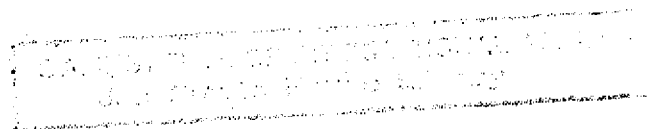


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THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA IN THE 1990s

by

Jim Broderick



THE SOUTH AFRICAN
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The United States and South Africa in the 1990s

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Jim Broderick

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Dedicated with love to Marie

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Of course, all errors are solely my own.

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Chapter 1: The United States and South Africa in the 1990s

Introduction: An Overview of the Post-Apartheid Relationship

The 1990s have seen some momentous changes in the structure of the international system which have presented decision-makers in the US and South Africa with a number of difficult policy issues and choices. Certainly within both states there is an ongoing debate concerned with finding an appropriate foreign policy stance in relation to these problems.

The US has been going through a period of profound re-evaluation of its policy position in the wake of the collapse of Soviet power. The euphoria of the immediate post-Gulf War period, when for a moment it seemed that President George Bush was presiding over the birth of a 'new world order', rapidly gave way to a sense of 'intellectual disarray' in US foreign policy. Indeed, in an article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1994, James Schlesinger observed:¹

With the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the shrinkage and transmutation of the Soviet threat, the United States lost the magnetic North for calibrating its foreign policy.

For Schlesinger, what has replaced this 'magnetic North' is a 'plethora' of foreign policy objectives, many of which are incompatible, which reveals that too little attention is being paid to the relationship between political ends and the means by which they are secured. Instead, for Schlesinger, US foreign policy is being defined and shaped by 'a capricious flow of events - rather than defined guideposts and a careful plan'.²

President Clinton, particularly during his first term in office, added fuel to such criticism by apparently focusing on the centrepieces of his domestic legislative agenda - welfare reform and budget deficit reduction - at the expense of foreign affairs. This problem was compounded by internecine divisions and an apparent ignorance of the 'folkways' of Washington on the part of the new President's foreign policy advisory staff.

Indeed, a series of early foreign policy blunders convinced many that the former Governor of Arkansas was ill-equipped to deal with the intricacies of the post-Cold War world. Yet, although disarray did perhaps characterise the first two or so years of the Administration, the evolution of a set of loosely defined principles which have subsequently given shape to the general pattern of US foreign relations, and the bilateral relationship in particular, can be discerned.

In November 1993, Tony Lake, then Special Advisor to the President for National Security Affairs, complained that the Clinton Administration 'has not had a single defining [foreign policy] issue against which it could define itself'. For Lake, the foreign policies of successive Cold War Administrations were conditioned by the need to contain the Soviet Union and prevent the spread of communism. But the Clinton Presidency is now 'being asked both to define the questions and to provide the answers' as the first truly post-Cold War US Administration.³

One 'answer' to the bewildering array of post-Cold War problems began to be publicly articulated in late 1993. In a series of policy statements, Clinton expressed a determination to place the democratisation of the international system at the heart of US foreign policy. Essentially, 'democratic enlargement' was to be achieved by the pursuit of four main policy objectives:

- the strengthening of existing market-based democracies in the international system;
- the fostering and consolidation of new democracies and market economies where possible;
- support for liberalisation programmes in non-democratic states; and
- the promotion of democracy as a means of addressing humanitarian concerns.⁴

Clinton's commitment to democratic enlargement as an underlying guide for the future course of US foreign relations was obviously influenced by the 'triumphalist' vision of liberal democracy associated in particular with the ideas of analysts such as Francis Fukuyama. From such a perspective, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism, coupled with the relative strength and prosperity of the Western democracies, is proof that the liberal democratic model is the most effective form of political organisation for generating wealth and stability, both in domestic and international contexts. Such assumptions thus imply that the post-Cold War period provides an opportunity to export the 'victorious ideology', in particular to key pivotal states, as this will assist regions beset by poverty and conflict to address their problems and, consequently, will guarantee the security of the international order. Hence democratic enlargement promised to provide what the Clinton administration had hitherto been lacking. For a President visibly struggling to come to terms with his foreign policy responsibilities, it represented a coherent blueprint for addressing complex international problems. Indeed, for Michael Cox, the 'standard view' that the

Clinton administration has little or no clear vision of the course of post-Cold War foreign policy is incorrect. Increasingly what has guided the Clinton regime, the first truly post-Cold War US administration, is a 'novel geo-economic synthesis'⁵ which shapes the course of US foreign relations.

Certainly, a recurrent theme emanating from the speeches and press releases of the Clinton White House is that the international system is becoming increasingly complex and interdependent while, at the same time, US economic power is in relative decline in the face of competition from Europe and the Pacific Rim. In the 1940s the US accounted for something in the order of 50% of world industrial output, but subsequently that figure has steadily fallen to current levels of around 16%. Consequently there has been a realisation that the traditional distinction between 'domestic' and 'international' politics has been eroded and that national economies can no longer be insulated from international economic flows. Thus the central task of post-Cold War US foreign policy will be to ensure that the US competes successfully with other actors in a regionalised global economy.

Clinton's *National Export Strategy*, published by the White House in 1993, is clearly a product of such thinking, and responds by explicitly linking domestic economic wellbeing with the liberalisation of the international economy. Promoting an international economic order structured according to liberal free-market principles will give US businesses an advantage in the coming geo-economic competition, as they already operate in a similarly structured local economy and will also maximise the number of market opportunities for American economic penetration. The combination of these factors will translate, it is hoped, into sustained economic prosperity and secure American jobs. In this sense, democratic enlargement is a conceptually coherent policy orientation, but the source of that consistency lies in a geo-economic, rather than geo-political perspective.

This geo-economic emphasis has prompted a reevaluation of various bilateral and regional relationships. The economic power of the Asia-Pacific region, led by the massive Japanese economy, is well recognised by Clinton, and led to an early visit to the region in 1993 to discuss the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) agreement. Europe received a Presidential visit in 1994, at which point it became clear that the level of importance attached to various bilateral relationships were also changing. The 'special relationship' with Britain, much vaunted during the Thatcher-Reagan years, cooled noticeably while Clinton sought to foster closer links with the economically vibrant Germany. By contrast the African continent had to wait until March 1998 to receive a visit from Clinton.

But Clinton's task was further complicated by a Congress which, for most of his tenure, has been in a particularly assertive mood. Indeed the vocal

expression of a generally conservative and isolationist agenda by the Republican right has at times threatened to wrest control of the foreign policy agenda away from the executive branch. One focus of this pressure has been to narrow the scope of US foreign commitments, particularly in terms of UN-legitimated multilateral operations. The era when the US was prepared to 'pay any price, bear any burden' to guarantee the security of the international order is now emphatically over.

A further focus of the Congress in the 1990s has been to cut federal spending drastically. In this battle foreign assistance has been a vulnerable target. In response Clinton has attempted to restructure foreign aid budgets in line with US trade objectives. The thrust of this reevaluation has been to reduce severely aid from Cold War levels and use the residual budget to promote democratisation in key states. The intent is to create stable local conditions which will attract foreign investment and this, in turn, will promote development. In a nutshell, this illustrates the logic of democratic enlargement. Those countries with high economic potential will benefit from American assistance because they represent new market opportunities for the private sector. States which have a low economic potential, or which lie outside important trading regions, face marginalisation.

South Africa has also undergone a period of re-evaluation, both as a result of the changes which have taken place in the international system and as a consequence of the profound transformation of its domestic political dispensation which occurred in the 1990s. Certainly the collapse of the Soviet Union also caused a loss of the ANC's 'magnetic North' in terms of its foreign policy orientation, and this created a number of problems for the Government of National Unity (GNU).

One result has been the steady shedding of the rhetoric of socialist internationalism from 1989 onwards.⁶ But what has replaced this policy orientation is a seeming competition of values which has resulted in a number of analysts criticising South African foreign policy for inconsistency and incoherence; much like the criticisms levelled against the early Clinton period. Clearly, then, the ANC government has also had to wrestle with the complexities of trying to adjust to the rise of a regionalised global economy. One reaction has been to establish a firm linkage between the seeking of markets abroad and the domestic imperatives of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), but this has led to a number of tensions in policy, particularly when trade concerns came into conflict with a second main element of South Africa's foreign relations - a commitment to human rights. Nowhere was this tension more plain than in the so-called 'two-Chinas' debate over whether to maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan or switch recognition to the People's Republic of China (PRC), despite Beijing's ongoing repression of democracy and human rights activism.

A further problem with the transformation to a liberal democratic state has been the keenly-felt fear that in embracing liberal tenets in its foreign relations South Africa will be perceived, particularly by its neighbours, as acting as a US proxy on the continent. Such a charge was levelled at the GNU's *apartheid* era predecessor, and it is one which many who participated in the liberation struggle find hard to swallow.

This concern is reinforced by the fact that for analysts such as Barry Buzan and Martin Shaw, the withdrawal of superpower rivalry from the developing world has a number of bleak implications for the states of the periphery. For Martin Shaw:⁷

Expectations of a definitively new [world] order have rested on the possibility of an overarching alliance of the USA, Europe (notably Germany) and Japan with the Soviet Union.

For Barry Buzan, with the end of the Cold War, and the irrelevance of Cold War alliance systems, the 'looming void' at the centre of the international security system will be filled by a 'security community among the major centres of capitalist powers'. This new security community will thus act 'as a major moderator of the new multipolar power structure'.⁸

But continuing asymmetries in dependence mean that much of the former third world will have little choice but to acquiesce in the formation of such a security community. Certainly for Buzan the periphery's role will be little more than to collaborate in its formation, given the absence of ideological alternatives to the path of liberal democracy following the collapse of Cold War competition.⁹

Yet such gloomy predictions should not obscure the view that the end of US-Soviet geo-political competition is also a period of great opportunity. Many of the worst conflicts on the African continent were fuelled and exacerbated by superpower involvement, and a number of corrupt and dictatorial regimes were propped up by both sides. Moreover, the demise of the ideological rivalry of the Cold War means that local powers, including South Africa in Southern Africa, will have greater freedom to manoeuvre.

Therefore, the key 'test' for South Africa in this changing geo-strategic environment is to identify, or formulate, a set of policy principles which will guide and give shape to its foreign relations.

Already one can see this process at work in the value-competition which is occurring between the desire to further trade relations to bolster domestic development and a commitment to promoting human rights in the

international system. Another example is South Africa's explicit determination to maintain a 'non-aligned' status and to participate in the workings of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which South Africa will chair from mid-1998.

Although the Non-Aligned Movement is experiencing its own problems in terms of post-Cold War adjustment, the depth of South African involvement in this body, and the interest in South-South co-operation in the post-Cold War era, is symptomatic of a search for a new 'identity' for post-apartheid South Africa, one which is neither 'Western' nor 'Socialist' but which is distinctly 'African'. In this regard, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki's increasing preoccupation with the concept of the 'African Renaissance' from the mid-1990s onwards is significant. While Mbeki's ideas have run into criticism both for a lack of coherent articulation and because of the fact that much of sub-Saharan Africa is in crisis rather than renewal, the initiative does illustrate an attempt by the anointed successor of Nelson Mandela to engage in a process of re-invention of South Africa's 'African' role.

