COMPARATIVE FOREIGN POLICY
ADAPTATION STRATEGIES
OF THE GREAT AND EMERGING POWERS

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Republic will fail to deal with these challenges and Iran’s global stature will diminish significantly.

Iran will have enormous difficulty achieving its long-term goals unless it normalizes relations with the United States, which so profoundly affected Iran in the previous century. Unlike the reformists, the conservatives generally oppose any rapprochement with the United States, the world’s only superpower, the leading force of information technology, and the dominant economic force in the global economy. Iran would pay dearly, as it already has, by ignoring this reality. Nor can the United States ignore Iran. Although each country has legitimate grievances against the other, they also share many common goals. Only through dialogue can the grievances be addressed and their common goals be used to establish new relations based upon reciprocity and mutual respect.

For Iran, the ultimate challenge of its foreign policy is to establish normal relations with the Western powers without endangering its cherished political independence. This is indeed difficult, but possible—and essential. Iran has a rich and ancient civilization, an invaluable geostrategic location, abundant natural resources, a huge and relatively educated population, and sizable markets. If Iran can meet this challenge, it can build on those resources to play a more influential and constructive role in world politics during the twenty-first century and beyond.

The Republic of South Africa has emerged from the shadows of its past to become a respected and formidable regional power. In this chapter, the linkage between South Africa’s fundamental internal reforms and its growing international stature is explored in detail. As we will find, democracy in South Africa has brought with it a democratic revolution in the formulation and conduct of its foreign policy, a pattern that has become evident in other emerging powers of the post–Cold War era.

From 1948 until 1994, South African leaders maintained an authoritarian political system known as apartheid (apartheid). Under this system, the white minority imposed racial segregation on a disenfranchised black majority. The cost of this strategy was South Africa’s branding as a pariah within the African continent and the wider international community. Continued adherence to apartheid policies amid the rising chorus of domestic and international condemnation virtually guaranteed South Africa’s “diplomacy of isolation” during the Cold War (Geldenhuys 1984).

South Africa’s pariah status ended in 1994, when Nelson Mandela was elected president in his country’s first multiracial and multiparty elections. South Africa emerged as the embodiment of the political–military and socioeconomic changes sweeping Africa that are often referred to as the “African renaissance.” This status was further strengthened in 1999, when Mandela’s anointed successor, Vice President Thabo Mbeki, emerged victorious in presidential elections (Vale and Maseko 1998). An important aspect of this newfound status has been the determination of both administrations to redesign the South African foreign-policy apparatus, a measure that would presumably lead to alterations in foreign-policy practices and
relationships. These internal changes have solidified South Africa’s ongoing transformation from international pariah to leader of the African renaissance.

South Africa constitutes an excellent case study for understanding foreign-policy adaptation in the post–Cold War era. Often referred to as a “regional superpower” (Butts and Thomas 1986), South Africa is without question the leading power on the African continent. It possesses Africa’s most industrialized economy whose annual gross national product of more than $130 billion accounts for nearly 30 percent of the continent’s economic output. South Africa also boasts the largest and best-trained military in Africa, including air and naval forces capable of projecting military power far beyond South African territory. Politically, South Africa serves as the embodiment of the democratic changes that have swept across Africa since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Dubbed the “rainbow nation,” South Africa is also a leader in the cultural realm as its leaders strive to create a civil society that is capable of resolving internal conflicts through the rule of law. This case, therefore, illuminates the promise and potential foreign-policy implications of far-reaching social and political reforms in Africa. More generally, South Africa offers important insights into the adaptation strategies being pursued by other emerging powers throughout the world.

THE ROOTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY

As other chapters in this volume have aptly demonstrated, the foreign policies of great and emerging powers alike cannot be understood without reference to their historical context. South Africa is certainly no exception to this rule. Indeed, it may be argued that, more so than the other countries featured in this volume, South Africa’s primary challenge today at home and abroad is to escape from the shadows of its past. The shadows include not only the apartheid era, but the previous and longer period in which South Africa was established and subsequently dominated by foreign powers. Both periods, therefore, deserve attention in this section of the chapter.

EARLY SETTLEMENT AND FOREIGN CONTROL

The first white settlers arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa in 1652 to create a “refreshment station” for the Dutch East India Company. As time went by, this settler population began to speak a unique language (Afrikaans) and think of itself as a unique people (Afrikaners) with permanent roots in the coastal areas of southern Africa. Yet, when faced with the imposition of British colonial rule early in the nineteenth century, approximately 20 percent of the Afrikaner population undertook the so-called “Great Trek” into the hinterland, establishing independent Afrikaner provinces known as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Under pressure from both the migrating Afrikaners and the imperial conquests of the British colonial army, the indigenous black populations of the region, such as the Xulu, the Xhosa, and the Swazi, were subjugated and placed under white rule.

The Afrikaners’ determination to forestall the encroachment of the British was soon dashed by the discoveries of diamonds near Kimberley in 1867 and of gold in the area of Witwatersrand in 1886. Intent on adding these resources to an expanding imperial colonial order, Great Britain annexed the Transvaal in 1877. This contributed to rising British–Afrikaner tensions and culminated in the Boer War of 1899–1902. The defeat of the Afrikaners in this war cemented the supremacy of British colonial rule over the region. It also fueled the unification in 1910 of Afrikaner territories within a self-governing, British-controlled state known as South Africa. This was followed in 1931 by London’s recognition of the country’s legal sovereignty within the British Commonwealth. The Afrikaners were granted full political franchise within the South African political system. Nonetheless, they were dominated by an English-speaking elite of British origins. The indigenous African nations that comprised the majority of the region’s population were largely stripped of their lands and political rights.

