INTERVENTION INTO THE 1990s

U.S. Foreign Policy in the Third World

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South Africa

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The challenge presented to U.S. foreign policy by the situation in South Africa continues to be a deep and difficult one. South Africa is unique in that, unlike most other Third World countries, it is self-sufficient in food production; has a strong industrially based economy; boasts a highly developed infrastructure in terms of transportation, energy, education, and social services; and was a founding member of both the League of Nations and the United Nations. Yet these attributes of development are illusory because access to the country’s economic wealth and political system historically has been highly skewed along racial lines under a system commonly known as apartheid. Whereas many black South Africans, especially those in the rural areas, suffer from acute poverty and malnutrition, nearly all whites are, at a minimum, relatively affluent in this racially segregated society. Moreover, despite the ongoing political dialogue at the beginning of 1992 between the Afrikaner government and the black majority that resulted in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) and the launching of the negotiating process leading to a new constitution, the fact that blacks still do not have the legal right to vote for national positions of power underscores the political side of the exclusionary equation.

The Afrikaner government’s systematic exclusion of the majority black population from reaping the economic and political benefits of South Africa led to increasing domestic instability and the estrangement of the regime both regionally and within the international system during the post–World War II period. The majority of sub-Saharan African countries since independence consistently condemned the South African state for its treatment of the majority of the population and contributed toward making apartheid a major issue in the international arena. In the case of the United States, a combination of factors—heightened polarization and instability within South Africa and the region as a whole, pressures from African countries, and a

*Gwendolen M. Carter, who died in February 1991 after a long illness, was the co-author (with R. Hunt Davis, Jr.) of this chapter in the book’s first edition. The present co-authors are deeply indebted to Gwen for the understanding and insights she provided on South African politics over her long career as a scholar. This chapter is dedicated to her memory.
highly vocal domestic antiapartheid movement—culminated in congressional passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. By adopting a variety of sanctions designed to force the dismantling of apartheid and the creation of a nonracial, democratic government, Congress in the 1986 legislation created a watershed in U.S.–South African relations.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE U.S.–SOUTH AFRICAN STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

U.S. policy in southern Africa historically has been relatively inert and passive on the issue of economic sanctions. One scholar, for example, has stated that “until the Carter administration, the United States took virtually no initiative in southern Africa, content at first to rely on the European imperial powers to maintain western supremacy there.” Of course, it should be kept in mind that much of the United States was still segregated into the 1960s (for example, the Selma, Alabama, march took place in 1965), and thus a racially stratified South Africa did not seem all that much out of step to U.S. policymakers. Furthermore, Washington’s principal ally, Great Britain, had an enormous economic stake in South Africa, which was a much more important concern to the United States than was apartheid.

A variety of perceived strategic interests in South Africa led U.S. policymakers to seek closer ties with the apartheid regime from 1948 to 1960. The State Department led the way, responding favorably at the end of 1948 to a South African request to upgrade each country’s respective diplomatic missions to embassy status and exchange ambassadors rather than ministers. Of primary interest to the State Department was South Africa’s unswerving political and diplomatic support for U.S. containment policies in both Europe and Asia. For example, not only was South Africa one of the first countries to send an aircrew for the U.S.-led Berlin airlift in 1949, but its leaders also provided support for the U.S.-led military effort in the Korean War. Actions such as these were strongly rewarded, as evidenced by the State Department’s handling of antiapartheid resolutions at the UN. Although the State Department supported the right of the UN General Assembly to “discuss” the issue of apartheid, U.S. representatives nonetheless were instructed to refuse to vote for specific resolutions. In a classic diplomatic balancing act, the State Department’s primary objectives were to curry the favor of antiapartheid critics while at the same time avoiding any actions that would strain U.S.–South African ties.

The Defense Department also lobbied for stronger U.S.–South African relations. In keeping with its primary bureaucratic mission of preparing for a global military conflict with the Soviet Union, the Defense Department argued that South Africa’s strategic location, excellent port facilities, and experienced military forces ensured both “offensive and defensive roles” for
that country in a major East-West military confrontation. As a result, military cooperation between the two countries took on many forms. In addition to routine exchange visits by ranking officers of both militaries, a 1951 military agreement authorized reimbursable U.S. military assistance under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act. Of even greater importance was routine access to South African ports, most notably the former British naval base at Simonstown. In exchange for this access, the Defense Department coordinated joint military maneuvers with the South African Navy. Finally, the Defense Department encouraged the sale of arms and, particularly, fighter aircraft to the South African Armed Forces. In 1952, for example, the United States agreed to sell over $112 million in arms to the South African military. The Joint Chiefs of Staff envisioned the fighters as being “immediately available for use in collective defense in the event of Communist aggression.”

The CIA constituted the third major proponent of closer U.S. ties with South Africa. Having begun under the Truman administration what one CIA officer described as a “long and cordial relationship” with the South African secret police, the CIA increasingly looked upon its South African counterpart as a natural ally in the global struggle against communist expansionism led by the Soviet Union. The primary reason for this outlook was the zealous anticommunist beliefs of the Afrikaner elite that equaled, if not surpassed, those of the most doctrinaire anticommunists within the U.S. government. For example, it is striking to note that the South African government adopted its Suppression of Communism Act at the same time that U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy was leading a domestic witch-hunt against suspected U.S. communists and “fellow travelers.” In the specific case of southern Africa, the CIA especially was interested in building up the counterintelligence capabilities of the South African security apparatus as a counterweight to potential revolutionary upheaval within the region. Indeed, as early as January 1949, the CIA was warning U.S. policymakers about the possibility for Soviet manipulation of African nationalism and the decolonization process to the detriment of U.S. interests on the African continent.

