy depends on particular constructions of problems and identities for its intelligibility and legitimacy, and through foreign policy, these problems, and identities are produced and reproduced (1; 15). Policy and identity are therefore ontologically interlinked (15). By researching one, the other can simultaneously be understood.

As written by Doty (1993), “the possibility of practices presupposes the ability of an agent to imagine certain courses of action” which require that “certain background meanings, kinds of social actors and relationships, must already be in place (298). PDA focuses on this aspect of Foreign Policy analysis. It investigates the discursive construction of reality that establishes said actors and relationships. Therefore, a PDA investigates “how meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects/objects, thus constituting particular interpretive dispositions which create certain possibilities and preclude others” (Doty 1993, 298). In this thesis, the act of foreign policy being studied is South Africa’s filing of the ICJ case against Israel. A PDA thus explores the identities of the actors involved in the foreign policy discourse, looks into how identities and problems are produced, and how these in turn create the possibility of the ICJ case as an act of foreign policy that can be understood in this reality.

## **Analytical Framework**

This thesis employs an analytical framework for conducting a PDA inspired by the works of Roxanne Doty (1993) and Lene Hansen (2006) in their discourse analyses of foreign policy. Doty (1993) proposed the concepts of presupposition, predication, and subject positioning as analytical categories to understand how discourse constitutes subjects, objects and how it organizes them into an intelligible structure (306). Presupposition entails the background knowledge that is taken to be true when a statement is made. These presuppositions imply the existence of subjects and objects and how they relate to each other, and as such, create a world in which “certain things are recognized as true” (Doty 1993, 306). Predication entails linking certain subjects with particular attributes or qualities through modifying words such as adverbs or adjectives (306). Together, predication and presupposition construct subjects, but they also establish different relations between the constructed subjects (306). The production of subjects is always in relation to other subjects. Hansen (2006) explains that the discursive construction of identity is relational, and that the *Self* and *Others* are positioned vis-a-vis each other with varying degrees of similarities and differences through processes of linking and differentiation

(33). Part of the relational nature of identity can be analyzed through a consideration of the spatial, temporal, and moral situatedness of identity (33).

Discourse constructs subjects, their identities, and actively “constructs the ‘reality’ upon which foreign policy is based” (Doty 1993, 303). Therefore, the analysis of this constructed reality through the analysis of discourse allows for a deeper understanding of the conditions that allows for the possibility of certain foreign policy and not others. This thesis will conduct such an analysis by examining the presupposition, predication, and subject positioning of subjects constructed in South African Foreign Policy discourse on Palestine and Israel. Following this analysis will be a discussion of how this construction of subjects creates a reality where the ICJ case against Israel indeed became a possible course of action for South Africa.

A point of consideration is that, in PDA, the researcher is not seen as outside the discourse. “The discourse analyst is an active agent in the production of discourses” themselves (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 129). The analyst, thus, interacts with and interprets the discourse. To ensure the validity of interpretation, there needs to be sufficient evidence to support one's interpretation, which must be logical and coherent. The data collection methods to underline the validity of the subsequent research of this thesis are outlined in the next section.

## **Data Collection and Coding**

This paper seeks to understand South African foreign policy through analyzing the state's foreign policy discourse, and therefore requires a corpus of sources to conduct the discourse analysis. As the discourse in question is that of foreign policy at the governmental level, the sources collected were all official in nature. These sources were found on the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) website, the South African Government website, and the South African Presidency website. They were found using the key words “Palestine”, “Palestinians”, “Israel,” and “Israelis”. These keywords were used to locate all available documents that contained these words across the entirety of the three websites. This discourse analysis limited its corpus in terms of time from 2018—2018 being the year that South Africa revoked its ambassador from Israel marking a new chapter in its international relations with Israel—to 2023—the year that South Africa brought forth its ICJ case against Israel. This timeline was decided upon as South African discourse on Palestine and Israel was markedly more explicit, accompanied by the downgrading of its embassy in Israel to a liaison office.

This search yielded around 200 documents, however, with the removal of duplicates and of agenda documents across the websites, the final number of documents was 135 (these can be found in the folder linked in the bibliography). The documents used for data collection consisted of media statements, communications, speeches, and addresses from top level governmental officials such as the president, the minister and deputy minister of foreign affairs, and from DIRCO more generally.

Following the selection of documents, these texts were coded. Coding was done by coding for the subjects most prominent in the discourse and how these subjects were talked about, focusing on adjectives, nouns, actions/verbs that constructed the subjects with identity, attributes, abilities, and expectations associated with said subjects. The coding process was done using Atlas.ti – a qualitative analysis software. The use of this software allowed for a more structured coding process and better overview of the codes and sources. The first stage of coding consisted of a general reading for understanding of discourse and line-by-line textual analysis to create the first codes as they appear in the discourse. As this paper conducts a PDA, the coding was done inductively, meaning that there were no premises that the codes were created based on, allowing the discourse to speak for itself. The second stage of coding consisted of focused coding, in which codes were reviewed and renamed, merged, or separated where appropriate. Coding was done until the point of saturation, that is, the point at which coding more documents does not contribute to the list of codes. The final list of codes can be found in *Tables 1-6*. These codes were divided by subject and organized according to categories to facilitate the discourse analysis. Each subject has one table of codes. The following chapter will consist of the discourse analysis based on the table of codes and the analytical framework provided.

## Chapter 4: South African Foreign Policy Discourse on Palestine-Israel

This chapter aims to analyze South Africa's foreign policy discourse on Palestine and Israel. It explores the construction of subjects and their identities as outlined in Chapter 3. The different sections of the chapter will be structured as follows: firstly, the predication and presupposition based on the codes for each subject will be analyzed, followed by a discussion on the subject positioning of the South African *Self* in relation to the other subjects and how these relate to question of Palestine and Israel.

The codes are presented in *Tables 1-6*. Each table is comprised of the predicates and practices through which the discourse constructs the subjects. For analytical purposes, these tables have been organized into four columns. The first column contains the qualities associated with the subject. The second contains the values and morals of the subject. The third column relates to how the construction of the subject is associated to Apartheid in South Africa. Finally, the last column contains the predicates and practices that relate directly to the Palestine-Israel conflict. Although the tables are organized in this manner, there are no strict conceptual boundaries between the categories as they all relate to the construction of the subject and may seep into each other. The codes for each subject are solely organized into the tables to facilitate the analysis of the discursive construction of the subjects and make the discourse's structure more visible.

