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## SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - TODAY AND TOMORROW

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SINCE ITS COLONISATION in the 17th century, South Africa has been part of the world system of political, economic and strategic relations – a permanent condition as the country can never revert to the situation of an isolated entity, disconnected from the rest of humanity.

Necessarily, international relations have a greater or lesser impact on the domestic situation of each country. Inevitably, therefore, decision makers intervene to try to determine the form and content of these relations. In however limited a fashion, decision makers also try to intervene to influence the international setting within which their country exists.

We refer to these issues to make the point that such interventions by the actors in the process of the transformation of our country into a non-racial democracy are and will continue to be an integral part of the struggle to define the nature of the new South Africa.

One of these actors is the African National Congress (ANC) and the constituency it represents. As such, the ANC has, since its formation, been involved in efforts to influence South Africa's international relations and the world context in which the country has had to operate and survive.

It is not the purpose of this article to trace the history of these efforts. What we have to do is to indicate something of the foreign policy objectives that the ANC would pursue in the context of its struggle for the transformation of South Africa into a united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist country.

A number of issues are critical in terms of the determination of what needs to be done to move South Africa from where it is today to where it should be tomorrow in the sphere of international relations.

The world relates to South Africa as the home of apartheid, the only other socio-political system which has, since the end of the Second World War, been categorised in international law as a crime against humanity. For this reason, the General Assembly of the United Nations has determined that it has a special responsibility towards the people of South Africa.

This responsibility entails the obligation of the international community to assist the people of South Africa to effect the transformations which will result in the suppression of this crime and the institution of a social order which will uphold the objectives contained in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations.

In the exercise of that responsibility, the international community has imposed various measures to isolate apartheid South Africa. A democratic South Africa will have to deal with the consequences of this 30 year reality, a process that will of necessity begin during the transitional period.

The obverse of this fact of isolation is that the ANC and the Democratic Movement have built a system of relations with the international community which has ensured the existence in almost all countries of the world of organised and highly motivated groups that are supported by civil society in general

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and whose *raison d'être* is to end the system of apartheid and to further the general good of all the people of South Africa.

This has resulted in the sensitisation of policy makers in many countries concerning the issue of apartheid and therefore South Africa. This has led to the integration of the objective of making a contribution to the process of ending apartheid in the policies and programmes of established political institutions and other organised social structures in such countries.

Another element in the reality that will help to govern the formation of foreign policy is that South Africa is one of the leading players in the world economy as a supplier of raw materials and precious metals. She also straddles the Cape sea route which is of some importance in terms of international shipping. In addition to this, South Africa is, of course, an African country. It is economically the most developed country on the continent; it has an infrastructure which facilitates relatively easy interaction with the developed economies in the rest of the world; and it is viewed by the international investor community as being of some importance both in itself and as a base from which to operate to establish intercourse with a good part of the African economies south of the Sahara.

The South African economy is itself linked to the economies of especially the countries of southern Africa in many ways. Its growth has depended, in part, on its ability to export capital, manufactured goods, food and services to these countries, maintain communication and transport links with them and import labour.

These relations are marked by the two elements of co-operation and conflict. The preceding paragraphs emphasise the element of co-operation, but inherent in this equation is the seed of conflict arising from the actuality of the vast imbalance in terms of the size and strength of the South African economy relative to the economies of the rest of the countries within the region of southern Africa.

The issue of conflict arises from the fact that in a *laissez-faire* situation in terms of regional relations, the fact of the relative strength of the South African economy would result in the retardation, if not the negation of the development of the rest of the countries of southern Africa.

Part of the reality of the situation in southern Africa has been conflict, expressed in political and strategic terms through the policy of aggression and destabilisation pursued by the South African regime from the moment its armed forces invaded Angola towards the end of 1975, immediately preceding the independence of that country.

A number of military-strategic factors are relevant to the actuality which we are trying to describe and from which a democratic South Africa will have to take off in its search for a foreign relations regime consonant with its stated objectives as a liberated country.

The basic theses at the core of the military doctrine which have instructed the behaviour of the South African Defence Force, predominantly the most significant armed contingent within the country, are:

- the need to maintain a preponderant military capability over the combined forces of the African countries which were perceived as a threat to the sur-



vival of apartheid South Africa;

- the need to maintain a "first strike" capability and to exercise this option should the need arise;
- the need to cultivate surrogate forces which could be used to undermine the all-round offensive capacity of the "adversary states";
- the need to secure the greatest possible independence in terms of the acquisition of the weapons of war by developing a domestic arms industry;
- the need to develop weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear and chemical weapons, or at least to have the capacity to pose a credible threat to perceived opponents so that they know that it is possible for South Africa to wage this kind of war;
- the need to build a system of international alliances within the zone of the South Atlantic so that the apartheid regime could call on these allies as need arises; (the supply of weapons to Morocco for its war against the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic was seen as a bridgehead into the rest of Africa which could be used to establish military links with other countries).

As a result of all these considerations, the independent states of southern Africa have themselves been obliged to spend scarce resources to give themselves a defence capability which would, at least, enable them to inflict losses on the South African Defence Force should it invade, as it did massively in the case of Angola.