Nuclear cooperation under the auspices of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission constituted a final important element of the growing U.S.–South African security relationship. Because domestic reserves of uranium oxide (a crucial element in the development of nuclear devices) were insufficient to fuel the massive development of the U.S. nuclear arsenal during the 1950s, an agreement was signed with South Africa in November 1950. In return for U.S. scientific and technical collaboration as well as guarantees of any capital required to develop and expand production, the South African government agreed to provide the United States with its entire output of uranium oxide. The strategic importance of this link was underscored by U.S. purchases of over $1 billion worth of South African
uranium production from 1952 to 1966.\textsuperscript{7} As a result of this agreement, the national security bureaucracies began citing South Africa's willingness to accommodate the United States with respect to a vital strategic component of U.S.-Soviet nuclear rivalry as yet another rationale for strengthening U.S.-South African relations.

The virtually unquestioned nature of the growing U.S.-South African security relationship was not seriously challenged until 1960. On March 21 of that year, a large crowd of Africans (estimates of its size range from 3,000 to 20,000) gathered before the police station at Sharpeville to demonstrate against the pass laws. Nervous white police opened fire, killing 69 and wounding 180. A chain reaction of events spread throughout South Africa, ending with a declaration of a state of emergency and the outlawing of African political organizations.\textsuperscript{8} The Sharpeville incident drew U.S. attention to the problems of apartheid in a dramatic manner and led to a gradual hardening of policy toward South Africa. In 1963, for example, President John F. Kennedy declared his administration's intention to terminate the sale of military equipment to South Africa. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson ended the practice of U.S. warships calling at South African ports. Overall, though, the United States continued to adhere to a low-profile approach on South African issues—as well as for Africa as a whole—except when crises such as the Sharpeville incident brought African issues to the attention of the U.S. foreign-policy-making elite.

The administration of President Richard M. Nixon initiated a shift in policy toward South Africa, a shift that backed off from the cautious limits that previously had been placed on relations with that country. This change in policy was embodied in National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM 39), one of eighty-five reviews ordered by the new administration in 1969. NSSM 39 set forth five options for a future U.S. foreign policy toward the southern African region: (1) closer association with the white regimes of the region; (2) broader ties with both white-ruled and black-ruled countries in order to foster moderation; (3) lessening ties with the white states and strengthening those with black states; (4) severing ties with the white states and establishing closer relations with the black states; and (5) withdrawal from the southern African region. The administration opted for the second option—dubbed "tar baby" by the option's opponents in the Department of State who felt that closer relations with the whites would become a quagmire for the United States—which in turn led to a relaxation of the political isolation and economic restrictions that had been placed on South Africa and the other white-ruled states in the region (Angola, Mozambique, and Rhodesia).

The basic premise of the new policy was that "the whites are here to stay" and that constructive change could come only through them; blacks could not hope to gain political rights through violence—this would only serve to open up opportunities to communists. The new policy thus sought
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to increase communications with the white minority governments of the region in order to induce them to modify their racial and colonial policies. It also provided more substantial economic assistance to the independent black states of the region in order to increase U.S. influence with them. The mindset behind this new policy was clearly a globalist one, for the real key to the situation in southern Africa, as far as Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and other U.S. policymakers were concerned, was the communist threat posed by guerrilla insurrections supported by Moscow.

Events soon overtook the vital assumption of NSSM 39 that white rule would continue as a permanent feature of southern Africa. On April 25, 1974, a military coup d'état against the Marcello Caetano government in Portugal led to the demise of Portuguese colonial rule in Angola and Mozambique, facilitating the rise of black nationalist movements to power in both countries by 1975. Rather than accommodating the new political forces, however, Kissinger's fixation on the Soviet threat in the region resulted in U.S. covert intervention in Angola's 1975–1976 civil war, an action described by one author as one of "Washington's worst policy debacles" in Africa. The result was just the opposite of what had been intended; rather than stemming Soviet influence, action led instead to stepped-up Soviet aid to the self-proclaimed Marxist government in Angola and, ultimately, to the massive Cuban military presence that bedeviled Washington for years afterward. In turn, U.S. intervention also led to a congressional break with the administration in 1976 with the passage of the Clark Amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill, which prohibited all covert aid to any of the parties in Angola. It was not until April 1976 that Kissinger finally ventured into southern Africa and, in a speech in Lusaka, Zambia, promised a thorough reevaluation and basic revision of U.S. policy toward the region. Though there was a clear recognition that the situation had changed (some two years after the Portuguese coup, it might be added), the new policy varied little "beyond making the absolute minimum of concessions to African states (and critical Americans) who had to be kept in good humor."

The election of Jimmy Carter to the presidency in 1976 seemed to herald a considerable change in U.S. policy toward Africa in general and a hardening of opposition to apartheid in particular. Gone was the low-profile approach toward South Africa. The issue of apartheid quickly moved into the foreign policy spotlight with the appointment of civil rights activist Andrew Young as ambassador to the United Nations and the heavy stress the new administration placed on human rights. One of the first steps was to secure congressional support for repealing the Byrd Amendment, legislation that had permitted the United States to import essential minerals from minority-ruled Rhodesia (Zimbabwe since 1980). Repeal put the United States back in compliance with UN sanctions on Rhodesia. Carter also moved well beyond his two predecessors and called for majority rule not only for Rhodesia and
Namibia but also for South Africa itself. In a May 1977 meeting with Prime Minister John Vorster of South Africa, Vice President Walter F. Mondale reiterated the administration’s position on majority rule.