The discourse constructed seven subjects, with South Africa being constructed as the primary *Self*. The discourse constructed Palestine and Israel as the primary *Others*. The United Nations (and UNSC) and the International Community were also constructed as *Others*. Although present in the discourse, and the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa group (BRICS) is constructed as less prominent *Other*.

**Table 1: Predicates and Practices of South Africa**

Qualities	Values and Morals	Apartheid	Palestine and Israel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has an extensive international network</li> <li>• Has limited resources</li> <li>• Is a bridge-builder</li> <li>• Is African</li> <li>• Is democratic</li> <li>• Is proud</li> <li>• Is robust</li> <li>• Is capable</li> <li>• Is peaceful</li> <li>• Is brave</li> <li>• Is free</li> <li>• Is cooperative</li> <li>• Is member of NAM</li> <li>• Is member of the international community</li> <li>• Is member of the UN</li> <li>• Is member of BRICS</li> <li>• Is member of the AU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believes in peace for all</li> <li>• Believes in justice for all</li> <li>• Believes in equality for all</li> <li>• Has a duty to support those seeking justice and equality</li> <li>• Believes in negotiated settlement and dialogue—diplomacy</li> <li>• Believes in peaceful resolution</li> <li>• FP based on advancing interests of the South</li> <li>• FP principles are centered on promoting peace, human rights, and dignity for all</li> <li>• Has historical and moral responsibility against racism and discrimination</li> <li>• Is committed to a rules-based international order</li> <li>• Is committed to multilateralism</li> <li>• Is informed by African values of people first</li> <li>• Recognizes the inalienable right of every people to self-determination and freedom</li> <li>• Seeks cooperation with the Global South</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is beneficiary of international support and solidarity against apartheid</li> <li>• Is thankful for international support against apartheid</li> <li>• Was under apartheid</li> <li>• Was a racist system</li> <li>• Were humiliated by Apartheid</li> <li>• Were traumatized by Apartheid</li> <li>• Struggled against apartheid</li> <li>• Struggled for justice</li> <li>• Was supported by Palestine against Apartheid</li> <li>• Mobilized support against Apartheid</li> <li>• Overcame apartheid</li> <li>• Succeeded in rebuilding after Apartheid</li> <li>• Chose reconciliation over war</li> <li>• Is transformed</li> <li>• Honors favor of international solidarity by creating a just world order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is concerned about children in military detention in Israel</li> <li>• Condemns Israeli Violence</li> <li>• Is concerned by US provocation</li> <li>• Condemns Israeli destruction of Palestinian infrastructure</li> <li>• Has strong historical relationship with Palestine</li> <li>• Hopes Palestine and Israel will follow similar path that it did</li> <li>• Is appalled by Israeli blockade of Gaza</li> <li>• Is committed to the Palestinian struggle against Occupation</li> <li>• Is concerned by Israeli annexation of Palestine</li> <li>• Is critical of Israel</li> <li>• Is guided by its own experience with Apartheid</li> <li>• Is ready to assist reconciliation and reconstruction</li> <li>• Recognizes the state of Palestine</li> <li>• Understands Palestinian pain</li> <li>• Is committed to a just and lasting solution to the conflict</li> <li>• Shares common values and objectives with Palestine</li> <li>• Is committed to multilateral efforts to end conflict</li> <li>• Calls on Israel to respect and abide by agreements with Palestinians</li> <li>• Calls for implementation of previous resolutions on Palestine</li> <li>• Cooperates with like-minded countries in efforts to establish viable Palestinian state</li> <li>• Is disturbed by deadly aggression</li> <li>• Supports achievement of a Palestinian state</li> <li>• Supports intra-Palestinian reconciliation</li> <li>• Supports the right of the state of Israel to exist in peace and security with its neighbors</li> <li>• Wants to see peace in Palestine</li> <li>• Believes that peace is possible in this conflict</li> <li>• Believes in peaceful resolution</li> <li>• Supports the two-state solution</li> </ul>

## **Self: South Africa**

The analysis of the foreign policy discourse shows that the subject of South Africa is constructed as the *Self*. The discourse creates the South African *Self* to be the *good* subject.

In the discourse, South Africa is associated with the predicates ‘democratic’ and ‘peaceful’. These presuppose that there is a world system in which states exist and that they have different forms of government. The predicate ‘democratic’ creates an understanding that democracy is a representative system of governance, but it also implicitly presupposes that other states might not have this system of representative governance. The predicate ‘peaceful’ presupposes that in this world system, states can be violent or peaceful in their behaviors with each other but also internally. Furthermore, the South African state is constructed to have the qualities of bravery and capability. These predicates assume that there is an established international order that a state can either follow or challenge to pursue their interests, but that only the brave and capable ones dare to challenge it. Although South Africa is constructed to be capable, it is also constructed to have ‘limited resources’. Here, there is the presupposition that resources—for example economic or militaristic—are required for challenging the order, yet these can be overcome through bravery and other capabilities.

Morally, the subject is constructed to value the *good* values of ‘peace’, ‘justice’, and ‘equality’. The discourse presupposes that there is disagreement in the world and that because of these there is violence and war, however these are *bad* and must come to an end. To that end, because the subject is constructed to value peace, the *Self* promotes the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and negotiation rather than violence and war in a world where states choose the latter. Additionally, South Africa is constructed to value the rule of international law and human rights and “calls for consistency from the international community and institutions of global governance in upholding the international rule of law” (DIRCO 2022). The presupposition implies that there is an internationally agreed upon law to which states are party. These states must adhere to the law, but if they do not, other states must hold them accountable to ensure that all are treated justly, equally, and lawfully. As a state, the *Self* is created to be ‘responsible’. It embodies this quality as a ‘bridge builder’ by using and furthering diplomacy. Implicitly, South Africa is, thus, constructed to be a state that is worthy of trust, morally good, that it keeps its commitments, and that urges other to do so too.