Even countries that are further afield, such as Nigeria, had to take the military threat emanating from apartheid South Africa seriously. Part of the reason that Nigeria moved decisively to support the MPLA government in 1975-76 was that she was concerned at the threat that would confront her if the South African air force had been based in Angola in the aftermath of the successful occupation of that country by South Africa.

South Africa will achieve a transition to a non-racial democracy during a period when there is a general universal tendency towards the establishment of political systems whose features include multi-party democracy, respect for individual human rights and movement away from centrally planned economies. Movement in these directions has, of course, been most marked in the former socialist countries – the Soviet Union and Africa.

The general collapse of the socialist camp has also reinforced a tendency towards the disappearance of the Cold War and a departure from the conduct of international relations on the basis of a bi-polar world order dominated by the conflicting interests of the superpowers and the two military blocs, Nato and the Warsaw Pact, the latter which is also in the process of being phased out.

It seems inevitable that the "new world order" that is being spoken of cannot but have as one of its features the increased influence of the United States and its allies in world affairs. This would be based on both the relatively superior economic and military-strategic strength of this group of countries and the political influences they are able to exercise on the basis of this relatively superior strength.

Coming closer home, South Africa is of course very much part of the African continent. The transformation of South Africa into a non-racial democracy will emphasise this point, as it will end the pretence cultivated by various



white minority regimes that South Africa is "an outpost of the western World" on the African continent.

We make this point to say that the fate of a democratic South Africa is inextricably bound up with what happens in the rest of the continent. A large part of the rest of the world sees the African continent, despite the fact that it is made up of many independent countries, as being one zone or region. The result of this is that what happens elsewhere on the continent will inevitably affect South Africa, as perceptions of Africa have an impact on how the rest of the world relates to the continent and therefore the individual African countries.

The above are some of the factors that would have to be taken into account during the process of the formation of the foreign policy of a free South Africa. Such a process would, of course, be predicated on the pursuit of identifiable national interests, with the full understanding that this has to be balanced with the interests of other countries.

Inevitably, therefore, and proceeding from a position of acceptance of the notion of equality among nations, we have to write into the perspectives we pursue the critically important concept of mutually beneficial co-operation among the people's of the world.

It would be clear from what we have said so far that the foreign policy of the new South Africa will have to address a number of matters in the political, economic and military-strategic fields at the regional, continental and global levels. Broadly stated, the objective of foreign policy would be to help create the situation at all these levels in which South Africa would exist and develop as a democratic, non-racial, peaceful, non-aligned and prosperous country.

For this reason, South Africa would establish relations with all countries and join such international organisations as the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations. It would also continue as a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as well as seek membership of the Lomé Convention and the African Development Bank.

South Africa would also sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a token of its resolve and commitment to help create a world free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. In this context, it would seek to promote the objective of Africa and the Indian Ocean as nuclear free zones and areas that would also be free of foreign military forces and bases.

As part of the African continent, South Africa would also actively promote the objectives of democracy, peace, stability, development, mutually beneficial co-operation among the people of Africa as well as pan-African solidarity. In this context, South Africa would also seek membership of such regional organisations as the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) and the Preferential Trade Area for East and southern Africa (PTA).

Such membership would however have to be predicated on the elaboration of an agreement by all countries in the region which should ensure balanced regional development so that the inclusion of South Africa in these organisations does not impact adversely on the economies of other member countries. Apart from anything else, it would be in South Africa's own national interest



that the countries of the region should develop and that a situation is not created whereby resentment and hostility emerge and grow as a result of actual or perceived domination of these countries by a more powerful South Africa. The new South Africa would therefore have to move away from the positions asserted by the white minority regime that South Africa must be recognised as a regional power. South Africa will continue to maintain an open economy which can only grow and develop in a situation of contact with the world economy in all spheres including access to world capital as well as financial and trade markets.

As concerns technology in assisting in its process of growth, especially in the light of the urgent task of ending the disastrous racial consequences of the apartheid system, South Africa would also have to work to secure aid which would be channeled to the third world sector of South African society as well as seeking most favoured nation status with the developed countries of the world.

It seems obvious that the new South Africa would also have to reduce the size of its armed forces very sharply so that it ceases to constitute a threat to any other country. This would release resources for development both in South Africa and the other countries of the region. This development would help to emphasise the importance to South Africa of the role of both the OAU and the United Nations as international agencies charged, among other things, with the task of prevention of armed conflict among states and the promotion of a culture of resolution of disputes by peaceful means.

South Africa would therefore have to make its own contribution to help raise the level of effectiveness of these organisations, both to ensure the democratisation of the system of international relations and to enhance the prestige of these organisations so that they can play their role in terms of protecting the interests of the smaller countries.

South Africa would therefore have to be ready to participate in any processes leading to the restructuring of these organisations aimed at ensuring that they are able to carry out these functions.

At the end of the day, the basic task of South African foreign policy would be to ensure that our country and its people live with the rest of the world in conditions of peace, friendship and co-operation. During the course of world struggle against apartheid, millions of people were mobilised into what was in fact an international movement of friends of the people of South Africa. These millions must remain mobilised as part of the process of establishing relations from people to people and as a resource that will help us to generate the resources we need for reconstruction and for ending the pariah status of South Africa.