What on first appearance seemed to be a new direction in U.S. policy was revealed upon closer examination, however, to be a continuation of two of the mainstays of the Nixon-Ford years: opposition to the liberation movements and a search for moderate solutions. For example, although in the end refusing to recognize the April 20, 1979, elections in Rhodesia—which led to Bishop Abel Muzorewa becoming prime minister of a “new” Rhodesia-Zimbabwe—the Carter administration had been indecisive and ambiguous about the elections in the first place. Furthermore, in the previous year, the administration had strengthened the legitimacy of the Rhodesian government when it had acquiesced to the demand of twenty-seven U.S. senators that Prime Minister Ian Smith, Bishop Muzorewa, and several other leading white Rhodesians receive visas to visit the United States in order to generate support for their cause. What appeared to turn the administration away from looking at southern Africa on its own terms was the perceived increase of Soviet influence on the continent. In particular, the Angolan-based invasions of the Shaba province of Zaire in 1977 and 1978 and the massive Soviet and Cuban support of Ethiopia in its war with Somalia in late 1977 were critical events in this shift. As elsewhere on the continent, then, the seeming initial “success of the pro-Africa policy was merely apparent, never real, and it was soon eclipsed by the contrary influences of National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and his globalist approach over the regionalist approach of Young.” Yet, critical as one may be of the failure of the Carter administration to move more aggressively on the question of South Africa, nonetheless the administration had abandoned the pro-white tilt of its predecessors.

The pro-white tilt of Washington returned in full and renewed force with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and his appointment of Chester Crocker as assistant secretary of state for African affairs. Crocker was the theoretician behind the Reagan administration policy of “constructive engagement.” The central argument of this policy was that “purposeful, evolutionary change toward a nonracial system” was a genuine possibility in South Africa and that U.S. interests lay in fostering such change. Pressure clearly would be necessary, but there also should be “a clear Western readiness to recognize and support positive movement, and to engage credibly in addressing a complex agenda of change.” The policy made reaching an accommodation with the white rulers of South Africa the key for securing U.S. economic and security interests in the area. Within South Africa, the Reagan administration pointed to the 1984 constitution, which extended a limited franchise to Colored and Indian voters, as proof that its policy was working; outside South Africa, it viewed the 1984 Nkomati Accord between South Africa and Mozambique, which committed the two
countries to ending support of covert activities against each other, in a similar manner.

The true focus of the constructive engagement policy, however, was not the southern African region but the global arena. The key to policies directed by Crocker and his deputy, Frank Wisner, was their belief that Soviet military aggression in southern Africa would increase and, less convincing, that Cuban forces in Angola would be its focal point.\(^\text{14}\) As a result of its globalist orientation, the Reagan administration reverted to the military option in two respects: (1) by engineering revocation of the 1976 Clark Amendment; and (2) by securing congressional backing under the auspices of the Reagan Doctrine for arming guerrilla forces led by Jonas Savimbi—the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)—that were attempting to overthrow the pro-Soviet Angolan regime headed by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

**EXTENDED CRISIS AND PASSAGE OF THE 1986 COMPREHENSIVE ANTI-APARTHEID ACT**

The underlying assumptions of constructive engagement were called into question by the most severe domestic crisis in South African political history. On September 3, 1984, a series of protests broke out in several black townships over the South African government’s adoption of a tricameral parliament that extended limited political rights to Asians and Coloreds but continued to deny political franchise to the majority black population. Serving as a spark for the release of decades of pent-up hostility that to a lesser degree had surfaced at Sharpeville and in Soweto in earlier years, these protests turned into a popular rebellion that pitted blacks against the South African security and police forces over a period of two years. When the dust had settled, over 2,000 blacks had died and nearly 30,000 others had been detained for political reasons. Of particular concern to human-rights organizations was the detention of nearly 3,000 black children under the age of eighteen.\(^\text{15}\)

The brutality of the South African government’s response captured the attention of the world media and became a nightly staple of U.S. news broadcasts. Vivid footage of white police officers viciously attacking black protesters in black townships with whips and dogs offered a strong indictment of the horrors of apartheid and the shallowness of reforms undertaken by the Afrikaner government. Yet, in a hearing convened by the Senate Subcommittee on Africa less than three weeks after the outbreak of violence, Crocker stressed that it was still “premature” to dismiss the “new willingness” of the Afrikaner government to “support the concept of reform.”\(^\text{16}\) Capturing the mood of several congresspersons who had decided in 1981 to “keep quiet” and give Crocker “a chance to show what could be done
with constructive engagement,” Senator Paul Tsongas strongly criticized Crocker’s continued support for a failed policy. “I really regret that in the 4 years and the opportunity that was had, that nothing has happened,” explained Tsongas. “I think ultimately there is a moral responsibility to look back at one’s stewardship and say, we made a difference, and the fact is, there has not been a difference.”

This clash between Crocker and Tsongas marked a turning point in the domestic debate over the proper course of U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa. As violence in South Africa continued to mount, apartheid became a domestic political issue for U.S. citizens increasingly prone to draw parallels between the legitimacy of the struggle by blacks in South Africa and the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s. In the absence of White House concern and given the arguments emanating from the executive branch that called for continuation of the status quo, rising popular demands for the United States to “do something” slowly captured the attention of vote-conscious members of Congress who previously had ignored the issue of apartheid. In short, the extended violence in South Africa served as a spark for the pro-sanctions viewpoint within the policymaking establishment in which Congress increasingly would assume the initiative in altering the direction of U.S.–South African relations.

The opening salvo of growing domestic concern over the violence in South Africa was launched by TransAfrica and its activist executive director Randall Robinson, who on November 21, 1984, staged a peaceful sit-in at the South African embassy in Washington, D.C., that led to his arrest. Accompanied by other notable African Americans, such as Walter Fauntroy, the District of Columbia’s delegate to the House of Representatives, and Mary Frances Berry, an outspoken member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, this act captured the imagination of antiapartheid activists and led to the creation of the Free South Africa Movement, an umbrella organization of antiapartheid groups seeking to impose sanctions against South Africa. Rather than constituting a one-day media stunt, Robinson’s arrest was duplicated nearly 6,000 times as antiapartheid activists staged similar sit-ins at the South African embassy and consulates around the United States during the twenty-three months that followed. The significance of these acts was further strengthened by the involvement and arrest of eighteen prominent members of Congress, the most notable being Senator Lowell Weicker and Representative Patricia Schroeder.