Others have sought to explain apparent anomalies in South African foreign policy as a function of transition, arguing that during transition foreign policy will inevitably be 'pragmatic' or 'instrumental' rather than normative.¹⁰ Certainly the domestic political dynamics of South Africa's transition process have played a key role in the shaping of South Africa's external relations and, as Roger Southall notes, 'those who choose to speculate about South Africa's future international prospects are presently subject to a "double whammy"' in that one must concurrently take into account both the changes which have taken place in the international system and the dynamics of South Africa's domestic transition.

In terms of African regime change between 1990-1994, Bratton and Van de Walle identify at least four 'modal paths' of African transition which are linked to the nature of preexisting political institutions. Significantly, Bratton and Van de Walle characterise the South African transition as exceptional in that it was essentially a 'pacted' transition from the 'settler oligarchy' of the *ancien regime* and, as such, was 'distinctly non-African'.¹² What Bratton and Van de Walle mean here is that South Africa's transition differed from other sub-Saharan transitions in that:¹³

[other] regime transitions in Africa were rarely accompanied by bargaining or compromise; old regimes either survived largely intact or were abruptly displaced in sweeping opposition victories. This mode of regime transition offered few opportunities for participants to nurture the democratic art of give-and-take.

Hence, the advantage of the South African transition was that it imparted what might be called a 'habit' of political compromise to the new regime

which was born of the protracted negotiations which accompanied the dismantling of the *apartheid* dispensation of the previous government. In this sense various 'pacts' were created by opposing élites around particular issue-areas and, as the process of transition matured, helped bolster compromise solutions.

However, a number of analysts point out that this process of pact formation is inherently 'conservative', as the negotiations which give shape to the new political dispensation also promote élite 'convergence' through constant compromise.¹⁴ As such, the process of pact formation is regarded as being a fundamental determinate of successful transitions, but the reliance on compromise between interest groups introduces a bias into decision-making in which key interests are inevitably guaranteed.

The view that a 'successful' transition and consolidation of democracy in South Africa is profoundly influenced by the manufacturing of a conservative consensus has a number of implications for South Africa's foreign relations. Even in an established democracy, the foreign policy-making establishment is comparatively well-insulated from domestic political debate, and certainly during South Africa's pacted transition, foreign policy-makers were under less pressure from 'radical' or 'hardline' groupings within the polity than their colleagues who were, for example, responsible for domestic social policy. Indeed, it can be argued that during the early stages of transition, South Africa's foreign relations remained largely outside domestic political debate, as issues such as the future electoral system and economic redistribution and development occupied centre-stage.

As a result, it is suggested that the first half of the 1990s saw a process of pact-formation taking place between 'moderates', and that particular biases in that process were reinforced. This is a further factor which helps explain the process whereby the ANC gradually distanced itself from a commitment to socialist internationalism towards an acceptance of an essentially liberal conception of the course of its future foreign relations.

Furthermore, although South Africa's declared policy of 'universality' in its approach to trade relations has been a source of contention between the US and South Africa in that it allows for the maintenance of links with Pariah states, it can also be understood as a function of the need to further the interests of particular sections of the domestic economic constituency. If that constituency is regarded in terms of compromise between *status quo* and reformist interest groupings, then foreign policy continues, in large part, to be responsive both to RDP goals and the entrenched needs of South African capital.

The combination of these factors, operating and interacting at both the

domestic and international levels, reinforces the view that the foreign policy of the new South Africa is subject to a variety of forces of 'socialisation' which, despite the rhetoric of the ANC-led Government of National Unity, will militate against the formulation of a 'radical' foreign policy agenda. Creating a 'non-aligned', human-rights led, 'African' foreign policy agenda in the face of these powerful 'conservative' influences is a central challenge for the post-apartheid foreign affairs establishment.

Conclusions: Themes and Concerns of the Study

For many analysts and commentators the view that post-Cold War US foreign policy will increasingly be concerned with geo-economic imperatives means that the African continent will face further marginalisation.

Certainly Peter Schraeder observes that the end of the Cold War has brought with it a number of implications for the Africa policies of the United States. Not least is a debate within the Clinton administration as to what constitutes US interest in the region now that the threat of communism has receded. Schraeder identifies six main trends which, he argues, will intensify as we move further into the post-Cold War era:

1. reinforcement of the tendency to treat Africa as a 'back-burner' issue;
2. pressure to trim already reduced levels of economic and military aid;
3. continuing importance of the national security bureaucracies as the primary driving forces of US Africa policies;
4. rising perception of the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism;
5. great power involvement [co-operation] in the resolution of regional conflicts; and
6. rising debate over making multiparty democracy a precondition of closer US ties.¹⁵

The argument that Africa should be put on the 'back-burner' in the post-Cold War policy agenda of the United States is reinforced by the fact that the sub-Saharan region accounts for less than a mere 1% of world industrial output and less than 1% of total US exports.¹⁶

Hence, despite the fact that the South African economy dwarfs that of its Southern African neighbours (South Africa absorbs something in the order

of 51% of total US exports to the sub-Saharan region),¹⁷ its future priority in US calculations, not to mention those of other powerful trading blocs such as the European Union, is the subject of considerable pessimism.¹⁸

Furthermore, the 'normalisation' of political relations in the 1990s means that relations with South Africa will no longer be charged with the same emotional *gravitas* as was the case during the preceding decade. Certainly in terms of American public opinion South Africa can be regarded as something of a 'done deal' and, as Jack Spence has noted, it is now 'just another country'.¹⁹

Conversely, South African decision-makers are faced with a tremendously complex set of problems arising from managing the process of transition. David Jervis rightly entitles his analysis of the US - South African relationship in the 1990s *After the Euphoria*, and this captures much of the essence of the task facing the Government of National Unity.²⁰ Having achieved a profound political transformation and one which, from the perspective of the mid-1980s at least, was remarkable for its lack of violence, decision-makers are now faced with a more mundane but no less important task: that of reconstructing a society badly damaged by decades of apartheid government.

Such reconstruction, inevitably, resulted in a period of relative introspection, particularly during the early 1990s, as pressing domestic, social and political issues occupied the attention of the ANC-led government. However, as the decade moved beyond its midpoint it was suggested that a process of re-evaluation and, to an extent, of reinvention had also taken place in South Africa's foreign relations.

The rest of this study goes on to assess these themes in more detail. As the title of Chapter Two suggests, the early 1990s was a period in which US - South African relations were characterised by a number of difficulties associated with the need to adjust to the rapid pace of transformation from the *apartheid* dispensation. Both for its proponents and opponents, 'constructive engagement' had been the lens through which relations had been viewed for nearly ten years prior to 1990. From 1990 onwards, however, the assumptions which underpinned this policy were no longer relevant. What resulted, therefore, was something of a search by leaders in both states for a new basis of understanding.

Chapter Three assesses the maturation of that search following the 'founding election' of 1994. What is suggested here is that the relationship, despite a number of gloomy predictions and in the face of instances of strident disagreement, has undergone a period of consolidation. Clearly, areas of

disagreement remain and it is not suggested that the 'process of normalisation' is complete (if such 'processes ever are), but nevertheless there has been a steady fostering of governmental, non-governmental, trade and investment links throughout this period.

Chapter Four is a brief conclusion which speculates on the future of relations between these two very different democracies. It is suggested that one influence which will increasingly come to inform the course of South Africa's future relations is how the notion of 'African' identity, oft referred to by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad, is formulated. Although at present not well articulated, such a concept, and the values which underpin it, will be a crucial influence on South Africa's future behaviour, both in terms of its immediate neighbours and in wider international fora such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), NAM and, of course, the United Nations (UN). This, in turn, will be a central issue for the bilateral relationship between the US and South Africa.

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Chapter 2: A Period of Transition

Introduction

One cannot talk about US policy towards South Africa in the early 1990s without reference to the policies of the previous decade as, during the Bush period in particular, US policy was in large measure a 'playing out' of the implications of the 'constructive engagement' versus sanctions debate of the 1980s. Indeed, for Bush, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War became the key area of attention and, with the erosion and gradual withdrawal of Cold War competition on the African continent, sub-Saharan Africa underwent a return to back-burner status in terms of US policy calculations. This legacy, and the policies of the Bush period, form the substance of the first two sections of this chapter.

But the tendency to relegate South Africa was also reinforced by the dynamics of South Africa's transition away from the *apartheid* system of government. Of course, assigning a date to the beginning of such a transition is itself a question open to considerable debate. One could argue that the process began with the 1976 uprisings or the mass demonstrations of 1984, which certainly helped galvanise the international pro-sanctions movement. However, it is not until the Bush period that one begins to see a series of political decisions within South Africa, particularly the unbanning of the ANC, the release of Nelson Mandela and compliance with other requirements of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) measures, which clearly marked a 'crossing of the Rubicon' away from the defiant repression of the mid-1980s on the part of the regime in Pretoria.

Yet, what was also significant about this era was not only the beginning of the dismantling of *apartheid* but the form of the transition process itself. A concern with the structure of the 'new world order' might have preoccupied decision-makers in Washington, but this was matched in South Africa by an inward-looking mood as the parties to the transition began the intricate process of bargaining and negotiation. This period in US-South African relations has received comparatively little attention, coming as it did after the high drama of the sanctions-engagement debate. Nonetheless, the early 1990s, it is suggested, is an influential phase in the evolving post-*apartheid* relationship because of the 'pacted' nature of South Africa's transition process.

Constructive Engagement and Its Legacy

Associated with the policies of Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 1981 to 1988, 'constructive engagement' became the conceptual underpinning which drove US foreign policy throughout much of the decade. The rationale of constructive engagement was articulated by Crocker as early as 1980, particularly in an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled, 'South Africa: Strategy for Change'.¹ For Crocker, constructive engagement was a more nuanced policy approach than that of either Nixon or Carter and rested on a notion of 'dual conditionality'² which linked internal South African political reform to regional co-operation. In particular this meant drawing together both the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 (adopted in September 1978, this Resolution was concerned with the process of self-determination and statehood in Namibia) and the question of Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola. For Crocker this formulation addressed a number of concerns:³

It was, first, our attempt to mould a feasible and attractive settlement package. Linkage, at this first level, was an exercise in American strategy, motivated by the desire to advance American interests. But, at the second level, linkage was also an inherently logical formula, which addressed the underlying interests of the parties [involved] ... Had it not been a balanced and logical concept, ideologues and hard-liners in various camps would not have been so quick to pour cold water on it.

The regional focus of constructive engagement was thus a crucial element of Crocker's thinking. The 'linkage' of South Africa's internal dilemmas to a resolution of the civil wars in Namibia and Angola was a 'grand negotiation' strategy of ambitious proportions. But, as Crocker himself concedes, constructive engagement would fail if 'any major actor or variable was out of sync'.⁴

A further assumption which underpinned Crocker's diplomatic strategy was the belief that the US had comparatively few weapons in its armoury with which to influence South African domestic reform. According to Crocker, the US in the 1980s had comparatively little trade with the region, nor was South Africa particularly aid-dependent. Instead, for Crocker the source of US influence was indirect, and more symbolic than substantive. What influence could be achieved would be through US 'credibility' and 'expertise' as a mediator in regional disputes.⁵ Hence, for Crocker, the key to promoting internal political reform in South Africa was to create a security interdependency in the Southern African region.