This newest member of the British Commonwealth enjoyed a positive international image early in the twentieth century. This was in part due to the influential role of South African diplomats in the creation and activities of the League of Nations and the United Nations (Geldenhuys 1984; Munger 1965). Jan Christian Smuts, a decorated hero of the Boer War who ruled South Africa from 1939 to 1948 as the head of the relatively moderate United Party, was credited with playing a major role in the peace conference following World War I (Noer 1985, 18). South Africa was also praised for its active military participation on the side of the Western allies during World War I and World War II. In the latter conflict, South Africa received more than $100 million in U.S. aid that was repaid by the South African government in 1947. In exchange for this assistance, the U.S. War Department was granted the right to establish several air bases on South African soil as part of the allied war effort (Lake 1974, 49).

Several aspects of South Africa’s political system foreshadowed future problems within the international community. First, a fragile political monopoly of the English-speaking political elite was threatened by the emerging power of splinter Afrikaner parties. Their leaders believed the government had “betrayed” Afrikaner culture, most notably by placing South Africa on a path that eventually would lead to “destructive” black rule (Noer 1985, 18–19). In World War II, for example, several National Party leaders openly praised and admired Adolf Hitler’s fascist brand of
“national socialism” and opposed entry into the conflict on the side of Great Britain in favor of giving support to Nazi Germany. As the April 1948 parliamentary elections approached, Daniel Malan, dubbed the “Boer Moses” by both critics and supporters, campaigned on a National Party platform of white supremacy and strict segregation of the races. The platform included a proposal for an apartheid system in which nonwhites would be stripped of any remaining legal, political, and economic rights.

Another dilemma in foreign policy revolved around the discriminatory practices directed against Indian ethnic groups in South Africa. Despite the conclusion of an agreement with India in 1927 that guaranteed Indian minority rights, South Africa’s parliament restricted Indian property rights and provided for separate political representation. An ensuing diplomatic conflict between India and South Africa prompted India to bring the issue before the UN General Assembly, foreshadowing many future debates over the treatment of nonwhite groups in South Africa.

A final problem resulted from South Africa’s occupation during World War I of the German colony of South West Africa (currently Namibia). Rather than acceding to UN demands to place the territory under trusteeship status in preparation for eventual independence, South Africa announced in 1946 its intention to incorporate Namibia as an integral part of South Africa. This act reflected a growing consensus of the South African foreign-policy establishment that the country was destined to play a leadership role throughout southern Africa, not unlike that of the northern industrialized countries in other parts of Africa.

GLOBAL ISOLATION DURING THE APARTHEID ERA

A new era in South African foreign policy began in May 1948, when the Afrikaner National Party achieved an upset victory in parliamentary elections. Despite receiving only a minority of the popular vote, the Afrikaner-based National Party obtained a working majority within the parliament by aligning itself with the smaller Afrikaner Party. In a series of legislative actions, the National Party consolidated its power and carried out an electoral promise to institutionalize a political system based on apartheid. Three laws passed in 1950 served as the cornerstones of this political system. First, the Population Registration Act mandated the classification and registration of all South Africans according to race. Second, the Group Areas Act formally divided South Africa into racially segregated living areas. Finally, the Suppression of Communism Act banned the South African Communist Party and allowed the government to suppress any criticism of the National Party or its apartheid policies. The system of apartheid was further strengthened in 1951. In the aftermath of the extension of parliamentary representation that accompanied Namibia’s annexation, the National Party achieved an absolute majority within parliament and further exerted its control over the black majority.

The abhorrent nature of South Africa’s racially based political system not surprisingly generated a rising chorus of domestic and international condemnations and attacks. This led to perceptions within the South African policy-making establishment of the emergence of a “total onslaught” against South Africa by the beginning of the 1980s. Internal protests had been growing in both scope and intensity since the Sharpeville massacre of March 21, 1960, when demonstrators against the so-called “pass laws,” which limited the movement of nonwhites throughout South Africa, were fired upon by South African security forces. This incident resulted in the deaths of 69 and the wounding of more than 180 blacks. The protests reached their peak in the mid-1980s, when a series of rebellions throughout the country pitted blacks against the South African security and police forces over a period of two years. When the dust settled, more than 2,000 blacks had died and nearly 30,000 others were detained for political reasons, including nearly 3,000 children under the age of 18 (Lodge et al. 1991).

Pretoria’s fear of a “total onslaught” was strengthened by the emergence of guerrilla organizations that sought to overthrow the apartheid regime. The three largest guerrilla movements—the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan-African Congress (PAC), and the South-West People’s Organization (SWAPO)—enjoyed varying degrees of safe haven within neighboring countries. They could also count on generous amounts of financial support from abroad. Afrikaner policymakers, who were vehement anticommunists, were particularly alarmed by the substantial amount of support the Soviet Union and other communist countries provided to anti-apartheid guerrilla forces. In the case of the ANC, South Africa’s oldest political party that was established in 1912, early support for nonviolent change was altered in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre. Under Mandela’s leadership, the ANC in 1961 formed a military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), which carried out a sustained guerrilla struggle against the apartheid system. The ANC evolved into a formidable political actor with an impressive diplomatic network that paralleled that of the “official” South African government (Thomas 1996). But the ANC suffered a devastating blow when Mandela was captured by South African police in 1962, receiving a life prison sentence.

Increased isolation, culminating in the imposition of a wide range of internationally mandated sanctions, served as the final component of the “total onslaught” perceived by South African policymakers. Many foreign

1Consider the following 1942 statement by B. J. Vorster (quoted in Laurence 1979, 41), future prime minister of South Africa: “We stand for Christian Nationalism, which is an ally of Nazism.”
countries refused to recognize South Africa and severed diplomatic ties with the country after the emergence of the Afrikaner-dominated regime in 1948. International organizations quickly followed suit, further compounding South Africa's isolation. The British Commonwealth of Nations forced South Africa to withdraw in 1961, after which South Africa declared itself an independent republic. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) refused to consider membership for South Africa, and the UN General Assembly passed a series of sanctions resolutions. These sanctions included a prohibition on the sale of military goods to the South African regime and a ban on South African involvement in international sporting events, including the Olympic Games. In other cases, foreign countries prohibited all forms of trade and investment with the apartheid regime. "Divestment" from multinational corporations doing business in South Africa became widespread in the 1980s. The global anti-apartheid movement, with affiliates in almost every country of the world, was one of the strongest international efforts directed against a single country during the twentieth century.