Congress soon responded to growing popular demands for punitive actions against South Africa. On June 4, 1985, the House of Representatives passed a sanctions bill (HR-1460) by a vote of 295 to 127 that called for bans on new U.S. corporate investment in South Africa, U.S. bank loans to the South African government, the importation of Krugerrands, computer sales to the South African government, and U.S.–South African nuclear cooperation. The bill also included a clause that mandated consideration of
new sanctions within twelve months. Despite an unsuccessful filibuster attempt by Senator Helms, the Senate passed its version of sanctions legislation (S-995) on July 11 by a margin of 80 to 12. The Senate version, however, was much weaker than its House counterpart. It included a ban on bank loans to the South African government, restrictions on the export of computer and nuclear products, mandatory adherence of U.S. corporations in South Africa to the Sullivan Principles (a set of guidelines for U.S. corporations doing business in South Africa drawn up by the Reverend Leon Sullivan, a member of the General Motors board of directors), and consideration of new sanctions after a period of two years. A joint House-Senate conference committee on July 31 adopted the more limited Senate bill with a ban on the import of Kruggerands and consideration of new sanctions legislation within twelve months being the only measures included from HR-1460.

The prospect of congressional passage of economic sanctions ensured the end of the parochial control the State Department’s Africa Bureau wielded over U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa and placed the issue of apartheid squarely in the hands of the Reagan White House. In contemplating whether the administration could successfully veto the legislation and prevent a congressional override—the position favored by the State Department’s Africa Bureau, the Defense Department, and the CIA—President Reagan and his advisers were faced with the Afrikaner government’s “untimely” declaration of a state of emergency on July 25, 1985, and subsequent intensification of civil conflict in South Africa. Moreover, Republican senators, most notably Foreign Relations Committee Chairperson Richard Lugar, warned Reagan that unless some sanctions were adopted by the administration, there was a strong possibility that a White House veto would be overridden by both the House and the Senate.

Despite Reagan’s inclination against any punitive actions toward South Africa, political pragmatism required taking the advice of Senator Lugar. In a successful tactical move designed to preempt Senate passage of the compromise sanctions legislation (the House already had passed the bill), Reagan issued Executive Order 12532 on September 9, 1985, which included bans on U.S. government loans to the South African government and the sale of computers to South African security agencies, placed limited restrictions on U.S.-South African nuclear cooperation, and ordered an investigation into the legality of banning U.S. imports of Kruggerands. The biggest differences with the congressional bill were executive branch discretion as to when sanctions could be lifted and the omission of any clause requiring the automatic reconsideration of sanctions within a specific time.

The Reagan administration’s attempt at co-opting the legislative process might have been successful had it been matched by decreasing levels of civil conflict in South Africa. However, growing levels of black rebellion were met by even stronger acts of suppression by the South African government,
culminating in a second state of emergency being declared in June 1986 as part of a determination to crush all opposition. To make matters worse, on May 19, 1986, the South African government launched coordinated military strikes against suspected African National Congress (ANC) headquarters in Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In the eyes of proponents of sanctions within the U.S. Congress, the combination of South Africa’s internal and external policies completely discredited any arguments on the part of the Reagan administration that the Afrikaner elite was committed to reform.

The intensification of civil conflict in South Africa led to renewed congressional efforts in 1986 to pass antiapartheid sanctions legislation. A comprehensive sanctions bill (HR-4868) calling for a complete trade embargo and U.S. divestment of all economic holdings in South Africa passed by a voice vote in the House on June 12, 1986.22 After sharp debate over several pieces of legislation and amendments, the Senate on August 14 passed its version of economic sanctions (S-2701) by a vote of 84 to 14.23 Among the bill’s most significant elements were the incorporation of the major provisions of the 1985 Executive Order, a ban on private bank loans to the South African government, and a prohibition on new investment in South Africa. A joint House-Senate conference committee in August 1986 voted to accept without amendment S-2701 as the conference report. As a result, both the Senate and the House passed that same month what has become known as the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. In addition to the major provisions already noted, the act included a ban on products produced or marketed by South African parastatals; a ban on U.S. imports of South African uranium, steel, and textiles; the withdrawal of U.S. landing rights for South African Airways; and the denial of visas for all South African officials except embassy and UN personnel.

Passage of the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act once again placed the issue of sanctions squarely in the hands of the White House. Hoping to co-opt the legislative process as he effectively had done in 1985, Reagan predictably vetoed the sanctions bill and offered instead a milder version in the form of another Executive Order.24 Convinced that if he could only take his case to the U.S. electorate, they would understand the logic of what the administration sought to accomplish in southern Africa, Reagan in a July 22, 1986, policy address broadcast live on network television rejected the imposition of further sanctions as “immoral” and “utterly repugnant.”25 In the eyes of opponents of constructive engagement, as well as of those sympathetic to the president’s viewpoint, the halfhearted measures included in the speech and codified in the Executive Order were too little, too late. On September 29, 1985, the House voted 317 to 83 to override the President’s veto. Four days later, the Senate followed suit by a 78-21 margin. In one of the greatest foreign policy defeats of the Reagan administration, these two votes constituted the official death of the policy of constructive engagement.

The reasons for this dramatic setback in administration policy were
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basically fourfold. First, the rising electoral strength of African Americans was translated into increasingly effective political organizations capable of bringing pressure to bear on Congress. The primary vehicle for this growing electoral voice outside of Congress was TransAfrica, the political lobby that effectively organized the dramatic protests at the South African embassy beginning in 1984. Within the halls of Congress, not only had the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) grown in numbers (twenty-one members in 1986), but its members also had achieved greater seniority and positions of authority. It was precisely these leaders, such as Representatives Ronald Dellums and William H. Gray III, who were in the forefront of legislating sanctions against South Africa. A second reason for the setback in administration policy, which derived from the growing electoral strength of African Americans, was rising Republican concerns over the issue of race in U.S. foreign policy. This factor was especially important because it contributed to the divisiveness within the Republican Party in 1986 that was so crucial to the passage of sanctions legislation in the Republican-controlled Senate.