Crocker based his judgement on the view that, although South African reform was the primary goal, that end could only be achieved by addressing the 'siege mentality' of the white minority regime in Pretoria and their claims that South African cross-border incursions were part of anti-

communist activism against the 'Marxist' regimes in Angola and Mozambique and ANC bases in the frontline states. However, the 1980s was also a period of opportunity for the US, as Crocker believed that the PW Botha regime in Pretoria was in fact a 'modernising autocracy'⁶ which contained within it elements that could be persuaded to move away from the structures of *apartheid* towards a more democratic dispensation.

A further advantage of constructive engagement for Crocker was that it did not require a radical departure from other core US foreign policy goals. For Crocker, the aims of constructive engagement were concomitant with internationalism and an activist diplomacy which lay at the heart of the United States' Cold War globalist stance. Thus, constructive engagement was also in convenient alignment with the key US policy goal of 'containment' (and its Reaganite variant - 'rollback') of Soviet-led communist global expansionism. The Angolan civil war, for example, was itself caught in the larger net of East-West conflict between capitalism and the spread of socialism. Pretoria, on the other hand, liked to cast South Africa as the only regime in the Southern African region which was both willing and able to stem the tide of 'total onslaught' of Marxist encroachment, as witnessed by the presence of Cuban troops in Angola in support of the MPLA regime. Hence one benefit of constructive engagement was that linking internal South African reform with the need to address white South African fears about regional security allowed the US administration, particularly in the early 1980s, to resist US domestic political pressure to isolate South Africa and to placate right-wing calls for continued support for the anti-communist Botha regime.

Moreover, constructive engagement, under the guise of placing domestic South African reform at the forefront of the US regional agenda, also served as a rationale for attempting to persuade states such as Angola to distance themselves from Cuba and Soviet Union. However, at the same time, the 'nuanced' approach to regional security allowed US policy-makers to make fine distinctions between 'real' Soviet/Cuban encroachment and instances where the 'Marxist' credentials of particular regimes were merely a smokescreen and, as Pauline Baker notes, this was to be an important justification of the different positions held simultaneously towards Angola and Mozambique.⁷

Initially the formulation of constructive engagement, the responsibility for which was largely left to a small Africa team within the State Department led by Crocker, took place in a context in which the Southern African region was a low priority in US calculations. Under the overall leadership of Secretaries of State Haig and Schultz, at least until the mid-1980s, this group functioned with a relatively high degree of autonomy in the conduct of US policy.

However, from 1984 onwards, Crocker's policies began to come under increasing attack. One of the problems of constructive engagement was that, in stressing the need to address the fears of the regime in Pretoria, the Reagan Administration was accused of both failing to understand and failing to support black political rights within South Africa. In part this was self-inflicted. As Pauline Baker notes:⁸

Unlike his predecessor, Reagan showed little interest in the *apartheid* issue until domestic political pressures forced him to take a public stand. When he did allude to South Africa it seemed clear that his sympathies were with the white government and were often based on inaccurate information.

Such problems were compounded by a lack of movement on the part of the Pretoria regime towards domestic political reform. As Paul Rich observes:⁹

The model of political 'reform' that was employed by the South African state in the early 1980s was based on a strategy of restructuring black society in order to sustain its counter-insurgency objectives. Yet these reforms were essentially within an *apartheid* framework and were seen by a number of critics as merely a modernisation of its basic tenets.

Also, during this period Pretoria was engaged in a series of cross-border incursions, seemingly aimed at destabilising South Africa's neighbours. Once again, signals emanating from the White House did little to allay such fears. According to Pauline Baker:¹⁰

President Reagan ... played a large part in shaping the public's perception of the administrations's policy towards South Africa ... Reagan, an ideological conservative, felt that the United States had to oppose communism and protect its strategic interests in the region. His remarks were invariably cast in this context.

Thus, the seeming failure of constructive engagement to either force internal change or stabilise the Southern African region, insensitive signalling on the part of the White House, and a growing US domestic political consensus combined to push the issue of *apartheid* to centre stage in the US political arena, which resulted in 1986 in a dramatic conflict between the Congress and the White House.

The passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA), over a Presidential veto, imposed a series of punitive sanctions measures against the Pretoria regime, including a termination of landing rights for South African Airways in the US, prohibition of most new investments in South Africa (except investment in 'black-owned' firms), prohibition of US Government loans except for housing and humanitarian purposes and a trade embargo on uranium, coal, iron, steel, textiles and sugar imports from

South Africa.¹¹ The passage of the Act represented a massive defeat for constructive engagement, and Crocker's bitterness at the victory of opposition forces within the US is clear from even a cursory glance at his retrospective *High Noon in Southern Africa*, published in 1992.

For Crocker, the 'sanctions versus constructive engagement' debate of 1985-86 was premised on a 'mythical dichotomy' wherein sanctions were somehow posited as an alternative policy stance the imposition of which underscored the 'failure' of constructive engagement. But Crocker observes:¹²

In reality it was a phoney choice. Sanctions had been incorporated in US policy since the voluntary arms embargo of 1962. There were a number of sanctions ... already built into long-standing US policy. Moreover, the dichotomy was false because sanctions are not a policy; they are one possible instrument of policy.

Instead of being based on the best way to influence South African reform, the debate was rather a reflection of American political dynamics, ranging from domestic political activism, spearheaded in particular by Randall Robinson's Transafrica grouping, to elements of the Democrat left and Republican Right in Congress, and opposition forces within the Reagan White House.¹³ Thus, according to Crocker, there was a 'quiet circling of predators' around the State Department Africa team which represented nothing less than a fundamental 'struggle over control of US policy toward South Africa'.¹⁴

Yet Crocker's dire assessment of the 'realities' of the sanctions debate is perhaps overstated. Certainly the decision was affected by multiple factors including American political debate and the vicious cycle of South African domestic political uprising followed by brutal repression, as well as the ineffectiveness of constructive engagement to help bring about lasting reform. Yet David Jervis asks, 'whether more politically-savvy efforts by the Reagan administration could have prevented the imposition of sanctions'.¹⁵ Reagan's officers might have argued the case that sanctions were harmful to the population groups they were intended to help; and they might have given more prominence to the fact that a number of influential South Africans were also opposed to such measures. For Jervis:¹⁶

The South African government certainly did not help its cause, but an administration as astute to domestic opinion as Reagan's could have done so. Perhaps its failure to do so is a testament to the continued importance of anti-communism in its thinking - in this case the context of Cubans in Angola - and to serious internal discord.

Furthermore, after the eventual passage of the CAAA in 1986 and the initiation of punitive economic sanctions by the US, South Africa once again slipped down the list of US policy priorities. While South Africa continued to be a pressing issue for lobby groups such as Transafrica, and disinvestment of US business in South Africa continued, the bipartisan consensus which pushed for sanctions began to dissolve. At the same time, there was also renewed pressure from the Republican right in respect of the question of US aid for UNITA. In 1985, 10 years after its inception, the Congressional ban on US aid to the parties involved in the Angolan conflict (the so-called 'Clark amendment') was repealed, and this opened the way for CIA Director William Casey and Republican Senator Jesse Helms (among others) to lobby for a decision to give assistance to the South-African backed UNITA militia led by Jonas Savimbi.¹⁷ In the spring of 1986 the administration began a programme of covert support for UNITA.

According to Crocker, underlying the debate in the mid-1980s was,¹⁸

... the question of how the Reagan Doctrine ought to be applied to Africa. The issue was fraught with theological significance. The answer would determine not only the immediate question of how and when we should help UNITA ... [but] ... Equally important, the answer would probably reflect the balance of forces between the battling Reaganites.

Thus, while the logic of the Reagan Doctrine might have been 'impeccable'¹⁹ its application to Africa was far more problematic. The structure of the Southern African security arrangement, as conceived by Crocker, did not fit into the simple ideological divisions of the Reagan Doctrine, and instead how the Doctrine should be applied in Africa became an occasion for internal 'turf battles' within the administration.²⁰

Despite these tensions Crocker nevertheless argues that US policy in the late 1980s was logical and consistent:²¹

... the basic US strategy did not change. We had become an indirect party to the Angolan civil war. But we also had a thoroughly logical two-track strategy of diplomacy backed by aid to UNITA.

Yet he goes on to note that Southern Africa policy was also a microcosm of the Iran-Contra affair, which dogged the administration from the end of 1986:²²

The protracted struggle over sanctions risked hobbling our diplomacy in an entire region, just as Iran-Contra made fools of us in the Middle East. Like Iran-Contra, the South Africa policy fiasco was scandalous. There was no discipline, no system, and no means of keeping apparently unauthorised personnel away from the vital machinery of decision-making.

Every major element of our Southern African policies ... was the object of one form of sabotage or another in the NSC, the domestic White House, the CIA, or the Defense Department. Foreign officials informed us of the treacherous conduct of our 'colleagues' in other agencies. But foreign officials were also beginning to wonder if anyone in the administration were in charge.

These seemingly disparate judgements are themselves a reflection of the very real tensions in US policy during the late 1980s and reveal a sense of confusion on the part of a policy 'professional' trying to conduct foreign relations in a particularly tumultuous period. His argument that covert assistance for UNITA accorded with the overall thrust of 'constructive engagement' does not bear close scrutiny.

The Transition Begins

In the aftermath of the sanctions debate in the mid-1980s, and notwithstanding the 'saga' of the aid to UNITA question, South Africa policy again became less salient in US policy calculations. This tendency was reinforced by the advent of the Iran-Contra scandal which broke in late 1986, and by the important changes taking place in the Soviet Union which followed the rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachev. For Pauline Baker:²³

The main concern in the post-CAAA period was to avoid a recurrence of public controversy. Republican Party strategists and President Reagan's White House advisers saw *apartheid* as a 'no-win' situation, a perception heightened by the approach of the 1988 presidential election campaign.

Certainly, South Africa was an issue which hardly figured in the campaign between Bush and Dukakis, although Crocker observes that Reagan and Bush at different times during the campaign spoke in 'glowing terms' on 'several occasions'²⁴ about the 'quadripartite' talks taking place between Angolan, Cuban, South African and American delegations throughout 1988. Pauline Baker notes that:²⁵

... each candidate distanced himself from his party's position on South Africa. In doing so they mirrored the ambivalence in US policy and the lack of public consensus. The sensitivity of race as a political issue in American politics - the central factor that makes South Africa an emotive foreign policy dilemma - seemed to have driven South Africa off the agenda of the 1988 presidential campaign.

Had Dukakis been successful in his electoral bid the consequences for South African policy could have been profound, particularly given the comparatively strong showing by Jesse Jackson in the Democrat primaries

and the influence of his opinion in the eventual shaping of the Democrat platform. But Bush's victory in large measure 'implied broad continuity of global policy'²⁶, even if South Africa no longer occupied the centrality it did during the mid-1980s.