South African policymakers responded to their growing isolation by launching a series of related initiatives that became collectively known in the 1980s as the "total national strategy." This strategy underscored the necessity of using all tools available to the South African state to protect the viability of the apartheid system and the Afrikaner way of life. The government's response to rising domestic protests greatly militarized South Africa's civil society (Cock and Nathan 1989). The South African Defense Force (SADF) doubled in size to 85,000 soldiers from 1975 to 1989 and could count on nearly 400,000 reserve forces with military training. The SADF oversaw the military training of white children in a cadet program that expanded from 56,000 members in 1975 to 250,000 in 1987. The South African Police, which exceeded 100,000 officers in 1994, received extensive military training and maintained a large arsenal of military equipment.

As painstakingly documented by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, created after the abolition of apartheid, these and other components of the state security apparatus routinely violated the human rights of all opponents of apartheid. Extensive documentation has now become public, for example, describing how state security officers extracted confessions through a variety of grisly techniques. These included use of the "black bag," a tightly wrapped cloth designed to bring a prisoner to the brink of asphyxiation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1999). The apartheid regime responded to the threat of guerrilla attacks by relying on a host of military tactics that culminated in a policy of destabilizing neighboring countries that provided safe havens to guerrilla groups (Barber and Barratt 1990). In Angola, military raids ranged from a March 1981 bombing of refugee camps to Operation Askari, a December 1983 invasion that involved thousands of troops and led to South Africa's long-term occupation of Angolan territory. Similar military operations against Mozambique included commando raids against suspected ANC safe havens in Maputo to paramilitary support for a guerrilla organization known as the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO).³

The policy of regional destabilization was particularly effective and forced the leaders of Angola and Mozambique to sign nonaggression pacts with South Africa in 1984 (the Lusaka and Nkomati accords). Indeed, regional destruction wrought by South African destabilization policies prompted the so-called "frontline states" to seek unity in numbers by creating the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). Despite its official title, the regional organization was initially formed on the basis of shared threat perceptions of South Africa (Kadiagala 1994). The SADCC stood in sharp contrast to the ill-fated, pro-South African Constellation of Southern African States envisioned by apartheid leaders.

The final element of South Africa's total national strategy sought to reverse the trend toward diplomatic isolation and mitigate the impact of mounting international sanctions. Periodic diplomatic offensives at best delayed the inevitable. In the case of the United States, for example, the imposition of economic sanctions was long delayed by a White House sympathetic to South Africa's diplomatic overtures, anticommunist credentials, and hospitable treatment of U.S.-based corporations. Successive presidential administrations were reluctant to act against Pretoria despite mounting public protests on college campuses and elsewhere in the United States. The nonresponse by the White House continued until Congress in 1986 passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act by such a large margin as to make it veto proof (Schraeder 1994).

In other cases, such as the Côte d'Ivoire under the administration of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the South African diplomatic corps was able to convince foreign leaders of the necessity of allowing an official visit by the South African president. Such cases, however, represented a rare exception to the general rule of official diplomatic isolation. Informal ties and visits, however, were not only tolerated but encouraged as a useful means of fostering change in South Africa.

³Originally created by the Rhodesian security services to weaken Mozambique's support for anti-Rhodesian guerrillas, RENAMO became a willing client of South Africa's security services when Zimbabwe's independence in April 1980 terminated its only source of support.
Success was much more evident in South Africa's determination to mitigate the worst effects of internationally mandated sanctions. Like many pariah states that find themselves cut off from access to international arms markets, South Africa was forced to pursue a high level of economic and military self-sufficiency (Geldenhuys 1990). The apartheid regime successfully developed a domestic arms industry—the Armaments Corporation of South Africa (ARMSCOR)—that made South Africa largely self-sufficient in armaments by the end of the 1980s. This was an impressive feat when one realizes that the country previously relied on foreign imports for nearly 70 percent of its defense needs in 1963 (Crawford 1995). By the early 1980s, ARMSCOR employed 28,000 people and was responsible for at least 100,000 jobs within the private sector (Geldenhuys 1984, 142).

The authoritarian nature of the Afrikaner regime exerted a significant impact on the formulation and conduct of South African foreign policy (see Munger 1965). The shift from a parliamentary system based on the Westminster model to a presidential system with a strong executive in 1983 did little to change the repressive nature of the political system. The majority black population still remained politically disenfranchised. It was noteworthy, however, that the foreign-policy role granted to the president was much stronger than that accorded the prime minister under the previous governmental design. Since South Africa became an independent republic in 1961, four Afrikaner leaders—Hendrik Verwoerd (1958–1966); B. J. Vorster (1966–1978); Pieter W. Botha (1978–1989); and Frederik W. DeKlerk (1989–1994)—have left their personal imprints on South African foreign policy.4 In sharp contrast, the legislature, historically weak in South Africa, was reduced to a "rubber stamp" role by the 1983 constitutional reforms.

The State Security Council (SSC), established by the Security Intelligence and State Security Council Act of 1972, played a leading role in the formulation of foreign policy, not least of all because it included the heads of the major bureaucracies. Originally conceived as an advisory body with little formal power, the SSC became highly influential under the leadership of President Botha, who ensured that the committee met on a regular basis. The SSC's rising fortunes were related to the perceived threat of "total onslaught" and the necessity of coordinating a response that included domestic and international components (Barber and Barratt 1990, 252). The SSC also served as an important arena of bureaucratic debates over foreign policy and in this sense offered insights into the evolving impact of the various foreign affairs bureaucracies. One of the most noteworthy trends was the gradual deterioration throughout the 1970s and

the 1980s in the preeminence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in favor of the rising influence and power of the Ministry of Defense and the intelligence services (Geldenhuys 1984, 107–158). As was the case with the SSC, the rising fortunes of the defense and intelligence services were directly related to the perceived necessity of countering greater levels of internal insurrection and externally based guerrilla activities.