A third reason for the reversal of administration policy in South Africa was the steady growth of grassroots antiapartheid organizations. National leadership for hundreds of such groups was provided by the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) and its Washington counterpart, the Washington Committee on Africa (WCOA), the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). These groups, which had been growing slowly but steadily in strength since the 1970s, made slow but steady gains and increased significantly in influence after 1984. Extensive media coverage made the public more aware of the South African crisis. Indeed, by 1986, nineteen state governments, sixty-eight cities and counties, and 131 colleges and universities had adopted various types of restrictions that affected nearly $220 billion of institutional assets related to pension and endowment funds. In addition to promoting such divestment and disinvestment at the local and state levels, antiapartheid organizations provided invaluable organizational support when the sanctions movement became a national phenomenon in 1986. These groups cooperated with liberal congressional allies, particularly those on the House Subcommittee on Africa, to seek passage of antiapartheid legislation. Their contribution ranged from collecting data and providing witnesses crucial to congressional hearings to coordinating massive letter-writing campaigns to wavering congresspersons.

The fourth and most important factor contributing to passage of the 1986 sanctions legislation was the unfolding of what became perceived among the U.S. public as an extended crisis situation in South Africa. In the early stages of the crisis, President Reagan was able to hold the line on sanctions by issuing an Executive Order. However, as the violence in South Africa continued to intensify, U.S. policy toward South Africa increasingly
became a domestic political issue for the U.S. electorate. Specifically, rising popular demands for the U.S. government to "do something" to stop the unfolding tragedy in South Africa galvanized the antiapartheid activities of African American lobbying groups, Republican splinter groups, and grassroots antiapartheid organizations. These groups, in turn, placed increasing pressure on vote-conscious congresspersons who recognized the popular political backlash that would accompany defeat of some sort of sanctions package. In hearings devoted to the question of sanctions, House Subcommittee on Africa Chairperson Howard Wolpe dramatized the crucial relationship between events in South Africa and the U.S. policymaking process: "Why are we so concerned with the passage [of sanctions legislation] at this point? The reason [is], very simply, because of the dramatic—very dramatic, I want to underscore that—deterioration of developments in South Africa."28 The fact that these developments obviously were linked to the politicization of the apartheid issue within U.S. domestic politics was underscored by Republican Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole. "Let's face it, there's a lot of politics involved. . . . This has now become a civil rights issue."29

The override of Reagan's 1986 veto marked a historic turning point in U.S.–South African relations as Congress successfully reversed a policy strongly embraced by the executive branch. Although the resulting legislation was still too mild for numerous antiapartheid activists, passage of it was in sharp contrast to the historical U.S. tendency to rhetorically denounce South Africa's racial policies while simultaneously doing little to change the established status quo. The law now firmly matched U.S. words with actions. Most significant, perhaps, was that large numbers of Republicans—most notably in the Republican-controlled Senate—abandoned a popular president of their own party during an election year. As Senator Paul Simon, chairperson of the Senate Subcommittee on Africa, was to note: "Three years ago no one could have imagined that a Democratic House of Representatives and a Republican Senate would together repudiate the administration's policy, override a presidential veto, and forge a new direction for U.S. policy in South Africa." He continued: "Congress seized the mantle of leadership, took a moral stand, and rejected a policy that compromised our commitment to individual rights and equivocated on our moral stand against apartheid."30

THE SANCTIONS DEBATE IN A CHANGING REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The Bush administration entered office in February 1989 determined to avoid the bruising battles with Congress over South Africa so frequent during the Reagan years. For example, Secretary of State James A. Baker III indicated in
his confirmation hearings that the administration was seeking a bipartisan approach built on close consultation with Congress. “No South African policy,” explained Baker, “is going to work unless we’re unified, unless we can coordinate well between the legislative and executive branches.”

Bush sought to demonstrate his sympathy with the antiapartheid movement by personally meeting with South African activists and publicly expressing his abhorrence of apartheid. “Reagan never succeeded in communicating his sympathy with the victims of apartheid,” noted Herman Nickel, U.S. ambassador to South Africa from 1982 to 1986. “So the Congress doubted whether his heart was in the right place on the issue of racial justice generally and South Africa in particular.”

In this regard, the Bush administration won the cautious praise of influential congressional opponents of apartheid, such as Representative Howard Wolpe. “I am encouraged by what seems to be a much more sensitive public posture toward the South African regime and what seems to be more interest and emphasis on this critical question,” noted Wolpe. “But it remains to be seen,” he cautioned, “whether this will really be followed up with the kind of measures that will make it clear to the South African regime that, absent an abandonment of apartheid and the onset of a negotiating process, there will be fundamental costs to the United States–South African relationship.”

Despite the willingness of Bush and his senior advisers to demonstrate that their “hearts were in the right places,” U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa in the early months of the Bush administration differed little, if at all, from the later years of the Reagan administration. Because of the preoccupation with the dramatic sociopolitical changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, as well as the reunification of Germany and the future of the NATO alliance, U.S.–South African relations were relegated to the Africa specialists within the State Department. In congressional testimony strikingly reminiscent of Crocker’s policy of constructive engagement, newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman B. Cohen stressed that he perceived “new thinking” and a “new sense of realism” among the white Afrikaner elite. If supported by an active U.S. stance of “dialogue, negotiation and compromise,” explained Cohen, “a democratic solution may be achievable.”

Although willing to concede that economic sanctions had been successful in forcing the Afrikaner elite to consider negotiations with the black majority, Cohen nonetheless emphasized the State Department’s continuing opposition to further sanctions against South Africa. This stance also enjoyed broad support within both the CIA and the Defense Department.