South Africa is constructed as a ‘transformed’ state. The discourse makes the temporal distinction between South Africa before 1994 and South Africa after 1994. South Africa post-1994 is constructed as the post-Apartheid South Africa. The discourse presupposes that

Apartheid was a system of institutionalized racial segregation and domination of white South Africans over all other South Africans in a socially stratified way—with white South Africans at the top of the hierarchy, followed by Indian South Africans, Colored South Africans, and Black South Africans at the bottom. Apartheid South Africa was non-democratic, whereas the post-Apartheid state is democratic. Under Apartheid, South Africa was racist, humiliating, and traumatizing towards Black South Africans. Now, South Africans have equal rights under their constitution (Ramaphosa 2023a). The post-Apartheid South Africa's valuing of peace is embodied in its construction to have succeeded in rebuilding the country after Apartheid because it “chose reconciliation over retribution, and peace-making over war” (Ramaphosa 2023b). The transformed South Africa is constructed to have become so because South Africa(ns) struggled for justice against Apartheid and overcame Apartheid. In the discourse, the South African struggle succeeded because of the support of the international community. Here the discourse also constructs South Africa as having been supported by Palestine during its struggle against Apartheid. The subject is also constructed as a beneficiary of this support who feels it must return the favor of support against apartheid.

In terms of spatiality, South Africa is constructed to be ‘African’ and part of the ‘Global South’. This construction presupposes that the international system, though connected, is still separated across territorial lines. South Africa as part of the ‘Global South’ also presupposes that the world is also divided across, socioeconomic, political, and historical lines. Here, there is also solidarity amongst postcolonial countries of the Global South. However, the subject is also constructed as part of the international community and, hence, part of a global network that crosses the previously mentioned lines. Furthermore, the South African *Self* is created to be committed to multilateralism. The multilateral construction of South Africa presupposes that in this divided yet connected world, states can engage and cooperate with each other through institutions in which multiple actors convene to discuss international matters. However, the other side of this is that other states may choose to act unilaterally and not engage in these institutions. In this discourse, South Africa is part of multilateral institutions such as BRICS, NAM, and the UN. The subject's “approach to multilateralism [is] guided by the country's national experience of peacefully dismantling apartheid and achieving a negotiated political settlement” (DIRCO 2020). The discourse, thus, creates a South African *Self* that is a cooperative global actor and in solidarity with the Global South.

In relation to the Palestine-Israel conflict, South Africa is constructed as a diplomatic mediator. It believes in international law and the right to self-determination of peoples; therefore, the state is also constructed as a supporter of the Palestinian cause. In the discourse,

South Africa supports Palestine consistently, historically, and on multilateral platforms. The state's construction as just, fair, and peaceful is seen in the condemnation of violence in the conflict, be it Israeli or Palestinian. However, the discourse constructs South Africa as anti-Apartheid and constitutes Israel as an Apartheid regime. As the subject's "own experience with ending apartheid, and [its] country's role in mediating conflict elsewhere on the continent, have yielded a number of insights" (Ramaphosa 2022), South Africa is constructed as having the wisdom and experience with Apartheid and reconciliation such that it is a good candidate for mediation in the conflict. South Africa is committed to international law and the Palestinian cause according to the discourse. Therefore, it believes the only solution to the conflict is through the two-state solution, as has been agreed upon internationally with reference to previous resolutions in line with international law. In the discourse, South Africa's "nationhood is testament to the power of meaningful negotiation, dialogue, and reconciliation" (Ramaphosa 2023b).

**Table 2: Predicates and Practices of Palestine (Palestinians)**

Qualities	Values and Morals	Apartheid	Palestine and Israel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are dispossessed of land</li> <li>• Are racially discriminated against</li> <li>• Are abused</li> <li>• Are brothers and sisters of South Africans</li> <li>• Are compatriots</li> <li>• Are comrades</li> <li>• Are defenseless</li> <li>• Are displaced</li> <li>• Are harmed</li> <li>• Are injured</li> <li>• Are killed</li> <li>• Are oppressed</li> <li>• Are occupied</li> <li>• Are plagued by hardships</li> <li>• Are refugees</li> <li>• Are humiliated</li> <li>• Are innocent</li> <li>• Are victims</li> <li>• Are disregarded</li> <li>• Are denied most basic rights</li> <li>• Struggle against occupation</li> <li>• Suffer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are progressive</li> <li>• Seek justice</li> <li>• Cause is just</li> <li>• Legitimate struggle</li> <li>• Have the right to self determination</li> <li>• Have fundamental right to freedom</li> <li>• Have right to resist occupation</li> <li>• Deserve sovereignty</li> <li>• Share common values and objectives with South Africa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is like a Bantustan</li> <li>• History is synonymous to South Africa's</li> <li>• Share the struggle for justice with South Africa</li> <li>• Supported South Africa during its struggle against Apartheid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is an outstanding question of decolonization</li> <li>• Is not free</li> <li>• Is not independent</li> <li>• Is occupied by Israel</li> <li>• Is attacked by Israel</li> <li>• Is oppressed by Israel</li> <li>• Is supported by South Africa</li> <li>• Looks to international community for assistance</li> <li>• Existence is threatened by Israeli annexation</li> <li>• Were promised land in Oslo accord</li> <li>• Do not benefit from international instruments for human rights</li> <li>• Endorses two-state solution</li> <li>• Wants peace</li> <li>• Wants self-determination</li> <li>• Face genocide</li> </ul>

## Similar Other: Palestine

Palestine (and Palestinians) is constructed as one of the primary *Others* in this South African foreign policy discourse. The discourse constructs the Palestinian *Other* to be the *victim* subject.

The Palestinian subject (both state and people) is associated with the predicates ‘oppressed’, ‘abused’, ‘injured’, ‘killed’. These predicates presuppose that there is a conflict between the Palestinian subject and a violent (Israeli) subject. It also implies that states are able to inflict harm on other states and peoples, and that the states can do so in manner that is violent and cruel such that abuse is “the daily life experience of the people of Palestine” (Pandor 2018). Furthermore, the subject is constructed to be ‘dispossessed of land’ and ‘refugees’. The presupposition here is that the Palestinian subject has ownership of land. However, this is forcibly taken away from the subject, and it is thus forced to flee. The discourse further constructs Palestine as being ‘occupied’, ‘denied of their basic rights’ and ‘defenseless’, presupposing that the Palestine and Palestinians have certain internationally recognized rights afforded such as the right to sovereignty. However, it is also presupposed that these rights are being infringed upon by the occupying state and that the occupying state is stronger or more capable than the subject. Together, these predicates construct a subject that is not only a victim, but also helpless against its abuser.