In this regard, it should come as no surprise that an authoritarian regime would favor military over diplomatic options. Indeed, the fact that many diplomats within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs favored a more "enlightened" foreign-policy approach did not endear them to a national elite intent on vigorously implementing the total national strategy (Barber and Barratt 1990, 213). Unfortunately, the enhanced bureaucratic power of the generals and intelligence officers effectively marginalized the diplomatic option. This contributed to an ever increasing spiral of violence between the apartheid regime and its opponents. Faced with a seemingly endless military operation and mounting international sanctions, however, the government finally opted for a negotiated settlement in September 1993. Under the agreement, free elections would be held in 1994, opening the door for the first time to majority rule in South Africa.

FOREIGN POLICY AFTER APARTHEID

South Africa's national elections in April 1994 serve as one of the most heralded examples of African democratic transition. Voters of all races cast ballots in free and fair elections that ushered in South Africa's first multiracial, multietnic, and multiparty democracy. Mandela, who was released after spending nearly twenty-eight years in prison under the apartheid system, was elected president. The party he represented, the ANC, won 63 percent of the popular vote, 252 of 400 seats in the National Assembly, and a majority share of seats in seven of the nine provincial legislatures.5 This so-called South African "miracle" was repeated five years later when, as promised, Mandela stepped down from power and his vice president, Thabo Mbeki, became president after free and fair elections.

Most observers have focused on the domestic impact of South Africa's transition to democracy, most notably the dismantling of its apartheid political system. This process, however, also entailed a complete reexamination and restructuring of South African foreign-policy practices and relationships. As Mandela (1993, 86) aptly explained in the influential U.S. journal Foreign Affairs several months before the 1994 elections, the charting of a new foreign policy for South Africa was a "key element in the

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4 Chris Heunis served as acting president (January–September 1989) during the transition from Botha to DeKlerk.

5 DeKlerk, the last president of the apartheid era, and his Afrikaner-based National Party won only 21 percent of the popular vote.
creation of a peaceful and prosperous country.” Toward this end, South African policymakers during the Mandela and Mbeki administrations pursued several strategies to adapt South African foreign policy not only to the realities of the post-apartheid era, but also to the demands of the post-Cold War era. This latter point cannot be overstated given the geopolitical vacuum created by the Soviet Union’s collapse in December 1991. Whereas the ideological concerns of the Cold War penetrated domestic politics throughout Africa after World War II, the demise of the world’s strongest communist power transformed the landscape of African politics in the 1990s and propelled dramatic shifts in many countries toward democratic and economic reforms. In this context, the strategies pursued by South African leaders, described in the following sections, were emulated by other countries in Africa and elsewhere that were undergoing historic democratic transitions.

THE RESTORATION OF CIVILIAN CONTROL

One of the most delicate tasks facing post-apartheid leaders was the restoration of civilian control over a security apparatus that had become all-powerful in the formulation of South African domestic and foreign policies. An agreement reached between the military leaders of the apartheid-era SADF and the military wing of the ANC prior to the general elections of 1994 outlined the creation of a civilian-managed Ministry of Defense, civilian control over the military budget, and civilian-based approval of senior promotions (Kruger and Bond 1995). Military officers during the apartheid era had been responsible for actions deemed illegal under domestic and international law. In response, the constitution stipulated that all security forces “must teach and require their members to act in accordance with the constitution and the law, including customary international law and international agreements binding on the Republic.”

The process of demilitarization also included profound changes in military doctrine (see Cilliers and Heinecken 2000). As opposed to the apartheid-era practice of launching counterinsurgency wars and retaliatory strikes against neighboring countries, current military doctrine emphasizes the overriding importance of national self-defense. In this respect, the South African military will be deployed beyond the country’s borders only under restrictive circumstances. These include multilateral peacekeeping operations, humanitarian relief missions, and, as witnessed by the South Africa–Botswana intervention in Lesotho in 1998, the restoration of democracy.

An important challenge confronting Mandela was the necessity of integrating previously opposed military forces into the newly created South African National Defense Force (SANDF). These included 85,000 largely white SADF soldiers, 30,000 predominately black ANC forces from Umkhonto we Sizwe, 6,000 guerrilla fighters from the Azanian People’s Liberation Army, and 7,000 soldiers from four black homelands (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei) that were granted independence by the former apartheid regime but were never recognized by other countries (Crawford 1995). An important reason for the success of this effort was the decision by Defense Minister Joe Modise to maintain an oversized defense force of at least 70,000 soldiers with the intention of gradually reducing this force over time through attrition. As noted by Mbeki (quoted in Crawford 1995, 101), “We could hardly take 30,000 combatants from the ANC and throw them on the streets.” Similar to their counterparts from other portions of the armed forces, continued Mbeki, these guerrilla fighters were “proud of their role” in the struggle to create a multiracial and democratic South Africa and understandably “wanted to keep their jobs in an economy where unemployment is high.”

RESTUCTURING THE FOREIGN-POLICY ESTABLISHMENT

A second strategy to adapt South African foreign policy to the new era was the restructuring of the foreign-policy establishment. As detailed later, the 1996 constitution clearly established the roles to be played by a wide variety of institutional actors. The creation and consolidation of democratic practices encouraged input from a wide variety of nonstate actors as well. In short, as South Africa became more democratic, so did its foreign policy.