Executive branch opposition to further sanctions against South Africa stood in sharp contrast to the sentiments of congressional antiapartheid activists. Led by the House Subcommittee on Africa and the CBC, activists continued to favor the tightening of economic sanctions. At the very least, these members of Congress hoped that the Bush administration would support the “multilateralization” of sanctions. Specifically, antiapartheid
activists were willing to cohere the administration's unwillingness to advance beyond the sanctions legislation "currently on the books" in exchange for making that legislation the basis of a U.S.-supported resolution within the UN Security Council—a step the Reagan administration was unwilling to take.

As demonstrated by South Africa's successful refinancing in October 1989 of a significant portion of its outstanding international loans, however, an ongoing congressional-executive standoff favored continuation of the status quo. In this case, antiapartheid activists sought White House intervention to prevent international banks from extending the grace period for nearly $8 billion in South African loans scheduled to fall due in June 1990. Congressional activists had hoped to precipitate a major financial crisis in South Africa similar to the one in 1985 when banks recalled nearly $14 billion in debt, the idea being to undermine apartheid further and force the Afrikaners to negotiate with the black opposition. Yet in the face of executive branch opposition and the inability of Congress to muster enough interest to force the issue, Washington stood on the sidelines as South Africa reached agreement with its creditors. "This action represents an enormous boost for the defenders of apartheid," explained a disgusted Wolpe. "At the time that pressure is being mounted to bring about negotiations, this action is taken that substantially reduces that pressure."36

Unable to force the executive branch to adopt more stringent economic sanctions, congressional activists from mid-1989 on were faced with a growing movement within the executive branch to repeal certain portions of the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act as a result of far-reaching changes in South Africa's political system. At the forefront of these political changes was Frederick W. de Klerk, the national chairperson of the ruling National party who in the September 1989 election emerged as the new president of South Africa. Adopting a reformist stance that in many respects paralleled the approach taken by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, de Klerk as early as June 1989 announced his intention to create a "new South Africa" in which the white minority would share power with the black majority.37 In order to demonstrate his sincerity in seeking implementation of some type of power-sharing agreement, President de Klerk in the months that followed initiated a series of political reforms that began with the September 1989 legalization of peaceful antigovernment protests. In what surely will be recorded as one of the most significant moments in South African history, President de Klerk four months later announced the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela, the world-renowned ANC leader who had spent nearly twenty-eight years in South African prisons.

The evolving political events in South Africa contributed to a significant change in the sanctions debate within the U.S. policymaking establishment, which broke down essentially into four major groups. The first group, comprising those portions of the policymaking establishment that had never
supported the imposition of economic sanctions—the State Department, the Defense Department, and the CIA—brought the idea of partially lifting some of those measures. One of the primary concerns of this group was that the growing polarization of South African politics could lead to the downfall of President de Klerk, a reformist leader who, like Gorbachev, was perceived as crucial to the reform process. Specifically, in order to forestall the rising electoral strength of right-wing forces in South Africa opposed to any changes in apartheid, this group argued that the judicious lifting of sanctions would strengthen the hand of President de Klerk. This viewpoint became increasingly debated after British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on February 21, 1990, announced her government’s intention unilaterally to lift a self-imposed ban on new investment in South Africa.38

The second group consisted of those congressional activists who favored holding the line on sanctions until it became clear that the reform process in South Africa was irreversible. In September 1989, for example, members of this group were questioning whether President de Klerk represented “real change.” Although he was perceived as much “smoother” than his predecessor and “better able to put a positive face on the tragedy of South Africa,” congressional activists cautioned that this did not ensure a “fundamental change” in the structures of apartheid.39 Even after a two-day fact-finding mission to South Africa in March 1990 in the aftermath of Mandela’s release from prison, congressional activists, though hopeful, remained cautious. Describing the period as a “rare window of opportunity” for the creation of a nonracial democracy, congressional activists nonetheless noted that there remained significant obstacles to a lasting negotiated settlement.40

In addition to those groups favoring the partial lifting and maintenance of existing sanctions legislation—the dominant perspectives within the U.S. policymaking establishment during 1990—two other groups constituted fringe elements. Although having sharply declined in numbers as a result of the evolution of political events in South Africa, a third group continued to call for the strengthening of sanctions against it. The most prominent supporters of such an approach were Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, and other grassroots antiapartheid organizations. The final group included those conservative members of Congress, such as Senator Helms, who favored the complete lifting of economic sanctions. Whereas the number of proponents of further sanctions declined because of recognition that President de Klerk deserved to “be given a chance,” proponents of completely lifting sanctions became isolated by the realization among some conservatives that the 1986 legislation did, in fact, contribute to political change in South Africa.

The primary issue in the growing congressional-executive sanctions debate was South African compliance with the legal requirements of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. According to Section 311 of the act, President Bush was authorized to suspend or modify any of the sanctions
measures if South Africa fulfilled the first and three out of the four remaining
conditions listed here:

1. The release of Nelson Mandela, as well as all other persons persecuted
   for their political beliefs or detained unduly without trial;
2. Repeal of the state of emergency and release of all detainees held
   under such a state of emergency;
3. Unban all democratic political parties and permit the free exercise by
   South Africans of all races of the right to form political parties,
   express political opinions, and otherwise participate in the political
   process;
4. Repeal of the Group Areas Act and Population Registration Act and
   institution of no other measures with the same purposes; and
5. Agree to enter into good faith negotiations with truly representative
   members of the black majority without preconditions.

An Executive Order repealing sanctions would take effect thirty days after
being issued unless Congress by a majority vote passed a joint resolution
overturning the president’s decision.