The months following Bush's election saw something of a 'ripening' of the fruits of Crocker's diplomacy, as the parties to negotiations neared an agreement for the resolution of the Angolan-Namibian question. The culmination of this process was the signing in New York on 22 December 1988 of the tripartite accord, which contained the all-important agreed timetable for Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola. Indeed the resolution of the Angolan dispute fulfilled one of the two elements of Crocker's concept of dual conditionality which underlay the policy of constructive engagement, and, by implication provided the context for subsequent domestic transformation in South Africa.

On 22 April 1989, Crocker finally stepped down as Assistant Secretary of State, to be replaced by the more low-key Herman Cohen. But the Bush administration continued to reap the benefits of past South Africa policy and, in large measure, went along with its implications in a changing geo-strategic environment. On the one hand, a number of regional developments occurred which, for many, bore out Crocker's commitment to constructive engagement. On the other hand, a number of geo-political changes were taking place which occupied the major part of the foreign policy thinking of the regime, particularly the changing nature of relations with the Soviet Union and the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. Thus US interest in South Africa (and indeed the region) began to undergo a period of re-evaluation. As Cox points out,²⁷

... when there had been a perceived revolutionary threat to the region, the United States had no difficulty in justifying its role there ... But now the only substantial reasons for involvement were humanitarian or to promote democracy.

While an overt commitment to promoting democracy marked something of a departure from the Reagan years, this element of Bush's foreign policy was never well articulated, particularly in the light of a continuing unease in relations with black South African political activism. Hence not only did the Bush administration inherit the strengths of constructive engagement, but also some key weaknesses. Bush did seek to address the apparent 'insensitivity' of the Reagan years by meeting with anti-apartheid activists such as Albertina Sisulu at the White House in June 1989 and publicly asserting his opposition to apartheid.²⁸ But, in many ways, the policies of the Bush era kept faith with Crocker's original belief that white South African fears needed to be addressed and that the regime in Pretoria was

indeed a modernising autocracy; a view given added emphasis when Botha was succeeded by the government of FW de Klerk in August 1989. This was reflected by continuing ambivalence on the part of the administration towards the sanctions question, and by Bush's invitation to both Nelson Mandela and de Klerk to undertake separate visits to the United States in 1990. De Klerk's was the first such visit by a South African head of state for 40 years.

Nelson Mandela's visit to the US in June 1990 yielded mixed results. Mandela received, as elsewhere, a rapturous reception in the US, particularly among African-American constituencies, and was accorded the honour of being the first black person and only the third private citizen ever to address a joint session of Congress. However, his support for leaders of various 'pariah' states which had backed the liberation struggle, including Gaddafi and Castro, and his continued adherence to the concept of armed struggle to overthrow the *apartheid* regime was a cause for concern which led Bush to publicly 'call on all elements in South African society to renounce the use of violence in armed struggle' prior to his meeting with Nelson Mandela on 25 June 1990.²⁹ In response, Mandela sought to play down the question by asserting that as long as the South African government maintained its commitment to dialogue 'there can be no question of violence'.³⁰ Mandela's speech to the joint session of Congress on 26 June 1990 was also couched in conciliatory tones, and referred to a situation where the "inalienable" rights of equality, liberty and the pursuit of happiness must 'if necessary, be defended with the weapons of war'. This message was further diluted when Mandela restated his commitment to a 'negotiated determination of the mechanism which will draw up the new constitution'.³¹

For Paul Rich, the Mandela visit was 'a triumph of symbolism over substance'³² since, despite clear requests to Congress and President Bush to continue with sanctions, he did not manage to prevent the subsequent repeal of the most important CAAA measures the following April. However, while perhaps not adequately recognised as such at the time by observers, Mandela's visit was substantive in that it outlined a number of central themes which were powerfully to shape the course of South Africa's relations with the US for the rest of the 1990s.

Firstly, in restating his support for leaders such as Colonel Gaddafi and Fidel Castro, Mandela foreshadowed the principle of 'universality' in South Africa's foreign relations which was to become overtly articulated by the Government of National Unity (GNU) after 1994 and has become an increasing source of tension in bilateral relations. Thus Mandela's statements contained a veiled allusion to the fact that South African foreign policy

would be determined independently of the United States and not become an African outpost of 'Western' values.

Mandela also sought to address US fears concerning the perceived leftist economic agenda of the ANC, stressing instead that:³³

The ANC holds no ideological positions which dictate that it must adopt a policy of nationalisation. But the ANC also holds the view that there is no self-regulating mechanism within the South African economy which will, on its own, ensure growth with equity.

At the same time, we take it as given that the private sector is an engine of growth and development which is critical to the success of the mixed economy we hope to see in the future South Africa.

At the time of his visit, one suspects that such rhetoric would have been largely dismissed as an attempt at conciliation on the part of Mandela in his efforts to maintain US sanctions. However, as subsequent GNU economic policy bears out, Mandela was in fact articulating subsequent ANC economic thinking with a high degree of accuracy. What is also revealed here is the extent to which, during the early 1990s at least, Nelson Mandela maintained control over the direction of ANC foreign policy.

Certainly, economic policy formulated by the Government of National Unity (GNU) from 1994 onwards can be characterised as a social democratic variant of an essentially liberal economic blueprint. The RDP was constructed not in terms of a socialist model of development but in terms of stimulation of the private sector and the assumptions which underpin the Government's macroeconomic strategy: The Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) initiative, appears to accept that the South African economy will run on a mixed market basis. On the other hand, although the rand has been vulnerable to slippage, the feared massive flight of capital once exchange controls were relaxed in the mid 1990s has failed to materialise. Indeed, in terms of relations with the US, South Africa has attracted a steady (if not spectacular) inflow of capital. The combination of these factors thus reinforces the view that particular interests have been, if not guaranteed, then at least accorded some measure of protection while other, reformist, objectives have been sacrificed, at least in the short term.

In contrast, the de Klerk visit of September 1990 was intended to convince opinion in the US that the process of negotiation within South Africa would lead to lasting reform and to argue the case for the lifting of sanctions following South Africa's fulfilling of the conditions of the CAAA. The visit came on the heels of the announcement in August 1990 of a ceasefire between the ANC and the Pretoria regime. It also followed de Klerk's

successful visit in May to the countries of the EC, which resulted in the repeal of the EC ban on new investment in December 1990 and the lifting of other sanctions measures in April 1991.³⁴ To a large extent, de Klerk achieved both of his objectives in the United States, as President Bush came away from the September meeting with the view that: 'The move away from *Apartheid* towards a new political reality is indeed irreversible', and with the 'recognition' that 'President de Klerk is courageously trying to change things'.³⁵

The CAAA stipulated five conditions necessary for termination of the bill:³⁶

1. the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners;
2. the repeal of the state of emergency and all detainees;
3. the unbanning of political parties;
4. the repeal of the Group Areas and Population Registers Acts; and
5. agreement to enter into good faith negotiations with truly representative members of the black majority without preconditions.

With the repeal of the Group Areas and Population Registration Acts in June 1991, the administration came to the conclusion that South Africa had met these conditions and in July 1991 terminated a number of sanctions measures. Thus, despite Paul Rich's claim that, '[the] Bush administration had rather more leverage with de Klerk government than its predecessor, as Pretoria desperately sought allies ... to support its policies',³⁷ US policy essentially followed the logic of constructive engagement.

Indeed, the Bush administration, like its predecessor, was always ambivalent about the usage of sanctions against South Africa, and the reform measures instituted by de Klerk further reinforced the growing pro-repeal trend within the United States. Of course, the decision of June 1991 was not popular with the pro-sanctions lobby, who were reluctant to see a repeal of these measures prior to the establishment of a power-sharing arrangement within South Africa but, as Schraeder notes,³⁸

The proponents of sanctions were severely hampered by the simple reality that South Africa had largely met the conditions originally established by Congress in 1986.

Schraeder also notes that the period after 1990 saw a shift in focus of the South Africa debate:³⁹

Prior to 1990, the national security bureaucracies sought to 'hold the line' against congressional demands for stricter sanction against South Africa. In 1990, these roles, in a sense, had shifted as congressional activists became confronted with the necessity of 'holding the line' in the face of growing repeal measures emanating from the national security bureaucracies.

Of course, the end of sanctions did not signal a resumption, or a normalisation, of relations between the US and South Africa. But the ongoing process of reform and the fact that transition did not seem to threaten the outbreak of civil war did facilitate a careful, 'incremental' move towards closer relations.⁴⁰

Looking Past Each Other: Different Needs, Different Concerns

The 'incremental' nature of relations was further fuelled by the election of Clinton, a President for whom foreign policy, in his first two years of office, was secondary to perceived domestic needs within the United States. The concept of 'democratic enlargement' was both slow in evolving and fraught with early problems. Clinton's first application of the concept in Somalia in 1993 resulted in a humiliating withdrawal from a state left verging on chaos, and demonstrated the need for a nuanced understanding of local conditions as well as of the difficulties of trying to impose democracy using military means. Indeed, in such criticism one hears ironic echoes of the arguments of Chester Crocker. However, in July 1994, Clinton authorised a more successful intervention in Haiti to restore the ousted Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Soon after, the President refused to commit more than a token number of American troops to humanitarian operations in Rwanda following the outbreak of genocidal civil war.

The decisions of 1993 and 1994 reveal that the Somalian experience had rapidly engendered a far more circumspect approach to the grand goals of democratic enlargement, particularly as applied to the sub-Saharan continent. The proximity of Haiti, its weak armed forces and the limited scope of the problem facilitated the decision to intervene. The Rwandan crisis, on the other hand, was geographically distant and required a long-term commitment that could easily lead to entanglement in a complex ethnic conflict. As such, involvement in Rwanda was uncomfortably reminiscent of Somalia and incurred potential costs outweighing the humanitarian concerns which, less than a year before, had been declared central to democratic enlargement.

Further problems were illustrated by US relations with Nigeria. Clinton vocally criticised Nigeria's suppression of democracy and human rights activism, but did little of substance to promote democratic reform. In part,

this was a function of the fact that the President had relatively few weapons in his armoury. In particular, threatening to escalate economic pressure risked damaging an important oil-trading relationship with a major African state. In this case, humanitarian and economic concerns were mutually exclusive policy goals which resulted in near paralysis in the face of continuing suppression of opposition groupings within Nigeria. That this has been a problem which has dogged the Africa policies of the regime throughout the 1990s is illustrated by the fact that Clinton's five-nation African tour in March 1998 did not include a visit to the country which is the largest single exporter of oil to the United States.

However, this period also witnessed a profound re-evaluation of its policies on the part of the ANC, as it wrestled with the implications of the demise of the Soviet Union. According to Graham Evans:⁴¹

As the trend towards lifting sanctions grew after 1990, the ANC's formal commitment to a socialist and radical foreign policy became increasingly anachronistic. The organisation appeared to be out of step with a changing international order in which Western values of democracy and the market, multi-partyism, pluralism, human rights, tolerance and peaceful transition within a shared culture of negotiation, rapidly achieved the status of universal norms of behaviour.