One of the most profound examples of institutional change involved around the restructuring of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure that it assumed a leading role in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy (Landsberg, le Pere, and van Nieuwkerk 1995). An important step in this process was the creation of a new diplomatic agency—the Department of Foreign Affairs—that would integrate diplomats from the foreign service of the former apartheid regime, the ANC’s Department of International Affairs, and the foreign ministries of the four homelands (Mills 1997, 21). This restructuring process prompted heated interagency debates because the Department of Foreign Affairs was the only bureaucracy allowed by the Public Service Commission to expand substantially, which it did by nearly 10 percent in 1995 alone. However, as demonstrated by simply one indicator—the growth of South African diplomatic representation abroad from twenty-five foreign embassies in 1985 to forty-three in 1995—South Africa’s emergence from the shadows

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6The 1996 constitution replaced the “transitional” constitution of 1993, which in turn replaced the apartheid-era constitution of 1983.
of its “diplomacy of isolation” demanded an enlarged diplomatic corps capable of responding to new foreign-policy challenges and opportunities.7

A LEADING ROLE IN THE “AFRICAN RENAISSANCE”

An emphasis on South Africa’s unique position as the leader of the “African renaissance” constitutes a third important component of the country’s foreign-policy adaptation to the new era. This renaissance refers to the strengthening of democratic practices and economic liberalization that has occurred across Africa since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. South Africa’s leading role was designed to emphasize the centrality of Africa in its foreign policy. Further, it underscored the importance of South Africa as the embodiment of Africa’s future political and economic potential. Finally, it highlighted the critical role of South Africa as an intermediary between the African continent and leading foreign powers in other regions of the world (Crouzel 2000). Interestingly enough, the African renaissance, arguably one of the most cited and debated themes in African politics at the beginning of the new millennium, was initially popularized due to repeated usage by then Vice President Mbeki (Vale and Maseko 1998). It has since emerged as the defining foreign-policy concept of his presidential administration.

Mbeki’s strong attachment to the concept of the African renaissance reflects several classic African foreign-policy concerns that have become integral to South African foreign policy.8 Among the most important of these is the promotion of regional integration and development, as witnessed by South Africa’s membership and leadership role in the Southern African Development Community (SADC; formerly SADCC).9 Also viewed as crucial is the government’s unequivocal support for nuclear nonproliferation. This position was vividly demonstrated by South Africa’s dismantling of a nuclear weapons program that successfully tested a nuclear device during the apartheid era. Mandela punctuated this point by playing a crucial role in convincing other developing countries to accept an indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Another component of Pretoria’s role in the African renaissance relates to its heightened sensitivity to the concepts of territorial integrity and state sovereignty. This was most poignantly symbolized by Mandela’s impassioned rejection of U.S. demands that South Africa avoid diplomatic contact with Libya and Cuba, both of which were designated as “rogue states” (later as “states of concern”) by the Clinton administration. South Africa also emerged as an ardent supporter of the peaceful resolution of conflicts, a position made clear by Mandela’s willingness to serve as a third-party mediator in an attempt to resolve ethnic conflict in Burundi.

South Africa’s interpretation of the African renaissance is consistent with several new themes in African foreign policy that are accepted to varying degrees throughout the continent. A commitment to the promotion of democracy and human rights has gathered strength throughout Africa since the Cold War’s end. Such a commitment reflects the emergence of democratic governments in Latin America and other regions that were formerly ruled by military dictators. Although many democratic transitions have been disrupted in recent years amid domestic turmoil, the global trend toward democratic governance is inescapable.

Nonetheless, South Africa’s support for democratization makes even some elected African leaders uneasy due to its inevitable clash with the cherished principle of sovereignty (see Landsberg 2000). In the case of South Africa, the Mandela administration’s joint undertaking with Botswana of a 1998 military intervention in Lesotho to restore democratic rule suggests an expansive interpretation of what means can be employed to promote democratic values and human rights. This interpretation, of course, assumed global proportions in the 1990s as the UN approved dozens of missions to preserve democratic transitions throughout the world. These missions often included the deployment of peacekeeping forces to separate warring factions and to allow elected governments the time necessary to implement political reforms.

A willingness to adopt the liberal economic model of free trade and investment has also gathered strength in post–Cold War Africa and has been especially invoked by the technocratically minded Mbeki administration (see Evans 1999). Although recognizing that domestic reconstruction and development constitutes the singular priority of South Africa’s population, the Mbeki administration, like its predecessor, has underscored the critical role of foreign trade and investment, not to mention foreign aid, in this process. Toward this end, the government’s close cooperation with South African businesses has yielded enormous success in developing regional markets and penetrating overseas markets. Once again, South Africa has taken advantage of a global trend in this regard as a record number of countries in the world have discarded statist economic strategies and have instead embraced export-led models of development. This has been a remarkable achievement in South Africa given the potentially contentious relationship between the post-apartheid regime and major corporations in South Africa, many of which are owned by whites and based in foreign countries.

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7 Statistics are drawn from a larger data-based research project directed by the author that seeks to explore trends in African diplomatic representation from the 1960s through 2000.

8 For an introduction to this rich literature and its foreign-policy themes, see Wright (1999).

9 The other SADC member countries are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
ADHERENCE TO THE "UNIVERSALITY" PRINCIPLE

A fourth adaptation strategy, adherence to the foreign-policy principle of "universality," is designed to bridge the foreign-policy gap between the apartheid and democratic eras. This principle underscores the willingness of South Africa to establish diplomatic relations with all countries of the world regardless of their domestic and foreign policies. In the Middle East, for example, Mandela and Mbeki sought to strengthen diplomatic links with Israel, historically an ally of the apartheid regime, while at the same time establishing and strengthening diplomatic ties with Libya and Iran, which were strong supporters of the ANC’s guerrilla struggle. In some cases, such as the ongoing diplomatic battle between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan as to which capital, Beijing or Taipei, is recognized as the official seat of the Chinese government, South Africa’s desire to maintain a two-China policy proved untenable. This led South Africa to choose Beijing, largely for economic reasons (Geldenhuys 1995).