By June 1991, the reform process initiated by President de Klerk
(measured in terms of South African compliance with the preceding five
major conditions of the legislation) had reached the point that the White
House could seriously entertain the lifting of sanctions.41 First, the Afrikaner
government demonstrated its willingness to enter into good-faith negotiations
(condition 5) through ongoing talks with the black majority that had resolved
several thorny political issues; most notable was the ANC’s August 1990
agreement to suspend its guerrilla struggle in favor of peaceful
negotiations.42 A second requirement (condition 4) was met when the two
primary legal foundations of the apartheid system—the Group Areas Act and
the Population Registration Act—were repealed in June 1991.43 Third, all
previously banned political parties and organizations, most notable of them
the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP), were legalized
(condition 3) as of February 2, 1990.44 A fourth requirement (condition 2)
was met when, in the aftermath of similar actions in the Transvaal, Cape
Province, and the Orange Free State in June 1990, the state of emergency
was lifted in the remaining province of Natal in November 1990.45

The only really contested requirement (condition 1) revolved around the
U.S. demand for the release of all political prisoners. In August 1990, the
South African government agreed to the “phased release” of several categories
of such prisoners by April 1991 as well as the return of more than 20,000
political exiles. This agreement, of course, followed on the heels of
Mandela’s dramatic release in February 1990, which was preceded by the
release of seven prominent political prisoners in October 1989. A dispute
arose, however, over who exactly constituted a political prisoner. Despite the
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amnesty granted to hundreds of individuals detained without trial or jailed for their political beliefs, the South African government refused to release prisoners who had committed "violent" crimes, even if those crimes were politically motivated. According to the Human Rights Commission, a monitoring group based in South Africa, approximately 800 such political prisoners were being held as of July 1991 in violation of the August 1990 agreement.46 This interpretation was rejected by a State Department-sponsored fact-finding mission that concluded in July 1991 that all political prisoners jailed for nonviolent crimes—in essence an acceptance of the South African government’s definition—had been released.

The State Department’s certification of South African compliance with all five conditions of the 1986 antiapartheid legislation culminated a prorepeal trend within the national security bureaucracies that ultimately required an executive decision by the White House. Having never agreed with its advocates about the efficacy of the sanctions weapon in seeking an end to apartheid, President Bush on July 10, 1991, underscored the "irreversible" nature of political change in South Africa and announced the lifting of all punitive measures associated with the 1986 antiapartheid act.47 "Since coming to office in 1989," he explained, "President de Klerk has repealed the legislative pillars of apartheid and opened up the political arena to prepare the way for constitutional negotiations, and as I’ve said on several occasions, I really firmly believe that this progress is irreversible."48 As a result, bans were lifted on, among other things, the trade in various products, the provision of bank loans to the South African government, and new investments by U.S. companies.

The executive branch’s decision to lift sanctions was not greeted warmly by those portions of the policymaking establishment that had been in the forefront of the sanctions campaign throughout the 1980s. Members of the House Subcommittee on Africa and the CBC favored the continuation of sanctions until a new constitution guaranteeing the right to vote for South African blacks was in place, despite the fact that this was not one of the conditions of the 1986 legislation. For these critics, lifting sanctions before the attainment of some sort of power-sharing agreement only invited intransigence on the part of the minority white regime. "They will be removed, and it will be tragic," explained Representative Gray on the day Bush announced his decision to repeal sanctions. "If you lift them too soon, you lock in apartheid."49

The proponents of maintaining sanctions were severely hampered by the simple reality that South Africa largely had met the conditions originally laid down by Congress in 1986. As aptly noted by Representative Lugar, one of the original coauthors of the 1986 antiapartheid act who favored the lifting of sanctions, to change the conditions of the 1986 law to include some sort of power-sharing agreement was tantamount to changing the rules in the middle of a game.50 Moreover, despite the continued existence of a broad
constituency that at the very least wanted the Bush administration to hold off on immediately repealing sanctions, the lack of popular perceptions of an ongoing crisis in South Africa—indeed, the opposite was true—ensured that traditional ideological splits within Congress would hamper any efforts at achieving the number of votes necessary to stop the White House. “As long as there is continued, demonstrable progress in South Africa toward the removal of the obstacles,” conceded Representative Wolpe, one of the congressional leaders who felt that the Bush administration’s embrace of South Africa was premature, “I think Congress will adopt a wait-and-see attitude.”

The general movement toward reform in South Africa did not mean, however, that the Bush administration had a free hand in reestablishing the close U.S.–South African ties that existed before the mid-1970s. Despite such growing pressures within the executive branch, the apartheid coalition was sufficiently strong to maintain other forms of sanctions legislation unassociated with the 1986 antiapartheid act. In addition to a variety of legislation that will remain in place at the local, city, and state levels, continued restrictions at the federal level include legislation banning any exports to the South African military and police forces, as well as any form of intelligence sharing. Although Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Cohen indicated the possibility of seeking the prosecution of a “test case” in which local antiapartheid legislation failed to comply with new federal realities, this approach seemed highly unlikely given the continued political concerns of the antiapartheid movement. Whereas the lifting of sanctions in accordance with legislatively mandated conditions was one thing, to seek the reversal of other forms of legislation before actual constitutional changes in South Africa was quite another. It is for this reason, for example, that the State Department’s Africa Bureau sought to soften the potential domestic firestorm that could have accompanied the lifting of sanctions by ensuring that the decision was announced in consultation with Mandela in the aftermath of a major ANC conference during the first week of July 1990, at the same time giving notice of a doubling in the levels of U.S. assistance (from $40 million to $80 million) devoted to housing, economic development, and education programs for black South Africans.

TOWARD THE FUTURE

The United States long failed to recognize the legitimacy of African nationalism in South Africa, caught up as it was in a globalist approach to the region that shortsighted ly emphasized anticommunism over racial equality. Yet once the Afrikaner regime began seriously to negotiate with the African National Congress, Washington also had to accord the ANC greater
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status. In addition, the organization’s leader, Nelson Mandela, enjoys a high
degree of popularity and respect in the United States, as his June 1990 visit
so dramatically illustrated. The Bush administration duly recognized
Mandela’s status by inviting him to the White House, but it was Congress,
in keeping with the policy momentum it had established on South Africa,
that most enthusiastically received the ANC leader by inviting him to address
a joint session. Mandela thus became one of only four private citizens ever to
be accorded this honor.