Thus by 1991 the ANC was struggling with a 'crisis of identity'⁴² arising from the need to adapt the politics of the liberation struggle both to the changing international environment and to the intricacies of the domestic negotiations *vis-à-vis* South African reform. As was observed earlier, this period was characterised by a 'pacted' form of transition and it is significant that, when assessing the changes in ANC foreign policy positions, Graham Evans notes a distinct 'policy convergence' on the part of the ANC's Department of International Affairs with the so-called 'New Diplomacy' of the de Klerk era.⁴³

In part, this was a function of the fact that the de Klerk regime had reacted far more quickly to the changing post-Cold War environment and so had 'finessed' the foreign policy position of the ANC, which was still concerned with the maintenance of South Africa's diplomatic isolation and sanctions until a new democratic dispensation had been put into place.⁴⁴ However, this process of 're-invention' also reflects the nature of negotiations with the existing foreign affairs establishment within South Africa. Throughout the period between 1990 and 1994, the ANC's foreign policy specialists and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) were in close consultation, and hence it is no surprise that Evans should observe that:⁴⁵

By the time that the new South Africa was established, the ANC's Department of International Affairs, at the highest level at least, was working in close harness with the DFA.

The first articulation of the 'new thinking' of the ANC was outlined in *Ready to Govern* (published in May 1992). For Chris Alden, this statement on ANC policy guidelines is a 'fair, if somewhat spartan rendition of the organization's official position on its future foreign policy'.⁴⁶ But, for Evans: 'Unlike previous articulations it is neither 'idealist' nor overtly 'internationalist' in tone. It acknowledges acceptance of, and signifies a willingness to work within, the prevailing order'.⁴⁷

More developed, if similarly 'broad brushstroke' pictures, were painted in the ANC's 1993 foreign policy discussion paper *Foreign Policy in a New Democratic South Africa*, and in an article written by Nelson Mandela for *Foreign Affairs*, in December 1993.⁴⁸ Again, both of these pieces in particular seek to reaffirm the 'non-aligned' and 'African' character of South Africa's future foreign relations, but they also embrace the principles of the promotion of democracy, regard for international law and participation in international trade regimes.

That these principles (which can be seen largely as a development of the views expressed by Nelson Mandela during his 1990 visit to the US) were to function as the underpinning of South African foreign relations was restated in the post-election foreign policy discussion document, *Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa*.⁴⁹ In this document the new 'party of government' enunciated seven key principles which would guide the foreign policy of the GNU:⁵⁰

1. a belief in, and preoccupation with, human rights which extends beyond the political, embracing the economic, social and environmental;
2. a belief that just and lasting solutions to the problems of humankind can only come through the promotion of democracy worldwide;
3. a belief that justice and international law should guide the relations between states;
4. a belief that international peace is the goal to which all nations should strive. Where this breaks down, internationally agreed peaceful mechanisms to solve conflicts should be resorted to;
5. a belief that our foreign policy should reflect the interests of the continent of Africa;

6. a belief that South Africa's economic development depends on growing regional and international economic co-operation in an interdependent world; and
7. a belief that our foreign relations must mirror our deep commitment to the consolidation of a democratic South Africa.

Yet, with the exception of point five, this statement of policy principles appears remarkably similar to the declarations of the Clinton administration, and was to suffer similar problems and tensions, particularly in relation to the crises in Burundi and Rwanda, and President Mandela's virtual isolation in his calls for action against Nigeria following the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa in November 1995 and the ongoing suppression of Ogoni political activism. What is also revealed by reference to ANC policy statements during this period is a shift in emphasis of the 'radical' agenda away from the imperatives of socialist internationalism towards a concern with human rights as a leading element in the determination of national interest. Yet, throughout this period, there was simultaneously a growing recognition that: 'Economic issues stand at the very centre of international relations ... [and] ... that trade and foreign investment issues should be a cornerstone of our foreign policy'. Furthermore, foreign trade and investment policies were to be 'closely linked to the overall objectives of ANC economic policy'.⁵¹ Thus foreign policy was to be geared towards assisting with the development of the domestic South African economy by supporting the programme for national reconstruction. However, what has resulted since the founding election of 1994 is increasing tension in policy formulation arising from the interplay of these competing policy objectives.

Endnotes

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3. *Ibid.*, p.72.
4. *Ibid.*.
5. For further discussion see Chapter 19 of *ibid.*, particularly pp.451-457.
6. See Crocker C, *op.cit.*.
7. Baker P, *The United States and South Africa: The Reagan Years*. New York: Ford Foundation/Foreign Policy Association, 1989, p.10.
8. *Ibid.*, p.25.

9. Rich P, 'Changing Relations with the United States', Chapter Five of Mills G (ed)., *From Pariah to Participant: South Africa's Evolving Relations, 1990-1994*. Johannesburg: SALLA, 1994, p.95.
10. Baker P, *op.cit.*, p.25.
11. See Appendix D in Baker P, *ibid.*, for a fuller listing of the measures imposed.
12. Crocker C, *op.cit.*, pp.268-69.
13. See *ibid.*, Chapter 11.
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15. Jervis DT, 'The American Decision to Impose Sanctions Against South Africa: A Reconsideration', *Discussion Papers in International Relations*, 2, 1. Johannesburg: Department of International Relations, University of the Witwatersrand, March 1998, p.8.
16. *Ibid.*, p.34.
17. See Baker P, *op.cit.*, pp.53-56 and Crocker C, *op.cit.*, pp.293-99.
18. Crocker C, *ibid.*, p.290.
19. *Ibid.*.
20. *Ibid.*, p.291.
21. *Ibid.*, p.302.
22. *Ibid.*, p.330.
23. Baker P, *op.cit.*, p.49.
24. Crocker C, *op.cit.*, p.440.
25. Baker P, *op.cit.*, pp.63-64.
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27. Cox M, *US Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. London: Pinter, 1995, p.109.
28. See *Statement on Meeting With South African Anti-Apartheid Activist Albertina Sisulu*. White House Press Release, 30 June 1989. <http://www.csd1.tamu.edu/bushlib/papers/1989/89063001.html>
29. *Remarks Prior to Discussions With Nelson Mandela*. White House, 25 June 1990. <http://www.csd1.tamu.edu/bushlib/papers/1990/90062500.html>
30. *Ibid.*.
31. Mandela N, *Address to the Joint Session of the Houses of Congress of the USA*, 26 June 1990. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1990/sp900626.html>

32. Rich P, *op.cit.*, p.179.
33. *Ibid.*.
34. Thomas S, 'The Diplomacy of Liberation: The ANC in Defence of Economic Sanctions', Chapter 10 of Mills G, *op.cit.*, pp.175-6.
35. *Remarks Following Discussions With State President FW de Klerk of South Africa*, 24 September 1990. <http://www.csd1.tamu.edu/bushlib/papers/1990/90092401.html>
36. See Appendix D of Baker P, *op.cit.* for a summary of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.
37. Rich P, *op.cit.*, p.101.
38. Schraeder PJ, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.242.
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41. Evans G, 'South Africa in Remission: the Foreign Policy of an Altered State', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34, 2, pp.254-5.
42. *Ibid.*, p.255.
43. See *ibid.*, pp.255-9.
44. *Ibid.*, p.257.
45. *Ibid.*, p.259.
46. Alden JC, 'ANC Foreign Policy in Transition', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 1, 1, Spring 1993, p.76.
47. Evans G, *op.cit.*, p.259.
48. See, Mandela N, 'South Africa's Future Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, 72, 5, Nov/Dec 1993; and *Foreign Policy in a New Democratic South Africa*. [gopher://gopher.anc.org.za:70/00/anc/policy/foreign.txt](http://gopher.anc.org.za:70/00/anc/policy/foreign.txt)
49. *Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa*. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/policy/foreign.html>
50. *Ibid.*, p.2.
51. ANC Discussion Paper: 'Foreign Policy in a New Democratic South Africa', *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.

Chapter 3: Post-1994, A Period of Normalisation?

Introduction: South Africa's Re-emergence into the Community of States

With the advent of a democratically elected government in South Africa in 1994, one might broadly describe relations as moving into a phase of 'normalisation'. But, whether the relationship has achieved what US Ambassador to South Africa James Joseph called a 'return to full engagement' is far from clear.¹ Within the foreign policy establishments of both states, the 1990s have seen an ongoing debate concerned with finding an appropriate set of principles which will define the pattern of foreign relations in the future. Since 1994, South Africa has continued to battle with the complexities of transition and consolidation of the post-apartheid democratic state, and the US has struggled to come to terms with the intricacies of the post-Cold War world.

In August 1995, South African Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo outlined the future course of the 'new' South Africa's foreign policy. What was significant about this statement of intent was that Nzo sought to stress that the focus of policy would be 'on forging new trade links, consolidating old ones and securing increased foreign investment for the revitalisation of the economy'.² As such it represented a commitment to a 'universality' in relations (the fostering of numerous bilateral and multilateral trade links to bolster the domestic imperatives of the RDP) which had been implied, but not made explicit, in the policy documents of 1993 - 1994 and reflected a 'firming up' of the ideas contained in Mandela's statements made during his visit to the US in 1990.

Certainly there has been impressive expansion in the scope of South Africa's bilateral and multilateral links with the international community during the 1990s. Yet it is also clear that South African determination to strengthen diplomatic ties with states such as Cuba and Libya is not solely based on economic concerns, since both are trading partners of limited significance. For example, when referring to President Mandela's invitation in February 1996 to Gaddafi and Castro to visit South Africa, Foreign Minister Nzo observed, 'at the moment we are inviting those countries because they supported our struggle for national and social liberation'.³ Clearly then, these states are benefiting from their past support for the anti-apartheid struggle.

Not surprisingly, the fostering of such diplomatic links has proved to be a source of tension in US/South African relations. Certainly the South African decision to send an ambassador to Cuba and open an embassy in Havana provoked criticism from several members of Congress. Ambassador Sonn received a letter dated 25 July 1995 signed by Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the chairperson of the House Africa Subcommittee, and three other congressional leaders. They expressed 'deep disappointment' with South Africa's policy and stated that:⁴

The clear message of such a decision would be to tell the American people that South Africa does not share our commitment to liberty, justice and democracy. Such a message could have significant impact on the Congress's relations with your country.

However, during the December 1995 meeting of the Binational Commission, American officials were careful to stress that protests about Cuba 'have come from the anti-Castro lobby in Congress and not from the administration itself'.⁵ Further, the State Department's response to President Mandela's later invitation to both Gaddafi and Castro to visit South Africa was muted. In a press statement of 13 February 1996, a State Department spokesman observed that,⁶

US-SA relations - based on our mutual support for democracy and human rights - are excellent, as demonstrated by increasing trade, investment and co-operation between our countries.

Rather than insist on a severing of relations, America urged South Africa to express international concern about human right violations and state sponsored terrorism, 'during any exchanges it may have with Libya or Cuba'.⁷

South Africa's relations with Iran have also been a source of tension. The oil-storage deal - of some 15 million barrels of Iranian oil - negotiated between the two countries in 1995 massively boosted South African/Iranian trade to R2 billion for the first five months of that year.⁸ According to the US State Department, the oil-storage deal between South Africa and Iran was 'ill-considered'⁹ given Iran's involvement in international terrorism, and revealed inconsistencies in South Africa's human rights policy. Concern was also expressed about the possibility that South Africa might become involved in the transfer of sensitive nuclear technology to Iran. Such criticism met with an indignant response from the Minister for Minerals and Energy Affairs, Pik Botha, who stated that: 'The Americans do not seem to be properly informed on what the deal is about'.¹⁰ Whether such reaction was justified is a moot point. US criticism was not reinforced by threats of possible action should South Africa continue to trade with Iran; neither was it likely that the United States would move beyond a verbal expression of

concern. Further, repeated assurances on the part of South African officials that economic transactions with Iran would not include the transfer of nuclear material appear to have reassured the United States. Certainly the economic relationship with Iran did not prevent the signing of an agreement in September 1995 concerning the transfer of 'peaceful' nuclear technology from the US to South Africa.