The discourse morally constructs the Palestinian subject to be good, just, and similar to the South African subject. The Palestinian subject is constructed to be seeking justice and, as such, its cause is also just. To seek justice presupposes that there is injustice currently being carried out against the subject. The underlying presupposition is that there are international frameworks such as law, that states and people can refer to in order to assess whether the cause is just or unjust. Relatedly, the subject has the right to self-determination, is ‘deserving of sovereignty’, and ‘seeks freedom’ in its legitimate struggle against its occupier. The presupposition here is that self-determination and sovereignty are rights and that having these is the norm in the world, yet other states can illegally infringe upon this sovereignty. Moreover, in the discourse, Palestine’s values are likened to South Africa’s. The two subjects, “share common values and objectives which were forged during the struggle against apartheid” (South African Government 2018). Thus, since South Africa is constructed to value peace, democracy, international law, and equality—so then does Palestine. Further, the implicit construction is that the two subjects have a historical relationship because of their solidarity in fighting against

the apartheid regime in South Africa. This relationship is constructed as continuous as Palestine is still supported by South Africa.

Temporally, Palestine is linked to untransformed South Africa during apartheid. The discourse associates Palestine with terms such as Bantustan which presupposes the South African experience with apartheid and the designated exclusionary territories that black South Africans that were forced to reside in. The discourse, thus, draws the comparison that the situation of oppression in Palestine is one of apartheid. Indeed, according to the discourse, Palestinians' "...humiliation is familiar to all black South Africans who were corralled and harassed and insulted by the security forces of the apartheid government" (DIRCO 2021). Therefore, as the Palestinian *Other* is constructed to be under apartheid, it is differentiated to the transformed and democratic South Africa. The implicit construction here is that Palestine can also become free like the transformed South Africa through its struggle.

Spatially, Palestine is constructed to be in the Middle East. This predication presupposes that the world is organized into regions characterized by similarity, proximity, and territorial borders. The discourse constructs it to be territorially beside Israel, however it is constructed as shrinking territorially due to illegal settlements. Although it is constructed to be in the Middle East, the subject's struggle is constructed a global one. In the discourse, Palestine is considered an "unfinished decolonization struggle" (DIRCO 2022b). The presupposition here is that states had to struggle against their colonizers during their decolonization movements, and most states succeeded in their decolonization struggles and are now free and sovereign. Therefore, although not explicit in the discourse, the subject's shared historical experience with colonization, socioeconomic poverty, and oppression constructs it as part of global south and thus a recipient of this Global South solidarity—especially South Africa's.

Regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict, the discourse constructs two main parties to the conflict—Palestine and Israel. It constructs the conflict as an unequal one with an aggressor—Israel—and a victim—Palestine. The discourse creates the conflict to be about the "forced dispossession of land, about colonial occupation, about racial discrimination and about the violent suppression of dissent" of Palestinians (Ramaphosa 2021). The presupposition here entails that greater structures such as racial hierarchies are at play, in which Arabs are discriminated against by the Jewish majority Israeli state. The implication then becomes that the conflict resembles previous decolonization struggles which were also racially motivated.

Moreover, Palestine's *existence* is considered threatened by the Israeli occupation and annexation, and hence, even faces genocide. The predicates 'genocide' and 'threatened' presuppose that abuse faced by Palestinians is ethnically based and aimed at completely

displacing them from their land. Palestine is also constructed as having the right to resist occupation. Resistance here presupposes struggle against the occupation and not pacifism. Of note is that the discourse constructs Palestine (The Palestinians Authority and Fattah as government) and Hamas<sup>1</sup> as different actors. In the conflict discourse, the Palestinian government is also constructed as being the more sensible party, seeking peace and endorsing the two-state solution, presupposing that there have been diplomatic efforts made to bring peace to the two parties, but that these have not been successful because of Israel. Furthermore, Palestine is created by the discourse as an *Other* who, although wanting to, does not benefit from international instruments aimed at securing the rights of states and their peoples. This construction presupposes that states and peoples are parties to international structures and frameworks that are supposed to secure rights globally, however, due to involvement of other states, do not.

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas was not as present in the discourse before October 7<sup>th</sup> and was thus not considered for analysis in thesis

**Table 3: Predicates and Practices of Israel**

Qualities	Values and Morals	Apartheid	Palestine and Israel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is destructive</li> <li>• Is an occupier</li> <li>• Is the Occupying Power</li> <li>• Is an oppressor</li> <li>• Is an abuser</li> <li>• Is a colonizer</li> <li>• Is aggressive</li> <li>• Is brutal</li> <li>• Is cruel</li> <li>• Is discriminatory</li> <li>• Is not held accountable</li> <li>• Is uncompromising</li> <li>• Is violent</li> <li>• Is senseless</li> <li>• Is shameful</li> <li>• Is capable/powerful</li> <li>• Is protected and supported by powerful friends</li> <li>• Has powerful friends in the North</li> <li>• Has responsibility as Occupying Power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaches obligations</li> <li>• Violates International Law</li> <li>• Violates human rights</li> <li>• Acts unilaterally</li> <li>• Is evil</li> <li>• Is unjust</li> <li>• Is defiant</li> <li>• Is uncooperative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is an Apartheid regime</li> <li>• Practices Apartheid</li> <li>• Has Apartheid policies</li> <li>• Is like South African Apartheid regime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupies Palestine</li> <li>• Oppresses Palestinians</li> <li>• Discriminates against Palestinians</li> <li>• Allows for the expansion of settlements</li> <li>• Arbitrarily arrests Palestinians civilians</li> <li>• Bombards Palestine</li> <li>• Colonizes Palestinian lands</li> <li>• Complicates negotiations</li> <li>• Detains children</li> <li>• Disregards UNSC resolutions</li> <li>• Negotiated agreements with Palestinians over the years</li> <li>• Disrespects agreements with Palestinians</li> <li>• Annexes Palestinian land</li> <li>• Launches unprovoked attacks</li> <li>• Is an obstacle to a permanent solution</li> <li>• Impairs possibility of the two-state solution</li> <li>• Commits crimes against humanity</li> <li>• Commits war crimes</li> <li>• Denies Palestinians their rights</li> <li>• Perpetrates holocaust against Palestinians</li> <li>• Commits genocide against Palestinians</li> <li>• Undermines peace and stability in Middle East</li> </ul>

## Radical Other: Israel

The discourse constructs Israel as the other primary *Other*. In this discourse, Israel is constructed as the bad, uncooperative aggressor.