On the surface the Bush administration has seemed to accept African
nationalism in South Africa, but in actuality it is far from doing so. No
longer driven by the exigencies of the Cold War, U.S. policy has focused on
maintaining the existing economic system in as intact a state as possible.
There are at least three components to this thrust. The first is to treat the
issue of apartheid as strictly political and more specifically as a matter of
eliminating racial discrimination. Thus, according to the State Department,
“The United States seeks the elimination of apartheid and the establish-
ment of a democratic nonracial South Africa through peaceful negotia-
tions between the government and credible black leaders.”53 Or, as President
Bush noted in his remarks following his repeal of sanctions: “Apartheid must
be eliminated, and we’ve worked with the nations of the world to bring an
end to this system of racial prejudice by every means possible.”54 By arguing
that de Klerk is making irreversible progress toward this goal, the United
States is also helping to restore the international legitimacy of the South
African government and promote the legitimacy of the current economic
system.

Second, U.S. policy has sought to open up the economic system to
greater black participation without proposing basic restructuring. One
example is the Assistance to Disadvantaged South Africans program, which
focuses on education, human rights, black private enterprise, labor union
training, and community development. Specifically, the program seeks “to
broaden understanding of the free market system and prepare black business
owners, managers, and employees for success in a postapartheid South
Africa.” Funding under the program has gone “to strengthen black business
associations” and to “training black women to become leaders in the
accounting and financial services field and providing credit to small
businesses.” Operated in conjunction with the African American Labor
Center, the program “has helped black unions develop skills in organizing,
collective bargaining, health and occupational safety, and grievance
procedures.”55

The third dimension of U.S. policy that seeks to check the growing
influence of African nationalism is the promotion of “credible black leaders”
(particularly Zulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi). For instance, in speaking to
reporters after lifting sanctions, President Bush placed the Zulu politician on
a par with de Klerk and Mandela: “I’ve been impressed with the commitment
by President de Klerk, by Nelson Mandela, by Chief Buthelezi, and many others to continue to build a constitutional democracy in South Africa.\textsuperscript{56} Even though the Bush administration knows that it cannot ignore Mandela and the forces of African nationalism that he represents, Buthelezi nonetheless is the "credible black leader" that the White House would most like to see emerge out of the negotiating process with the government. The reason is easy to discern. Nelson Mandela speaks of removing racial oppression in the economic sphere as well as in the political sphere: "As far as the economic policy is concerned, our sole concern is that the inequalities which are to be found in the economy should be addressed."

Continuing, he noted that "we are not looking at any particular model," although "we have mentioned state participation in certain specific areas of the economy, like mining, the financial institutions and monopoly industries."\textsuperscript{57} This is in sharp contrast to Buthelezi’s position: "We have been able to heed the lessons that Africa has taught us. Socialism, as it has been practised, hasn’t worked on this continent. With the best will in the world in some countries, it has failed miserably. The fact is that the free enterprise system remains the only system in which wealth can be generated in such a way as to provide the jobs and infrastructure necessary for growth and stability."\textsuperscript{58}

Events in South Africa continue as in the past to have a way of overtaking U.S. policy. The Bush administration had sought to ensure political continuity by promoting and assisting gradual reform, by strengthening the de Klerk government through lifting sanctions and other measures, and by helping build up Buthelezi and his Inkatha movement as a rival to Mandela and the ANC. Within less than a month of the lifting of U.S. sanctions, however, the "Inkathagate" scandal broke, with its revelations that South African police slush funds had been used to promote Inkatha activities and those of its trade union auxiliary. The effects of the affair were to undercut many of the hard-won political gains the government had garnered through its reform program, severely undermine the credibility of Buthelezi and Inkatha as a viable and independent alternative to the ANC, and advance significantly the standing of the ANC.\textsuperscript{59} Indeed, this shift in political fortunes no doubt contributed significantly to the formal opening of official negotiations on South Africa’s political future that got under way with the first meeting of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in December 1991.

The launching of CODESA provides the Bush administration with the opportunity to revamp U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa. The globalist element stemming from the Cold War context has vanished, because the opposing side has disintegrated. The ideology of promoting the free enterprise system, however, very much continues, as does the belief that the white minority deserves consideration over any other segment of the South African population. This tendency was reinforced by de Klerk’s
willingness to hold a referendum in March 1992 on the issue of reform in South Africa in which whites overwhelmingly voted in favor (68.7 percent) of negotiating an end to apartheid. There thus remain strong continuities in U.S. policy toward South Africa, a policy that still has not undergone a fundamental restructuring to accommodate fully the forces of African nationalism and to accept unambiguously the proposition that destroying apartheid means transforming the economy as well as the politics of that racially divided country.

Despite the fact that the Mandela government would most likely not be able to govern in the space (as it is currently) that the state government did, it is clear that the system of white minority rule is breaking down.

The current system of government was designed specifically to accommodate the interests of the white minority. Its central feature was the separation of white and black political spheres. The ANC has expressed its commitment to ending this system by calling for the dismantling of the apartheid apparatus and the implementation of a new constitution that guarantees equal rights for all South Africans. This new constitution would establish a democratic system of government that would provide a strong foundation for economic development and social progress.

In conclusion, the current system of government in South Africa is a product of the historical context and the political and economic conditions that have shaped its development. The ANC has demonstrated its commitment to ending this system and establishing a new and more just society based on the principles of democracy, equality, and social justice. The ANC's vision for the future of South Africa is one in which all citizens have equal rights and opportunities, and where the economy is transformed to meet the needs of all its people. The road ahead will not be easy, but with the support of the international community and the commitment of the South African people, it is possible to create a future that is truly prosperous and inclusive.