

Abstract

The way foreign policy decisions are made in democratic states is an issue that is often characterized as contentious. There is a general presupposition that the state's democratic character would mean that important decisions concerning the way the state relates to the international system would be made in a manner that espouses democratic values. These are values such as openness, plurality, political equality, participation, liberty and many others associated with the bulk of liberal democracies.

This research investigates the role that the South African public plays within the country's foreign policy decision making architecture. The paper argues that on a declaratory level the public is at the center of the decision making process, playing a vital role in how decisions are architected by the South African government. In reality however, the place of the public in the decisional matrix is tenuous if not completely absent resulting in stark contradictions between the democratic values professed and the actual condition of the decision making architecture. This investigation uncovers how foreign policy decisions are made in South Africa as well as how the decisions are influenced by the public. This is done through the application of democratic theory as well as foreign policy decision making theory to the South African context and essentially testing the quality of the country's democratic fiber. The investigation subsequently takes the form of a practical analysis in order to illuminate the realities of the relationship between the public and foreign policy decisions made, showing the depth and extent of the public's removal from the process.