Thus, just as 'universality' has been the subject of domestic criticism for its inherent tension between pragmatism and moral concerns, so has this commitment revealed some divergence of interests between South Africa and the United States. One vexing issue is whether South African foreign policy should concentrate on forging closer links with Western and Asian Pacific states, or whether it should try to create a more active 'Afro-centric' role for itself through participation in organisations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) or the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as part of the 'African Renaissance' referred to by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki.

Universality in relations has also presented South African decision-makers with a dilemma similar to that faced by their American counterparts in terms of the US commitment to democratic enlargement: how should a democracy manage its relations with states that have poor human rights records, but which are nevertheless powerful trading partners?

Hence the relationship between the US and South Africa since 1994 has been characterised by a peculiar mix of tentative co-operation punctuated by instances of strident argument. Whether these outbursts of diplomatic wrangling are symptomatic of an inevitable divergence between the two states, or mere 'teething troubles' in a newly restored relationship forms the basis of this chapter. The following analysis is broadly divided into three sections. The first area of interest is the launching in 1995 of the US-South African Binational Commission. The establishment of the Binational Commission might be considered an illustration of the strengthening of the bilateral relationship following the collapse of the *apartheid* system in South Africa. The second section of the discussion evaluates trade and aid issues, and here the relationship has been less amicable. What US aid has been made available to South Africa has been in steady decline, and the trade relationship has been dogged by a series of disputes such as: the Armscor case; the debate over American intellectual property rights in South Africa; American concerns about the cartel-dominated structure of South African industry; and complaints from sections of both the US and South African business communities about the impact of lowered tariff barriers. However, along with such difficulties have also come some notable instances of bilateral co-operation, both in terms of South Africa's role in securing an acceptable compromise at the NPT Review and Extension Conference in

1995 and the visit to South Africa by President Clinton in March 1998. The third area of analysis thus goes on to deal with the prospects for an increasingly close US-South African relationship, particularly as it pertains to military-security issues.

The US-South African Binational Commission

According to a 5 October 1994 briefing by US Administration officials, the 'centrepiece ... of [the] bilateral relationship is the binational commission'.¹¹ A 'cabinet-level' US-Mexican Binational Commission has been in existence since 1981 (chaired by the Secretary of State and Mexican Secretary of Foreign relations), but the US-South African Commission differs in that it is chaired by the Vice-Presidents of both states and is mandated to meet twice-yearly.

The United States has established similar-level Commissions with only a small number of other states: Russia (1993), Egypt (1994) and Ukraine (1996), all of which are perceived as key actors in relation to the pursuit of US interests in the post-Cold War international system. In one sense this underlines a commitment on the part of the Clinton administration to South Africa and, to an extent, counters Schraeder's view that African affairs are 'back-burner' issues for the United States.

In tandem with the US-South African Business Development Council, the Commission is intended to function as a mechanism for 'defining ways to make most effective use of the resources that are being made available in our bilateral aid programme', as well as for the 'development of business relationships between the US and South Africa'.¹² The first meeting of the Binational Commission took place in March 1995 in Washington, followed by a second in South Africa in December of that year. According to a White House press release of 22 February 1995, the 'Binational Commission represents an important advance in relations between the two countries'¹³ and South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki observed in December that the commission had 'got off to a flying start'.¹⁴ However, the initial track record of the commission was somewhat more pedestrian. In Washington, little of substance beyond the initial launching of the commission was achieved, while in Pretoria those agreements which were reached (on Peace Corps operations in South Africa, the establishment of a sixth sub-committee of the Commission {Agriculture} and on some minor economic and technical matters) were of fairly minor import.

While the announcement of the formation of a sub-committee on Agriculture, or agreement on the renewal of commercial ties and tax treaties or collaboration on sustainable energy projects might not be the heady stuff

of 'high' politics, it does illustrate that a steady fostering of links in a variety of areas has been under way since 1994. Further, the advent of the Commission provided an institutionalised forum in which Cabinet-level decision-makers could meet at regular intervals to discuss issues of policy. As such the Commission represents a rather radical departure from the pattern of diplomatic interaction which marked both the 'constructive engagement' period and the Bush years and, for Thabo Mbeki at least, emphasised the new 'people to people nature of relations'¹⁵ between the US and South Africa.

Moreover, the founding of such a commission can be viewed as a token of American recognition of South Africa's international potential. For Franklin Sonn, it is South Africa's new-found 'moral authority' which explains why 'South Africa is different for the US than other nations'.¹⁶ However, this recognition also rests upon South Africa's potential regional military and economic preponderance. According to Michael Cox, in 1992 South Africa was identified by the US Commerce Department as being one of the 'Big Emerging Markets' in the global economy,¹⁷ and in March 1995, George E. Moose observed that 'South Africa already accounts for nearly half of US exports to sub-Saharan Africa'.¹⁸ Indeed, given the determination to open up the African continent to US trade and investment contained in the Administration's 'Comprehensive Trade and Development Policy' announced on 5 February 1996, South Africa now represents not only an important emerging market but a useful stepping stone for the penetration of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

However, when the formation of a Binational Commission was originally mooted, a sub-committee on defence was omitted from the structure. Presumably this was because in 1994-1995 the US feared that South Africa would use this forum to voice its concerns about the US Justice Department's indictment against Armscor for alleged arms smuggling during the *apartheid* era. Although alleged sanctions-busting by Armscor employees was a legacy of South Africa's unique past, the mid-1990s saw a hardening of attitudes and lack of resolution of the issue. Indeed, in 1996 Thabo Mbeki stated that:¹⁹

The issue is putting a strain on the relations of the two countries. We have been prepared to negotiate everything but we cannot compromise the sovereignty of South Africa.

While, for Caspar Weinburger, the case was 'an absurd, unnecessary and dreadful example of the abuse of prosecutorial power'²⁰ on the part of the United States, the GNU's attempts to divorce itself from the actions of its predecessors appeared to fall on deaf ears and the Clinton administration

continued to demand the payment of US\$100 million in fines. Thus the 1995 Binational Commission's six sub-committees were responsible for the following portfolios:

- (i) Agriculture;
- (ii) Conservation, Environment and Water;
- (iii) Human Resource Development and Education;
- (iv) Science and Technology;
- (v) Sustainable Energy;
- (vi) Trade and Investment,

but, significantly, not defence matters.

Of course, although not in the official purview of the Commission, the Armscor dispute was a central concern of the US-South African Binational Commission, particularly during its 1996 meetings. Yet what was surprising about the negotiations at the 1996 Washington meeting of the Commission was the speed with which this issue was apparently resolved. Although South African officials were stridently stating that the Armscor dispute was an infringement of South Africa's 'sovereignty', at a brief, private meeting between Gore and Mbeki the two sides hammered out a compromise agreement in which South Africa would plead no-contest in the US courts and the administration would waive the punitive measures that are normally imposed against sanctions violators. Significantly neither party was prepared to give precise details as to the substance of this private discussion save that, in a press release of August 1996, Clinton, Gore and Mbeki 'welcomed the agreement in principle' and merely noted that the compromise 'meets the needs of both countries'.²¹

The resolution of the Armscor dispute thus paved the way for the formation of a defence sub-committee, the inauguration of which was announced at the Washington meeting in July 1997. Indeed, the comparatively low-key nature of the 1997 meetings of the Binational Commission supports the notion that the relationship is undergoing a process of consolidation. One area of attention during 1997 was how to improve channels of communication between the foreign policy establishments of both states. This concern clearly results from the realisation that the various squabbles which had arisen - including that over South Africa's 1997 announcement that it was considering selling tank-sighting technology to Syria - were made more intense than was necessary by both sides making inappropriate public utterances.

However, the February 1998 meeting of the Binational Commission was cancelled at the request of President Clinton as heightening tension in relations with Iraq required the presence of the Vice President in National Security Council deliberations, which means that the substance of defence sub-committee discussions has yet to become clear. A clue to the future nature of the defence debate lies in the fact that during the 1996 meetings of the Commission there was strong pressure from the American side for South Africa to assume a more active international peacekeeping role than hitherto. Indeed, Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad observed of the Washington meeting:²²

Those of us who participated in the US Binational Commission were astounded by the unanimous message from President Bill Clinton, Vice-President Al Gore and the State Department, that if South Africa does not get involved in the OAU, particularly in conflict prevention, the situation [in Africa] will further deteriorate.

Trade and Aid Issues

On 5 October 1994, President Clinton announced the launch of the Southern African Enterprise Development fund (SAEDF) designed to 'promote and stimulate indigenous development'²³ in the region. SAEDF was to be funded by USAID over three years with about half of the US\$100 million dollar allocation earmarked for South Africa. This sum was over and above the US\$600 million aid package announced soon after the 1994 elections in South Africa, which again was to be spread over three years. Further aid packages have been subsequently announced, including using American loans to guarantee some US\$500 million for housing development in South Africa.²⁴ At the July 1996 meeting of the Binational Commission, Gore announced that the federal Overseas Private Investment Corporation was to back a US\$120 million fund that will make equity investments in South Africa and the Southern African region.

However, these packages have been greeted with some scepticism on the part of South African officials. President Mandela himself managed to upset many in the Clinton administration in 1995 by his now-infamous characterisation of such initiatives as 'peanuts' (in contrast, the Ukraine in 1995 received something in the order of US\$600 million in aid in one year alone). Certainly, the 1990s have witnessed a general decline in levels of aid to the African continent. During a 1996 visit to South Africa, Brian Atwood, the chief administrator for USAID, declared that: 'This is not a country that should require foreign aid'.²⁵ Atwood then stated that once the three year lifespan of the US\$600 million aid package came to an end, the United States would be looking gradually to phase out its assistance efforts, a warning which has subsequently been borne out by events.

Indeed, throughout his tenure, President Clinton has had to contend with a particularly assertive Congress intent on sharply cutting back on Federal spending levels. Anthony Lake has observed that: 'Foreign assistance is under attack by new isolationists from both the left and the right',²⁶ USAID officials have had to fight an ongoing, and unsuccessful, rearguard action against the slashing of African aid programmes and, Clinton has had to 'sharpen the focus of the US role in assisting Africa to meet its development challenges and, in the process, to promote US trade and investment to the region', since this represents a 'necessary evolution of US policy'.²⁷ That evolution appears to be the result of recognition by the Administration that:²⁸

in a time of shrinking Federal funding, any strategy to support trade and development in Sub-Saharan Africa will need to rely heavily on increased US commercial involvement in the region.

In its foreign aid appropriations request to Congress for 1997 the Clinton administration asked for \$103.6 million for South African development - which represents a 15% reduction from the 1996 budget.