This subject is predicated by the qualities ‘occupier’ and ‘powerful’. These predicates presuppose that in a world where the sovereignty of states is predominant, some states are still unwillingly under the authority of other states—occupation. It also presupposes that Israel is a state that has the military capability to exert its power over Palestine. Additionally, the Israeli *Other* is associated with the predicates ‘destructive’, ‘aggressive’, ‘abuser’, and ‘violent’. This cluster of predicates connotes the physical damage and harm done to Palestinians and Palestinian infrastructure. These predicates presuppose that states conduct themselves in relation to other states and can do so in peaceful unharmed ways or can resort to violence in their conduct. However, this discourse implies that the violence exerted by this *Other* is more extreme than other violence—it is ‘brutal’ and ‘cruel’. In addition, the discourse constructs the Israeli state to be uncompromising and senseless, thus implying a stubborn subject that does not consider the implications of its actions and practices.

In terms of moral construction, this discourse creates Israel as an immoral subject. Words such ‘unjust’, ‘discriminatory’, and ‘evil’ predicate the subject. These predicates presuppose that there is right and wrong in the world—a good and an evil. It presupposes that people have the right to be treated equally and fairly. However, the unjust and discriminatory treatment of people, in this case Palestinians, is wrong and evil. In this sense, the implicit construction is that Israel does not value equality and fairness. The discourse furthers that the occupation is “totally unjust and shameful as it takes away human rights of Palestinians” (DIRCO 2021a). In fact, a salient construction of the Israeli *Other* is that it does not value international law, but ‘violates’ and ‘breaches’ its obligations to it. The subject’s “killing of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza [...] goes against the tenets of international law.” (Pandor 2023). This presupposes that international law governs states to ensure international justice in the absence of a supranational authority, and that Israel is bound to it as a state. However, by violating and breaching international law, Israel is constructed to not hold the value of justice and infringes on the rights of Palestinians. The subject is further constructed to value unilateralism over multilateralism. As such it is ‘uncooperative’ and ‘defiant’ in multilateral settings and, thus, acts unilaterally.

Temporally, the discourse connects the Israeli subject to the old South African regime. In the discourse, South Africa “draws a direct parallel between the former apartheid regime

and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land” (DIRCO 2022b). This implies that just as the apartheid regime was oppressive, racially segregating South Africans, and imposing on the freedoms and rights of South Africans, so does the Israel with its occupation of Palestinian land. Indeed, the discourse points to this *Other* as having and practicing apartheid policies. Israel is, thus, constructed to be an Apartheid regime. The implicit construction is that the subject commits crimes against humanity as Apartheid was designated.

The discourse constructs Israel as being in the Middle East, yet not part of the Global South. It is constructed to have more ‘powerful friends in the North’. The presupposition then is that states form alliances with those they align with on topics. This implies that Israel has strong alliances amongst Western states who give it support in its actions, whereas it does not have such powerful alliances with states of the Global South, who instead tend to stand in solidarity with Palestine. This is also pertinent in the construction of the *Other* within the conflict.

Israel is constructed as the aggressor in the conflict with Palestine. The subject is constructed as a killer and abuser of Palestinians and their rights. It treats them discriminatorily by enforcing a system of apartheid on them. Moreover, Israel is constructed as an occupying power and as such is the dominant party over the Palestinian party. In the conflict, the Israeli subject disregards international law and UNSC resolutions aimed at stopping its illegal activities. It allows for the continuing expansion of settlements into Palestinian territory, while evading accountability for crimes it commits against Palestinians. According to the discourse, this subject’s “acts are not only illegal but also risk undermining the viability of a negotiated two-state solution and will have negative consequences on the entire peace process” (DIRCO 2020b). Therefore, while being constructed as the main perpetrator on the conflict within the discourse, the Israeli subject is also constructed as actively furthering the conflict by preventing the achievement of long-term peaceful resolution due to its behaviors.

**Table 4: Predicates and Practices of the International Community**

Qualities	Values and Morals	Apartheid	Palestine and Israel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is global</li> <li>• Is good</li> <li>• Is progressive</li> <li>• Are observers</li> <li>• Does nothing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values peace</li> <li>• Values human rights</li> <li>• Must uphold international legality</li> <li>• Must hold states accountable for their actions</li> <li>• Must ensure that process of decolonization is completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported South Africa against Apartheid</li> <li>• Were in solidarity with South Africa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be united for comprehensive ceasefire</li> <li>• Has duty to satisfy legitimate aspirations of Palestinians</li> <li>• Must find permanent solution for people for Palestine and Israel</li> <li>• Is indifferent to violations against Palestinians</li> <li>• Is disturbed by Israeli aggression</li> <li>• Should work to attain peace in Palestine</li> <li>• Stands with Palestine</li> <li>• Does not recognize Israeli annexations of Palestine</li> <li>• Must support negotiated settlement</li> <li>• Must safeguard rights of Palestinians</li> <li>• Has responsibility to support Palestinians</li> <li>• Should intervene</li> <li>• Has obligation to ensure international law is respected by Israel</li> <li>• Has the obligation to act against genocide</li> <li>• Preaches two-state solution</li> </ul>

## Self in the Other: International Community

Another subject constructed within the discourse is the International Community. This subject is constructed to be both responsible and a bystander. South Africa is a member of this subject, but, at times, it is also constructed to be distant from the subject.

The discursive construction of the International Community at the level of the signifier already predicates ‘international’ and ‘community’. These predicates presuppose that the world is organized into nations defined by their borders and that the states, peoples, and networks can come together as a community to deliberate and address issues of international significance.

Spatially, this actor is constructed to be global, not delineated by borders or location. This construction allows it to mean a specific group of countries or networks while not specifically naming them. The discourse also allows for the flexibility its construction. For example, before its democratic transformation, Apartheid South Africa was not part of the international community, whereas post-Apartheid South Africa is a member of the international community (Britannica 2023). From this construction, it can be inferred that membership in the community is circumstantial.