The willingness of the Mandela and Mbeki administrations to choose economic self-interest over regime type in the case of China—Taiwan is a democracy and the PRC remains a dictatorship—has led to sharp critiques of South African foreign policy. This is most notable when one realizes that the ANC, during the period of guerrilla struggle, strongly denounced any government (including the United States) that emphasized economic self-interests in their refusal to impose sanctions against the apartheid regime. In this regard, there has been a tendency for South Africa to err on the side of maintaining diplomatic ties even with authoritarian regimes such as Fidel Castro’s Cuba, which strongly supported the ANC during its insurgency.

South Africa’s diplomatic ties with countries considered by U.S. leaders to be terrorist states (most notably Libya, Iran, and the Sudan) caused repeated diplomatic tensions with the Clinton administration. The tensions continued after Clinton’s departure in January 2001 and the coming to power of the much more strategically minded administration of President George W. Bush. South Africa’s policy, however, has been widely praised in other capitals as reflecting a more independent stance that is able to overcome pressure, and occasional intimidation, from the great powers. In this respect, South Africa has emerged as a role model for other emerging powers that wish to assert themselves in regional and global politics.

GROWING ACTIVISM IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

A final strategy for adapting South African foreign policy to the new era is a commitment to upholding and strengthening the norms and practices associated with the UN and its member agencies. This commitment also applies to a wide range of other intergovernmental organizations at the regional and global levels, whose numbers and responsibilities have increased substantially in recent years and have played a major role in fostering democratic transitions.

One of the most important objectives of the immediate post-apartheid era was to ensure that South African diplomats quickly reassured South Africa’s “rightful place” as both a member and a leader within the international community. Less than two months after Mandela took power in 1994, South Africa was admitted to the OAU, joined the Non-Aligned Movement, and was readmitted to the British Commonwealth of Nations. South Africa has especially embraced its proclaimed UN membership, joining the governing councils of several specialized agencies and organs such as the International Telecommunications Union.

South African diplomats consistently argue that their country’s historic role in the UN, of which South Africa was a founding member, and its current status as the embodiment of the African renaissance, make South Africa the ideal African candidate for a permanent seat on an enlarged UN Security Council. This campaign is not unlike those launched by other emerging powers covered in this volume, including Brazil, India, and Indonesia. South Africa’s potential African rivals for a permanent UN Security Council seat are dismissed as either undemocratic (Egypt), beset by internal conflict (the Democratic Republic of the Congo), or lacking sufficient economic resources (Nigeria).  

A MORE “DEMOCRATIC” FOREIGN POLICY

The study of the sources of African foreign policy traditionally has been dominated by three bodies of scholarship (Schraeder 2000). The first body of research, often referred to as the “big-man” theory of African foreign policy, emphasizes the overriding importance of the personal whims of authoritarian leaders to explain the formulation and conduct of African foreign policies (e.g., Chan 1992). A second body of scholarship focuses on the impact of the larger geopolitical setting of great-power competition, most notably the Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union (e.g., Weiss and Blight 1992). Finally, a third body of scholarship emphasizes the constraints imposed on African foreign policies by the continuation of “dependency” relationships between African states and their former colonial powers (e.g., Shaw and Okolo 1994). In essence, all three bodies of scholarship simplisticly imply that one has only to grasp the preferences either of African leaders or foreign powers in order to understand the key sources of African foreign policy.

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The primary argument of this chapter is that these explanations constitute at best exaggerations of more dynamic foreign-policy processes, especially in those cases, such as South Africa, that have made transitions to democratic forms of governance. Specifically, students of African foreign policy have neglected the simple but logical hypothesis that the process of democratization, typically examined in terms of its impact on domestic politics, should also foster the democratization of African foreign-policy institutions. The implication of this trend is that the process of democratization has favored the emergence and strengthening of a wide variety of state and nonstate actors, all of which are capable of shaping foreign policies. African democracies, including those newly established and in the process of consolidation, embody open political systems that, by their nature, permit wider involvement in the foreign-policy-making process.

In this respect, it is crucial to note the important role played by many actors in the formulation and conduct of South African foreign policy today. The constitution of 1996 clearly stipulated the overriding importance of the president in the formulation of South African foreign policy. This constitutional prerogative was further strengthened by what is often referred to as the “Mandela effect,” which relates to Mandela’s emergence from captivity into one of the most celebrated, admired, and charismatic figures of the twentieth century. Rather than seeking to punish his former jailers once he and the ANC won the 1994 elections, Mandela extended the olive branch to all ethnic and racial factions in South Africa. This surrounded the former guerrilla leader with an aura of near saintliness within the international community. It is precisely for this reason, lamented critics of the Mandela administration (see Mills 1997, 24), that South African foreign policy often followed Mandela’s public statements rather than the sometimes opposing contours of consensus opinion within the foreign-policy establishment.

It will be up to future historians to sort out the long-term impact of the “Mandela effect” within the foreign-policy realm. In any event, the election of the more technocratic and less charismatic Mbeki as president in 1999 heralded a greater “depersonalization” of South African foreign policy that is more in line with the 1996 constitution (Evans 1999). Having served as the foreign minister of the ANC during its years in exile, Mbeki is clearly familiar with the multitude of foreign-policy issues confronting post-apartheid South Africa. Unlike his predecessor, Mbeki is more open to compromise and more willing to rely on the expertise of specialists within the executive branch, most notably the Coordination and Cooperation Unit, a sort of “kitchen cabinet” directly answerable to Mbeki that is comprised of young and energetic, but initially inexperienced foreign-policy staffers.

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For a personal account of the Mandela story, see his autobiography (Mandela 1994).
branch of government plays an important oversight role that, although not as powerful as originally envisioned by ANC leaders and advocates of civil society, clearly goes beyond the foreign-policy prerogatives enjoyed by legislatures during the apartheid and pre-apartheid eras. The leading legislative actor within the foreign-policy realm is the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs. This committee holds well-attended hearings in which established tradition requires the appearance of executive branch officials to answer questions related to South African foreign policy. The Portfolio Committee has not hesitated to criticize executive branch policies. Most notable have been the policies fashioned by the Department of Foreign Affairs, despite the fact that both the presidency and the parliament are controlled by the ANC.