The switch in emphasis from aid to trade in Africa is also in keeping with the objectives set out in Clinton's National Export Strategy announced in 1993 and in the 1998 administration initiative, 'The Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa'. Both policy statements emphasise securing American jobs at home by seeking trade liberalisation and the opening of new markets abroad. Notwithstanding predictions by Ross Perot *et al* that trade agreements such as NAFTA will result in a 'giant sucking sound' of American jobs being lost to lower-wage economies, the Clinton administration is claiming that an aggressive export strategy has fuelled one-third of recent US economic growth and created 1.5 million new jobs.

Yet there is a danger that the marginalisation of Africa will continue in this new 'world of trading states', as relations with Russia and the newly independent states, an integrated European Union, and with the increasingly powerful Japan-led group of Asian tigers take priority in American calculations over a region which accounts for a mere one percent of world industrial output and less than one percent of total US exports.

However, while the African market as a whole is small, South Africa is the largest single market in the region; it now accounts for 51% of US exports. Thus, although a number of analysts such as Stephen Brent are of the opinion that 'South Africa's political miracle may not be followed by an economic one',²⁹ and that much depends on the continuing consistency of the South African government's economic performance, American

investment in South Africa since the elections of 1994 has been steady, if not spectacular. In January 1995 Anthony Lake observed that the United States had an interest in the growth of Southern African economies since, 'this growth holds the promise of great new opportunities and more high-wage American jobs. During the last 18 months, one new American company has invested in South Africa every 10 days',³⁰ and in a statement of 27 April 1995, President Clinton observed that: 'Over 300 American companies have returned since *apartheid* ended'.³¹

Indeed, since 1995 the trade relationship has continued to expand, with American companies investing in South Africa at a rate of about one a week. According to a report released in June 1996 by the Washington-based Investor Responsibility Research Centre, the number of multinationals with direct investment or employees in South Africa is up by 20% on 1994, and a 1997 survey by *Southern African Investor* revealed that US direct investment and earnings reinvestment in 1996 amounted to US\$2.4 billion, which makes the United States the largest single source of external investment in South Africa.³²

Yet the nature of that commercial involvement in South Africa is somewhat problematic. While new investment in South Africa has risen in the 1990s, so has the trade deficit grown. In 1993 the trade deficit stood at approximately US\$358 million, but, according to figures released by the US Commercial Service, by 1995 this had risen to US\$541.3 million and by 1996 had reached US\$783.5 million. The most recent figures available show a trade deficit for January - September 1997 running at US\$434.1 million. Thus, despite the weakening rand, the burgeoning trading relationship between the US and South Africa is nevertheless one of substantial imbalance favourable to the United States.

Moreover, the trading relationship has to be contextualised in terms of the overall trading position of the United States. Sub-Saharan Africa still accounts for less than one percent of total US trade. Thus although the administration estimates that 100,000 US jobs are dependent on exports to Africa, that is a mere fraction of the 1.5 million jobs which the administration claims have been created by Clinton's National Export Strategy since 1993.

The burgeoning trading relationship has also been the source of a number of disputes, including intellectual property rights protection, American pressures for 'strong anti-trust legislation'³³ and the pace and scope of South Africa's lowering of tariff barriers. According to a Freedom House report released in May 1996, the liberalisation of the South African economy is being hampered by 'the few conglomerates that dominate SA's economic landscape [which] have close ties to top politicians'. South Africa remains

on the intellectual property rights 'watch list' of the US Trade Representative's office.

Of course, such disputes are set to continue, and can largely be written off as symptoms of a normalising of the bilateral relationship. One has only to look at US relations with the EU or with Japan to see similar rows over apparent perfidy on the part of the US's main trading partners and during his visit to South Africa in March 1998, President Clinton actually praised the macroeconomic strategy of the South African government.

Hence, while such differences are not likely to disappear in the near future, they should be placed in context. As Simon Barber notes, 'The kind of disputes ... the US and SA are presently engaged in, are the ordinary stuff of relations between the US and all of its allies and trading partners'.³⁴ For Princeton Lyman, former US ambassador to South Africa:³⁵

Trade issues also arise when two countries have, as the United States and South Africa now do, a US\$4.2 billion trade relationship. These issues need to be addressed since they not only affect trade and investment but are indicative of how rapidly South Africa is moving to liberalize its economy.

The Prospects for Military-Security Co-operation

South Africa's role in securing an indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) during the Extension and Review Conference convened on 17 April 1995 has been cited as an indication of the potential inherent in South Africa's unique international position. For Tom Zamora Collina, South Africa's efforts in securing agreement demonstrated that 'the newly democratic government had emerged as a leader of the non-aligned states, while maintaining firm ties with the West'.³⁶

However, Peter Vale injects a cautionary note with his comment that although South Africa's, 'special international positioning ... was used with great efficacy in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) issue ... the successes are not as clear-cut as they have been portrayed' as being.³⁷ For Vale, the NPT was a 'goal-directed' question and should not be taken as an indicator of future South African practice. Rather, 'the government's foreign policy is low-keyed and pragmatic, much like its domestic policy'.³⁸

But certainly one tangible result of South Africa's efforts during the conference was the September signing of the bilateral agreement on peaceful nuclear co-operation between the US and South Africa. When announcing the accord, President Clinton stated that South Africa 'played a decisive role in the achievement of indefinite NPT extension - a top US

foreign policy and national security goal', and this was 'compelling' evidence of South Africa's commitment to non-proliferation.³⁹

In terms of regional military-security issues, there have been further signals of a willingness on the part of the US to collaborate more closely with South Africa.⁴⁰ In February 1996, the United States and South African navies engaged in joint exercises off the South African coastline and, in the same year, the US-South African militaries concluded a deal for the transfer of C130 transport aircraft to the SANDF.⁴¹ Thomas McNamara, Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, observed in February 1996 that the goal of the United States was to 'better co-ordinate African nations' civilian and military peacekeeping capability through improved co-ordination of bilateral and multilateral efforts'. He went on to note that:⁴²

This country's political, economic as well as military, capabilities make it an important player in the areas of conflict resolution, arms transfers and non-proliferation.

Such statements indicate an ongoing American willingness to engage in a closer military-security partnership with South Africa, particularly in terms of South African participation in an All-African Crisis Response Force. Since the founding elections of 1994, US diplomatic language has been constantly couched in terms of the 'empowerment' or the 'enabling' of South Africa to engage in regional peacekeeping tasks. Yet the reaction of South African officials to such calls has been less than enthusiastic. Decision-makers in both the DFA and Defence Ministry have been reluctant to become engaged in the region citing the domestic imperatives of the RDP as taking precedence over foreign commitments. Another problem lies in the legacy of the *apartheid* years as, throughout the 1980s, South Africa's policy of destabilisation of the region imposed tremendous financial and social costs on its neighbours. In the 1990s the GNU, particularly as South Africa is due to take over the chair of the NAM, is deeply concerned that the state's regional preponderance should not be translated into a perceived regional 'big brother' role; especially if that hegemony is linked to a perception that, once again, South Africa is acting as little more than an African 'fig-leaf' for Western interests.

These fears influenced the initially cool reaction to US proposals for the creation of an All-African Crisis Response Force during the visit of Warren Christopher in 1996. Clearly one purpose of the visit of the Secretary of State to South Africa in late 1996 was to gauge opinion on the viability of such an operation. Christopher ran into a storm of criticism in South Africa, being accused of blatant electioneering on behalf of the Clinton administration and the idea of an all-African peacekeeping force was characterised by many as a cynical attempt to shore up political support in

the US following Clinton's recent cutbacks in domestic welfare spending. Certainly President Mandela's reaction to the initiative was less than enthusiastic. Mandela's position was that South Africa might entertain the idea of participation in a UN multilateral force for Africa, but not in an overtly American-backed coalition. Partly this is a function of domestic political constraints which prevent the ANC-led government from forging too close a public relationship with the US, and partly it is a result of the view that it would be premature for South Africa to commit itself to foreign intervention so soon, given current pressing domestic economic imperatives.

However, since the visit there have been signals that South African reluctance is slowly being eroded. The US has subsequently watered down its proposals to the extent that a proposed Response Force is now a Response Capability, with US logistical and technical support for a multilateral African peacekeeping force replacing any direct US military involvement. Since the Christopher visit South Africa has taken part in a multilateral peacekeeping exercise in Zimbabwe and it is also interesting that during Clinton's 1998 visit to South Africa there was a small but significant shift in the position of President Mandela towards the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). While still rejecting the prospect of South Africa participating in any American-led coalition, the President stated that he 'fully supported' the concept of an African crisis response capability. As such, this represents a far more positive reaction than Warren Christopher encountered during his visit in 1996. If this is coupled with the July 1997 announcement that the Binational Commission was to establish a seventh sub-committee on defence, one could argue that the Clinton visit signalled a tentative willingness on both sides to deepen security co-operation. Although still in a very early stage, such co-operation will increasingly be the substance of bilateral negotiations in the future.

Conclusions

In June 1994, President Clinton observed:⁴³

When I became president it seemed to me that our country really didn't have a policy toward Africa ... For decades we viewed Africa through a Cold War prism and through the fight against *Apartheid* ... But now the prism through which we viewed Africa has been shattered. In the post-Cold War and post-*Apartheid* world, our guideposts have disappeared, and it may be a good thing if we respond in the proper way.

But assessing whether a 'proper way' has been found since the President made such a statement is problematic, since both countries, in their own ways, are engaged in an ongoing process of self-definition *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world.

In terms of South Africa, the debate between 'realists' and 'radicals' is, for Jack Spence, 'refreshing and timely',⁴⁴ but inherent problems for foreign policy formulation were nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the weak and confused response to the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight fellow Ogoni activists in Nigeria. In large part, then, the future of US-South African relations is tied up with the domestic debate as to the future of South Africa's international role - and the outcome of that debate is far from certain. Thus, while one might view South Africa's role in extending the NPT and the launching of the Binational Commission as positive indicators of the health of the US-South African relationship, whether they signal that the process of 'normalisation' will result in a 'convergence of national interests'⁴⁵ is not clear.

In 1996, Princeton Lyman, former Ambassador to South Africa, stated that 'South Africa's relations with the United States are evolving', and the relationship 'has become richer and more complex'.⁴⁶ Yet, as has been noted earlier, such an optimistic assessment is not shared by a number of scholars and analysts of the bilateral relationship. Given South Africa's semi-peripheral position in the international system and the general marginalisation of the sub-Saharan region, many suggest that South Africa will hardly feature in future US foreign policy calculations.

However, the difficulties and tensions which marked the constructive engagement period might lead one to conclude that this is not to be lamented. Certainly one theme which runs through Chester Crocker's *High Noon in Southern Africa* is that the Africa policies of the US were regarded as something of a 'free-for-all'. For Crocker, all too often the Africa policies of the US were negatively influenced by those seeking simply to oppose the Reagan administration or by those concerned primarily with enhancing their own domestic political profile in the United States.