Although the International Community is both constructed to be diverse and made up of various countries, peoples, and civil society networks, it is also constructed to be a (sometimes) unified entity. The discourse constructs the actor to be a virtuous subject. It is constructed to value peace, human rights, and international law. Indeed, according to the discourse, the subject even supported South Africa during Apartheid and helped South Africa achieve its freedom. This implies that the international community is capable of changing conditions of peoples and states, and when determined, it has the power to do so. The subject is associated with the predicate ‘progressive’ and ‘good’ presupposing that other multilateral organizations, states, or networks can be more conservative regarding change—even if it is positive— and, thus, perpetuate ‘bad’ conditions. This construction implies that, through unified efforts, the international community can change situations for the better. Further, it is constructed as having the responsibility to do so. As the international community, this *Other* is constructed as having the responsibility to hold states accountable on the international stage. The implication here is that, domestically, states may get away with poor behavior. Yet, internationally, it is up to the good and progressive members of the international community to maintain accountability.

Although it is constructed as a progressive and morally virtuous actor, the discourse further constructs the International Community as composed by ‘observers’ and ‘bystanders’ to the plight of Palestinians. This construction presupposes that Palestinians are being oppressed and that the international community is aware of it yet does not change their conditions. It is constructed as ‘indifferent to violations against Palestinians’ yet also ‘disturbed by Israeli aggression towards Palestine’ and stands with Palestine. Here, the tension between the subject’s moral construction and its construction in the particular conflict is visible. As an actor who values peace and human rights, it is expected to safeguard the rights for Palestinians, however, it ‘does nothing’ to change their conditions. The discourse endows the International Community with various responsibilities relating to the conflict. It is constructed as having to ensure that the decolonization processes are completed. The implication that the international community aided previous decolonization efforts is made while also implicitly alluding to its abandonment of the Palestinian cause. While the international community does not recognize Israeli annexations and settlements within Palestine, it has the obligation to ensure that international law is respected by Israel and, therefore, must intervene. The presupposition here is that the International Community follows the law, and that Israeli annexations and settlements are illegal according to the internationally agreed upon law.

Furthermore, the discourse constructs the conflict as having an end that can be achieved through dialogue, and as such, the international community bears responsibility to advocate for ceasefire and permanent solution and peace. The South African ambassador to the United Nations stated, “we have the responsibility, as the international community, to make every effort towards creating opportunities for comprehensive dialogue led and owned by Palestinians and Israelis themselves” to foster a permanent resolution to the conflict (Joyini 2023).

**Table 5: Predicates and Practices of the United Nations**

Qualities	Values and Morals	Apartheid	Palestine and Israel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs reform</li> <li>• Is undemocratic</li> <li>• Has responsibility for maintaining international peace and security</li> <li>• Is entrusted with ensuring promotion and protection of human rights</li> <li>• Should resolve issues of occupation</li> <li>• Is unable to carry out its duties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values peace</li> <li>• Values justice</li> <li>• Values equality</li> <li>• Believes dignity</li> <li>• Wants to eradicate global poverty</li> <li>• Dedicated to Freedom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declared apartheid a crime against humanity</li> <li>• Supported South African struggle for liberation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolutions must be uniformly implemented</li> <li>• Should be primary forum for interventions</li> <li>• Must fulfill its obligations to the Palestinian people</li> <li>• Must take concrete steps against violations of resolutions</li> <li>• Endorses two-state solution</li> </ul>

## **Other: United Nations (UNSC)**

The discourse constructs the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as one of the *Others* in discourse. Although the *Self* is a member, it is in a more formal capacity.

The UN is constructed as the highest authority on internationally significant issues. This predication presupposes that the world is organized into nations where each state maintains their sovereignty. However, certain matters are of significance across the territorial boundaries of sovereign nations and require an international or multilateral approach. This construction implies a democratic and representative approach governance on the international stage, in the absence of a global government. The UN is constructed as a multilateral space for formal deliberations of matters with formal mechanisms for decision making.

The UN Charter enshrines the mandate “to foster peace and to promote fundamental human rights, social progress and a better standard of life for all.” (UNGA 2023). As such, the subject is constructed to promote the values of peace, justice, and equality. This presupposes that these values can be at risk on the international stage. It, consequently, wishes to eradicate poverty and improve global conditions. This presupposes that the world is unequal, with some places being more poverty stricken which is unacceptable and should therefore be improved. The UN *Other* is constructed to be dedicated to freedom, and it supported South Africa in its struggle against Apartheid. Further, this *Other* is constructed to believe in the dignity of people globally and declared Apartheid a crime against humanity. The presupposition here is that was a criminal system that stripped South African civilians of their dignity.

Although constructed to be a representative forum for international decision-making, this subject is also constructed to be undemocratic and necessitating reform. The discourse implies that few powerful nations wield more decision-making power at the UN, which is undemocratic and wrong thus requiring reform. Furthermore, as the UN and UNSC have the responsibility to maintain international peace and security, the subject is entrusted to protect the human rights of all. This implies that the UN is an impartial entity. However, due to the undemocratic impasse at the highest levels of decision-making within the UNSC, this subject is ‘unable to carry out its duties’ to maintain international peace and security. Indeed, while “the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and its human rights protocols all commit [UN Member states] to protecting all people without distinction of

any kind”, the crises they face contemporarily is “because [the UN has] not always upheld these foundational principles consistently and fairly” (Pandor 2022).

In regard to the conflict between Palestine and Israel, the subject is constructed to have great responsibility without being able to deliver. As enshrined in their charter, the subject is constructed to have an obligation to the Palestinian people – to resolve the illegal occupation of Palestine, to ensure their freedom, and to protect their rights. The discourse also implies that the UN has helped in the eradication of apartheid before, and therefore should do so again with the apartheid in Palestine. Nevertheless, the subject is constructed to have taken multiple stances and have drafted resolutions on the conflict. But the subject has failed to ensure the adherence by the Israeli state to its resolutions. The implicit construction here is that the subject is supposed to uphold international law but is contributing to its deterioration by not ensuring the adherence. Indeed, “for international law to be credible, it should be uniformly applied and not selective” (Pandor 2023).