Within parliament, the Select Committee on Defense, modeled after a similar arm of the German Bundestag, is charged with making recommendations concerning the military's budget, organization, and policies. "Under the National Party and the previous Westminster parliamentary system, the Select Committee on Defense had proved little more than a rubber stamp for the executive," noted Jakkie Cilliers and Lindy Heinecken (2000, 252), two specialists of civil–military relations in South Africa. "Now, with its powers enshrined in the Constitution, Parliament has taken an active and vigorously independent role in monitoring defense relations and the military as a whole." The committee perceives itself as an "active participant" in all major decisions undertaken by the Ministry of Defense and has played a critical role in restoring civilian control over the South African military. It is precisely for this reason that the "relative power and influence" of civilian managers within the Ministry of Defense in the near future "will be comparable to that in most Western armed forces."

**GREATER INPUT FROM NONSTATE ACTORS**

A wide variety of nonstate actors also plays a significant role in the formulation of South African foreign policy. This pattern has emerged in other newly democratic countries, particularly those in Eastern Europe, and demonstrates how a more pluralistic government structure produces greater public involvement in foreign affairs. Importantly, nonstate actors are widely viewed as an essential pillar of civil society. As such, Western aid donors have broadened their efforts in recent years and have provided vast sums to political parties, labor unions, news organizations, and other nonstate actors whose influence is seen as vital to the consolidation of democratic rule.  

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12 The U.S. government's recent focus on supporting private groups associated with civil society in newly democratic countries, including South Africa, reflects a "learning curve" in its foreign aid programs. See Carothers (1999) for a detailed examination of the lessons learned by the U.S. government and other major aid donors since the Cold War.

Among these groups in South Africa, the ANC is particularly influential due to its status as the ruling party in both the executive branch and the parliament during the democratic era. The ANC's victory in two sets of legislative elections and the transition of power from the Mandela to the Mbeki administrations have even led some scholars (e.g., Giliomee 1998) to refer to South Africa as a "dominant-party system" in which the ANC will likely continue to rule for the foreseeable future. Yet the ANC's ideological stance on foreign-policy issues, and therefore its impact, has significantly changed since the party's inception in 1912 (Thomas 1996). At least three phases can be discerned (Evans 1999). The first phase (1912–1960) involved liberal support for international law and international organizations. The second phase (1960–1993) embraced the socialist ideals of international revolution and redistribution. Finally, the third and current phase (1993–present) calls for a more pragmatic, self-interested approach that emphasizes the importance of "geoconomics." This latter position is widely shared within the South African government and among business leaders. It is also endorsed by most northern industrialized countries and international organizations.

Mbeki's election reflected the strengthened position of adherents to the current pragmatic phase. Many ANC members in parliament, however, maintain strong attachments to the ideals of socialism, while many groups in the executive and legislative branches share the ideological leanings of liberal internationalism. The ideological differences between the ANC's adherents in the executive and the parliament partly explain the ongoing foreign-policy tensions between these two branches of government. Some have even argued that the contradictory nature of South African foreign policy (i.e., the primacy of geoconomics in some cases and the primacy of human rights concerns in others) is "in no small part attributable to the push/pull effects of this competing triad of theoretical perspectives and the lack of consensus the tensions between them have generated within the ranks of the ruling party" (Evans 1999, 623).

Not only do political parties play a key role in democratic governments; labor unions have also exerted strong influence in domestic and foreign policy. The South African labor movement, under the leadership of a nationwide umbrella group, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), is particularly important in this regard. Its influence derives in large part from the Congress's central role in the transition to the democratic era and its contribution to the electoral success of the ANC in national elections. Although principally focused on domestic priorities, such as the creation of a National Economic Forum and the passage of the Reconstruction and Development Program, COSATU's leadership has actively pursued a wide variety of foreign-policy initiatives, especially when supported by "fraternal" unions in neighboring countries.
It has been argued, for example, that pressures from COSATU played an important role in Mandela's decision to seek a restoration of the democratically elected government of Ntsu Mokhehle in Lesotho (Bischoff and Southall 1999, 175). The group's lobbying efforts were also critical in prompting Mandela to place pressure on King Mswati to oversee a return to democracy in Swaziland (Bischoff and Southall 1999, 176). In both cases, COSATU's actions were driven by a desire to lend support to trade unions that took the lead in calling for democratization in neighboring countries.

Finally, a wide variety of international actors has also served as an important source of South African foreign policy. South African leaders especially have been influenced by "role expectations" within the African continent and the wider international community. As aptly stated by Aziz Pahad, former deputy minister of foreign affairs, there exists a "tremendous expectation" from other capitals that South Africa will play a major role in shaping the world politics of the new millennium. In this regard, many African leaders expect South Africa to take the lead in promoting the most cherished aims of African foreign policy. The northern industrialized democracies, meanwhile, expect South Africa to continue to serve as a role model for economic and political reforms throughout the African continent. It therefore should come as no surprise that Mbeki has made the African renaissance and South Africa's unique place at the intersection of the African continent and the northern industrialized democracies the cornerstones of South African foreign policy.

The impact of economic factors in shaping foreign policy in post-apartheid South Africa cannot be overstated. Struggling to overcome the disparities of the apartheid era that included a 45-percent unemployment rate, largely within the nonwhite majority population, South Africa has aggressively sought foreign aid, trade, and investment. In 1995, the first full year of democratic transition after Mandela's election, South Africa received $386 million in Official Development Assistance from a wide variety of foreign governments (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 1996, 178). Industrialized countries, meanwhile, exported $27 billion in goods and services to South Africa (U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service 1997, 81). South Africa's leading economic partners, including the member-states of the European Union (most notably Germany and the United Kingdom) and the United States, thus have a material as well as normative interest in the consolidation of democratic rule in South Africa.