**Table 6: Predicates and Practices of BRICS**

Qualities	Values and Morals	Apartheid	Palestine and Israel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a champion of South-South cooperation in multipolar world</li> <li>• Is a prominent voice for the Global South</li> <li>• Is an informal grouping of leading emerging markets and developing countries</li> <li>• Provides global leadership in addressing needs and concerns of majority of the world</li> <li>• Oppose double standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values equality</li> <li>• Values mutual respect</li> <li>• Believes all countries should cooperate to promote human rights and protect fundamental freedoms</li> <li>• Believes all conflicts should be resolved through peaceful means</li> <li>• Committed to UN Charter</li> <li>• Committed to respect for international law</li> <li>• Committed to strengthening multilateral systems</li> <li>• Fair, just, equitable, democratic international system</li> <li>• Oppose illegal use of force</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• n/a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes Palestine as a state</li> <li>• Should be resolved by dialogue and diplomacy</li> <li>• Concerned about deteriorating situation in occupied Palestine</li> <li>• Believe in the two-state solution</li> <li>• Question of Palestine must be resolved through negotiation based on international law</li> <li>• Believes that Palestinians have legitimate aspirations</li> </ul>

## Self in the Other: BRICS

The discourse constructs the BRICS as subject as an *Other* which the *Self* is part of. This subject is constructed as multilateral group that aligns itself with the Global South.

This subject is constructed to be an informal multilateral group of states consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. This presupposes that these states exist in the international system, and they wanted to cooperate in a smaller multilateral group. This implies that they align on more international issues, so they require their own grouping. The discourse constructs the BRICS to be a champion of South-South cooperation. The presupposition here is that there is cooperation between countries of the Global South, and that championing this means modeling the cooperation through the BRICS and promoting it in the Global South. The implication is that they wish to engage multilaterally outside of other existing multilateral institutions.

This *Other* is associated with the values of ‘equality’, ‘respect’, and ‘cooperation’. It is constructed to value multilateralism and cooperation between states of the Global South but also more broadly. The presupposition here is that states cooperate with each other to address matters together, but this cooperation often happens on multilateral platforms that are not Global South focused. Indeed, this subject is constructed to be a ‘global leader’ providing global leadership by addressing the needs and concerns of majority of the world. The BRICS is constructed to be ‘voice for the Global South’. This construction implies that the Global South makes up the majority of the world, but its needs and concerns are not prioritized in other multilateral institutions.

This subject is constructed to support the Palestinian cause. It shows “support for the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate rights including but not limited to their right to self-determination” (BRICS 2023a). The BRICS are ‘committed’ to international law and as such oppose the illegal use of force by Israel on Palestine. As an actor who is associated with the value of equality, this subject morally opposes double standards in regard to the conflict implying that Israel is allowed to evade international law and UNSC resolutions. It believes that the international community must support negotiations “towards a two-state solution, leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine”, as it believes that all conflict should be resolved through peaceful dialogue and diplomacy (BRICS 2023b).

## Discussion

The first step of this PDA analyzed the discourse at the level of predication and presupposition in order to deduce the discursive construction of the subjects and their identities. Although there has already been some reference to the subjects' construction vis-à-vis one another—such as aggressor and victim, this next section will discuss more explicitly the subject positioning in the discourse. After this discussion on the subject positionings, this section will then discuss how the relational construction of the different subjects each with their own subjectivity and different degrees of difference and *Otherness* produce a certain reality where some possibilities of foreign policy action emerge while others are precluded.

The PDA conducted above shows that the South African *Self* is constructed as a peaceful, democratic, morally responsible subject that values equality, multilateral cooperation, and international law. It is constructed as wanting to improve the conditions of Palestinians and mediate the conflict by sharing its wisdom through diplomatic dialogue.

The discourse constructs the Palestinian *Other* as an oppressed, abused, and neglected victim that seeks its freedom from occupation. In relation to South Africa, Palestine is differentiated temporally, but linked through similar values, morals, and historical ties to the *Self*. Indeed, considering the linking between Palestine and South Africa, Palestine is therefore the similar *Other* in the discourse.

In this discourse, Israel is constructed as an unjust, violent, and destructive aggressor. It does not value international law and habitually violates it without repercussion in its behaviors towards Palestine. Vis-à-vis South Africa, Israel is linked temporally to the Apartheid regime which radically differentiates it from post-Apartheid South African *Self*. Morally the two subjects are greatly differentiated. South Africa values international law and multilateral cooperation, whereas Israel violates it and acts unilaterally. South Africa fought to liberate itself from Apartheid while Israel imposes apartheid on Palestinians. Ultimately, the discourse constructs Israel as South Africa's radical *Other*.

From the discourse analysis, it was also concluded that the international community was constructed as valuing peace, human rights, and international law, but it was also produced as and solely observing in Palestine's case. In relation to South Africa, the International Community was constructed to be sometimes lagging behind the most progressive actions. As such, South Africa is part of it but not consistently because it is more proactive. Therefore, the South African *Self* can be seen *in* the International Community *Other* but retains its separation from it.

The United Nations was constructed by the discourse to be the most authoritative actor in matters of international security and peace. The *Other* is constructed to be responsible for the protection of human rights everywhere in an impartial manner, valuing both international law and justice. Indeed, in relation to South Africa, the UN has more responsibility to uphold international law and justice than the *Self* does. South Africa values the UN and wants to see its charter respected, but the undemocratic and unrepresentative UN is unable to carry its duty. Vis-à-vis South Africa, the UN is an *Other* that although morally linked to the *Self* and through membership, is differentiated from the *Self* due to other more powerful states control over decision making and hindering its effectiveness.

The discourse constructs the BRICS as an informal multilateral group that values peace, diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, equality, and is focused on the Global South. Its construction in relation to South Africa is that of high similarity due to membership and the group's principles. The BRICS, and South Africa within it, represent the Global South and stand in solidarity with it giving it a voice when ignored by greater powers. As an *Other*, the BRICS is close in degree of otherness to the self. The *Self* is then also seen as a part of the *Other*.

Because all identity is relational in PDA, the subjects are not just constructed in relation to South Africa but also in relation to each other. This was especially seen in the construction of the conflict. Israel and Palestine were seen to be positioned in antagonistic opposition to each other with Israel being the *aggressor* and Palestine being the *victim* of Israel's aggression. The International Community was seen to be positioned more closely to Palestine as they are linked through values. Yet, it was not actually positioned in opposition to Israel, even though the construction through the discourse of foreign policy posits it to be. This was the similar case with the UN. Although being constructed to uphold peace and security and passing various resolutions and thus positioning itself closely with the Palestinian cause, the UN(SC) was not positioned in a directly oppositional stance against Israel due to its inaction and inability to enforce its resolutions. The BRICS was constructed to be linked to Palestine, maintaining its values focus on the Global South, and morally in opposition to Israel.

Subjects are constructed vis-à-vis one another such that a reality is produced. The reality constituted by the discourse, then, is constructed with the above identities—where Israel is the aggressor and Palestine is the victim; where Israel is South Africa's radical *Other*, and Palestine is close to South Africa in terms of *Otherness*.

So, once Israel began with its extreme retaliation against Palestine on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October of 2023, these identities were produced and reproduced. By December of 2023, three months

into the attack on Gaza, more than 21,000 Palestinians had been killed including more than 8,000 children. South Africa— a peaceful follower of international law, who supports Palestinian rights— had been calling for cease fire and restraint from the Israeli state from the beginning of its siege on Gaza to no avail. Therefore, when the other actors within the discourse that are constructed to value peace, human rights, and international law, fail to hold Israel accountable or enforce the laws and resolutions already in place— due to various reasons such as a divided international community, or UNSC stalemate due to US veto powers—the possibility emerges that South Africa had to act. As a capable and brave, but not materially powerful state, South Africa would have to pursue other avenues to get Palestinians the justice they deserve, according to the discourse. South Africa's pursuit of a case at the highest (independent) court of the UN—an internationally recognized court— is in line with the discourse that constructs South Africa as an actor that values the rule of international law and pursues diplomatic and multilateral avenues to solve conflict. In fact, the discourse constructs South Africa as having tried to act diplomatically before with the state's revocation of its ambassador to Israel, yet the Israeli aggression continued; therefore, merely expressing concern or condemnation would not produce a lasting solution to the conflict. In this reality mutually constituted by the discourse, the possibility of South Africa filing of the ICJ case against Israel thus emerges as an attempt to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and maintain its solidarity with Palestine.

In fact, this act of foreign policy emerges as a more than a possibility—a necessity— because other possibilities were precluded in this reality. For example, as a peaceful state, South Africa could not wage war on another state. As a state that places such value on international law and human rights, it could not let institutions like the international courts set up by the UN be denigrated without attempting to utilize them first. As a state who was previously under an apartheid regime and had to fight for its freedom with support from Palestine, South would have to return the favor. As a consistent ally, a voice for the Global South, South Africa could not stop supporting Palestine—especially when Palestinians are facing genocide. The discourse constructs the *Others* as observers and unable to carry out duties. It also differentiates the South African Self, meaning that South Africa could not do nothing as well. This possibility was precluded.

## Conclusion

This thesis has sought to answer the research question: *How can South Africa's ICJ case against Israel be understood from a Poststructural perspective?* It attempted to do so by conducting a Poststructural Discourse Analysis of South African foreign policy on Palestine and Israel up to the filing of the ICJ case. This analysis found that the discourse constructed subjects and their identities, while positioning them in relation to one another and thus constituting reality in which the ICJ case can be understood as consistent with the discourse.

South Africa, as the primary subject and *Self* in the discourse, was constructed as a bridge-building, democratic state with a commitment to peace, justice, and multilateralism. It was constructed to support Palestine based on historical solidarity and its own experience with Apartheid. Palestine, the similar *Other*, was constructed as the victim of oppression and occupation seeking justice and self-determination, thus aligning with South African values. Israel was constructed as the radical *Other*—an unjust, Apartheid state that violates international law and human rights—thus in opposition with South Africa. The International Community, the *Other* in which the South African *Self* can be seen, was constructed as aligning with South African values but failing to act effectively and thus was a bystander. The United Nations *Other* was constructed as being the key authority on international peace and security but hindered by undemocratic processes and power dynamics. Lastly, the BRICS was constructed as a multilateral group, of which the *Self* is part, that champions the Global South and supports peaceful resolutions and international law.

This study has found that the discursive construction of these subjects constituted a reality in which the ICJ case emerged as a possibility. In the context of the discourse, it was a necessity that South Africa would bring forth its ICJ case against Israel. As explored in Chapter 4, given both South Africa's and the other actors' discursively constructed identity, South Africa could not ignore the indiscriminate violence in Palestine, and much less let Israel as the aggressor continuously violate law without being held accountable. As such, the possibility of doing nothing, or pursuing the same avenues it had before were precluded.

While other lenses might understand this act as inconsistent or duplicitous in light of South Africa's other foreign policy behavior, a Poststructural Discourse Analysis of South African foreign policy on Palestine and Israel allows for the understanding of the ICJ case against Israel as an act of foreign policy that is consistent with, expected and even necessary given the discourse. This finding deepens our understanding of this action as it then is not an anomaly in

South African foreign policy, not some kind of distraction, but in essence consistent with the discourse.

Understanding South African foreign policy is important to comprehend the ICJ and why it is so important to South Africa and IR. When considering the discourse, the ICJ case becomes a matter of survival for Palestinians, because their *existence* is threatened by Israel. The ICJ case becomes some kind of final resort for a state like South Africa that could not turn to war in attempting to stop the continuous oppression of Palestinians by the Israeli state, in addition to finding itself faced with inaction by the international community. It also becomes about more than this particular instance of Israeli destruction of Palestine and Palestinians, but it also becomes about preserving the rule of law internationally as every Israeli violation threatens the credibility and sanctity of international law. Indeed, the discourse points to the awareness and intention of making the Global South, their needs, and concerns more prominent on the international stage. We can infer from it that the West is losing hegemony on the international stage. It no longer dictates what is right and wrong, legitimate, or not. Countries from the Global South are forming stronger alliances and cooperating amongst themselves to challenge the Western powers and their alliances. They do so by using the very instruments of international governance created and highly esteemed by the West. This case has already set a precedent into challenging this strong alliance between Israel and Western states. The world is witnessing more and more international court processes against Israel and Israeli officials (e.g., the ICC warrants out on the Israeli governmental officials).

Despite the ICJ case provisional orders not being respected by Israel, if the ICJ finds Israel guilty of violating the Geneva convention—guilty of committing genocide against Palestinians—there will be a more hardline stance on Israel on Western countries part. If there is no drastic change in their behavior, Western states will lose all credibility amongst countries of the Global South, and they are already well on their way there.

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