The link between political reform and economic development is clearly demonstrated by the explosion of foreign direct investment (FDI) that has been directed toward Africa's most dynamic emerging market. In just the first two years after apartheid was abolished, FDI inflows to South Africa increased dramatically from $29 billion to $43 billion (U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service 1997, 85). This surge in private investment was also due to the simple fact that wide-ranging sanctions were dropped after South Africa emerged as a "legitimate" actor in the international community. The recognition among South African leaders that foreign capital is crucial to internal reconstruction and development has made South Africa a firm proponent of the neoliberal model of development. This consensus, which rejects the once-heralded models of import substitution, trade protectionism, and government control of key industries, is only one of many surprising developments in South African foreign policy since the apartheid era.

TOWARD THE FUTURE

Several issues will continue to set the tone of debates over South African foreign policy in the future. The first is the degree to which the South African policy-making establishment should be focusing on foreign affairs as opposed to the serious domestic challenges confronting South Africa's nascent democracy (e.g., see Thompson 1999). The extraordinary domestic challenges inherited from the apartheid era include a 35-percent unemployment rate among the majority black population, which constitutes 75 percent of a total population of approximately 43 million people. Also of concern is the impoverished condition of the historically neglected black townships, in which 7.5 million citizens still lack access to running water and 3 million citizens lack adequate housing.

To these apartheid-era remnants one can add the more recent but related challenges of an AIDS pandemic that currently afflicts more than 4.2 million people and a dramatic rise in crime. The murder rate in South Africa, for example, is an astounding 58.5 killings per 100,000 South Africans, a rate nearly ten times higher than the U.S. rate of 6.3 murders per 100,000 Americans. In short, many South Africans who have yet to receive the material benefits of the democratic transition are increasingly prone to question the usefulness of spending limited national resources on costly foreign-policy initiatives when so much needs to be done at home to resolve the inequities of the apartheid era.

Even if a consensus is reached as to the proper balance between foreign and domestic policy priorities, the South African foreign-policy-making establishment remains in a process of flux that limits its effectiveness in foreign policy. Although the restructuring of the foreign-policy apparatus has been largely completed, the interaction both within and between the various branches of government remains unclear and often chaotic. For example, the balance of power between the executive branch and the parliament has yet to be clearly defined, especially as legislators increasingly balance their traditional focus on reconstruction and development with a greater interest in foreign affairs. Even within the executive branch,
interaction among the various foreign-affairs bureaucracies remains fluid as each seeks to master its area of expertise. In short, the process of making South African foreign policy remains a work in progress.

Not surprisingly, the lack of consistency within the foreign-policy-making process has fostered seemingly contradictory foreign-policy behavior. Critics particularly underscore the tension between South African rhetoric over the need to promote human rights and democracy and the more apolitical demands associated with the principle of universality, state sovereignty, and the pursuit of economic self-interests. Needless to say, all countries must contend with competing foreign-policy objectives. Few, if any, are successful in creating a hierarchy of goals in which the most important is rigidly and consistently pursued.

As noted earlier, Mandela’s decision to recognize Beijing over Taiwan served as one example of a wider and intensifying foreign-policy debate. Its primary concern is whether “universalism” and economic self-interests should serve as the guiding principles of South African foreign policy. Indeed, the unwillingness of both the Mandela and Mbeki administrations to be outspoken over the human rights violations of Castro’s Cuba and other supporters of the anti-apartheid struggle has prompted critics to charge that post-apartheid South Africa is guilty of doing exactly what it condemned others for doing during the apartheid era: turning a blind eye toward human rights violations in the name of promoting economic self-interests.

Regional relations will be of particular importance to South Africa’s emerging foreign-policy role. The ongoing civil war in neighboring Angola and heightened racial tensions in neighboring Zimbabwe serve as important daily reminders of the fragile nature of democratic reform in southern Africa and across the continent. Such conflicts not only hinder the prospects for further regional integration, one of the cornerstones of the regional initiatives undertaken by Mandela and Mbeki, but they also invariably affect South Africa itself as refugees and armed groups cross its international boundaries.

Like it or not, South African policymakers must respond to these problems. The role expectations associated with South Africa’s self-proclaimed status as a leader of the African renaissance have ensured such complications in its regional relations. In the case of the large-scale war that has engulfed the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), dubbed Africa’s “First World War” by many observers, South Africa’s appeals for a nonviolent resolution stand in sharp contrast to its direct military involvement in Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. Denunciations of South Africa’s approach to the Congo war reflect a high degree of regional hostility toward Pretoria that was once thought to be a by-product of South Africa’s hated apartheid system. In short, South Africa’s newfound status as a legitimate, post-apartheid foreign-policy actor has in many respects harmed its regional relationships as smaller, less-powerful neighbors seek to limit the influence of what in essence constitutes a regional superpower.

These cross-pressures in the regional security context raise fundamental questions as to what sort of balance should be struck in South Africa’s links with Africa and the wider international community. From the day of his inauguration, Mandela sought to set the tone of his and future administrations by stating that South Africa was, first and foremost, an African country with primary responsibilities to the African continent. The vast majority of South Africa’s economic and financial links, however, are with the major northern industrialized democracies. In this regard, South African leaders are quick to note the overriding importance of maintaining economic access to the industrialized world as the best means of promoting successful internal reconstruction and development.

The crucial and as yet unresolved questions are as follows: Should South Africa primarily focus on strengthening its links with the northern industrialized democracies? Or does cultural solidarity demand a greater focus on the African continent and other countries within the Southern Hemisphere? Although some would argue the necessity of simultaneously expanding and strengthening links in all directions, others rightfully claim that the rational use of limited resources requires some kind of geopolitical hierarchy. Only time will tell if South Africa emerges as the preeminent representative of African foreign-policy interests, a rising middle power that serves the interests of the northern industrialized democracies, or some combination of the two. In any event, a democratic South Africa will inevitably play a crucial role in shaping the destinies not only of its own people, but of those far beyond its borders.