Further, it can be argued that constructive engagement in the Southern African region allowed, or even facilitated, the *apartheid* era government's programme of destabilisation of its neighbours and brutal repression of domestic political opposition. Given the combination of these factors, perhaps South Africa should welcome a period of relative stability in the bilateral relationship, and concentrate on forging an economic relationship which is as favourable as possible for the concerns of the RDP. While this might not make good copy for journalists, or exciting studies by academics, this task in itself is a complex and delicate one, given the continuing relative economic dominance of the United States

Certainly the track record of the Binational Commission to date supports the view that the relationship is undergoing a process of consolidation. The

meetings have not been marked by any major disagreements, and the resolution of the Armscor dispute in fact illustrates the usefulness of this governmental-level discussion forum. Also, the number of sub-committees and the range of their portfolios have undergone a steady increase; particularly relevant here of course is the establishment of a defence portfolio in 1997. Moreover, since 1994 South Africa has received a stream of visits from administration officials of increasingly high status, culminating in a visit by Clinton himself in 1998.

What is also worthy of note about the 1997 Binational Commission meetings, and the Clinton visit in 1998, is a concern with the need to improve communications between the foreign affairs establishments of both countries. In part, this is a result of the realisation that the arguments which have arisen between the two states have been exacerbated by a series of inappropriate public statements being made on both sides.

Yet those areas of disagreement which have arisen do reflect deeper problems for the future of the relationship. 'Universality', 'non-alignment' and 'independence' in foreign policy have been explicitly incorporated within the foreign policy statements of the ANC, in part as a replacement for the ideological commitments of the Cold War, and all have caused tensions in relations with the United States. Yet they are themselves symptomatic of a profound search which is taking place in the post-apartheid regime. The nature of that search is one for an 'African' identity in the foreign relations of the 'new' South Africa. This certainly underlies Thabo Mbeki's preoccupation with the notion of an African renaissance. How such an identity is formulated, and the policy outcomes which result, will be a prime influence in the future structure of US-South African relations. In this the GNU is still faced with a very familiar South African dilemma: how to reconcile being 'caught between being part of Africa and Part of the West in Africa'.⁴⁷

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Chapter 4: Some Conclusions

Introduction: A 'New Partnership' with South Africa?¹

President Clinton's three day visit to South Africa in March 1998 - part of his six-nation African tour - not surprisingly, prompted mixed reactions on the part of analysts and commentators. Of course, the 'Washington version' cast the visit as an unprecedented acknowledgement of the importance of the African continent as a whole, and an underlining of the relevance to the United States of various key bilateral relationships; in particular with the 'new' South Africa. Certainly the visit was intended to be viewed as a public demonstration of the underlying health of intergovernmental relations, building on the low-key work of the Binational Commission as well as the earlier visit of the previous Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, to South Africa in 1996. In this sense, the visit was an attempt to counter the pessimism which pervades much of the commentary on relations between the United States under the Clinton administration and the African continent.

In South Africa the visit was received with varying degrees of scepticism. Certainly for Salih Booker, the administration's much-vaunted initiative (the new 'Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa', which was announced by the White House in June 1998 and which occupied centre stage in Clinton's speeches and meetings with African leaders throughout the tour) merely resembled 'the "moonwalk", a dance step that creates an impression of forward motion while actually sliding backwards'.² Furthermore, the scenes of ecstatic crowds almost swamping the President in their enthusiasm to greet him, which was a powerful media image of the Ghanaian leg of the visit, was clearly not repeated in South Africa. Indeed, the South African visit was a far more low-key affair than other parts of the tour.

Moreover, comparatively little of substance appeared to emerge from the visit to South Africa. Neither the President nor his entourage of some 700 staffers, security personnel, journalists et al announced anything new or significant during this trip; neither were any major agreements signed. As such the primary purpose of the visit appeared to be an exercise in symbolism rather than substance. Certainly one analyst privately noted that the 'love-in' character of the Africa tour was not going to be obscured by the inclusion in Clinton's schedule of a visit to the United States' largest external source of oil - Nigeria - a state which is also currently engaged in suppressing domestic democratic and human rights activism. As such,

difficult tensions between goals of economic engagement and the promotion of democracy and human rights in Clinton's Africa policies were avoided rather than addressed.

In a press briefing given in Dakar, Senegal, on 1 April, Sandy Berger (President Clinton's National Security Adviser) observed that the African visit had three main objectives:

- (i) to help 'Americans rethink Africa and Africans rethink America',
- (ii) to describe a 'new partnership between the United States and Africa', and
- (iii) to 'make clear America's stake in this continent of 700 million people'.³

But whether the trip succeeded in achieving even these limited aims in terms of the South African bilateral relationship is a moot point.

Certainly Clinton fulsomely praised the macroeconomic strategies of the GNU since 1994, and emphasised a number of measures contained in the 'Africa Growth and Opportunity Act' (currently being considered by Congress), which are designed to increase African access to US markets, provide investment guarantees and debt relief. Yet, as Salih Booker observes:⁴

Undergirding the entire initiative is the assumption that most African states have now embraced what is commonly referred to as the Washington Consensus. The latter encompasses the core elements of the structural adjustment programmes that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have imposed on African states over the past several decades. Such programmes generally seek to reduce the economic role of the state and promote open markets and private sector and export-led growth.

In Dakar, Sandy Berger attempted to address the perception that the notion of 'trade not aid', which has become associated with the Clinton presidency, was something of a 'false dichotomy'. Yet during his visit there was no indication on the part of Clinton or his advisers of a shift in the administration's position from that which has governed US Africa policies throughout the 1990s. Apart from some rather vague verbal assurances that the administration is seeking to stem the shrinkage in aid budgets and that Clinton will seek to write off South Africa's approximate US\$1.6 billion in bilateral debt,⁵ the context continues to be a shrinking level of aid commitment and a reluctance to become unilaterally engaged in conflicts

in the region. As such the Clinton visit did not signal, in any concrete form, a departure from his intention to foster development through increased US commercial involvement in the region.

Therefore, while the Clinton visit might be described as a 'high water mark' for US-South African relations in the 1990s, it can by no means be described as a watershed. Indeed the comparative marginalisation of Africa is illustrated by the fact that Clinton's visit comes half-way through his second term of office. Other regions, particularly Europe and the Japanese-led Asia-Pacific region, have received multiple visits since his inauguration in 1993. Instead, the visit of the President did appear to function on a symbolic rather than substantive level. The trip, in this sense, affirmed a number of underlying contours of the relationship but did not overtly define any 'new direction' in the course of bilateral relations. However, one aspect of this visit which is worthy of note is the strength of administration denials that the visit to Africa was a 'tour of contrition' for a number of sins which include the legacy of slavery in US history, the racial tensions and divides in contemporary domestic US politics, and US inactivity in the face of genocidal crises in states such as Burundi and Rwanda. While rejecting the former criticisms, the President did accept that the US had been 'slow off the mark' in giving assistance to Rwanda in 1994.

Americans 'Rethinking' Africa: Africans 'Rethinking' America

Clearly the very presence of the President in Africa succeeded, in the short term at least, in drawing international attention to the continent, but the hope that this would produce a 'rethinking' of Africa proved optimistic, particularly since Mr. Berger prefaced his comments in Dakar by observing that the President was extending his Africa tour by a week, not only because of the 'success' of the trip but also because: 'We will not go home until we see a leopard'.

Obviously such a comment was spoken in jest, but it does illustrate a visceral, yet paradoxically deep-seated, view held by many in the developed world that Africa is a place either of famine and war or 'unspoilt' natural resources.

Yet the need for the US and South Africa to 'rethink' their relations with each other was well illustrated in the Clinton-Mandela meeting of 27 March. Although the encounter was generally cordial, with President Clinton stressing areas of common interest between the two states, President Mandela used the occasion to reaffirm South Africa's independent stance towards 'pariahs' such as Cuba and Libya. Such a position is not new for

Mandela and, as with previous policy statements, is perhaps more concerned with publicly demonstrating that South Africa will not function as a United States 'client', particularly as South Africa is to be the next chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Nevertheless it underlines the fact that there are areas of divergence which have not been fully resolved.

Indeed a constant theme of this report is that at the heart of the convergence/divergence debate lies an ongoing process of self-definition which will fundamentally influence the future course of relations. Of particular relevance here is the meaning of 'African identity', or the related vision of the 'African Renaissance', for South Africa's foreign relations. Obviously to undertake an exhaustive survey of the meaning of these concepts is beyond the scope of the present study, but a number of key points can be made.

As mentioned earlier, much of the current discussion of the African Renaissance is associated with the thinking of Thabo Mbeki, but the concept has encountered much criticism in relation to the paucity of its content. Certainly a number of critics have pointed out that the concept is something of an 'empty vessel'⁶ and is little more than a lyrical gloss which enlivens public speeches but is short on policy.

In a thought-provoking discussion, Peter Vale and Sipho Maseko observe that the African Renaissance can be interpreted in two very different ways:⁷

Cast in the modernist tradition, the first [interpretation] links South Africa's economic interest to Africa through the logic of globalisation. We call this the globalist interpretation. The second uses the African Renaissance to unlock a series of complex social constructions around African identity.

Vale and Maseko's first interpretation accords firmly with the triumphalist 'end of history' thesis which, as stated previously, has been of profound influence in the formulation of US foreign policy during the Clinton period. Essentially, the logic of such an argument is that embracing economic liberalism will reinforce the move away from authoritarianism towards both a domestic democratic 'contractual accord' and a new role for South Africa as an 'African Tiger' (though perhaps 'African lion' might be more apposite) in the mould of the East Asian economic powerhouses:⁸

In this rendition, the African Renaissance posits Africa as an expanding and prosperous market alongside Asia, Europe and North America in which South African capital is destined to play a special role through the development of trade, strategic partnerships and the like. In exchange for acting as the agent of globalisation, the continent will offer South Africa a preferential option on its traditionally promised largesse of oil, minerals and mining.

Yet such thinking has been criticised by South Africa's neighbours in that it risks merely providing a smokescreen for South Africa to play a hegemonic regional role. But recent signals from within the DFA do indicate a willingness to consider a more authoritative South African role. Indeed, Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad has made reference to great power status being 'imposed' on South Africa, and goes on to link South Africa's future with the rest of the region.⁹ Further, this linkage is informed by Pahad's view that the economy is global in nature and also, significantly, that regional development is closely associated with regional stability. Thus, while this geo-economic rationale for intervention is itself informed by explicit references to 'African' identity, it is not completely at odds with 'Western' formulations of security in the post-Cold War era.

Graham Evans points out that: 'Given such a long abnormal past, South Africa is not surprisingly still in the process of reinventing itself as a "normal" state'.¹⁰ But, according to Garth Le Pere,¹¹

Western intellectual traditions have served Africa poorly and must take much of the responsibility for shaping a mythology of barbarism, savagery and otherness.

Yet for Evans that process of re-invention appears to be one in which South Africa is merely coming to terms with the 'constraints imposed by the international political economy while pursuing what opportunities for growth this may offer'.¹² Therefore, while Evans accepts that there is no clear consensus on the future direction of South African foreign policy, he states that:¹³

At present, the evidence suggests that although foreign policy remains contested ground in South African politics generally, the GNU has not embarked on any new or radical initiatives.

Rather than formulating an 'African' role for itself, Evans is of the opinion that the ANC's vision of,¹⁴

South Africa's role in world politics is conceived in terms of a fairly narrow conception of the national interest tempered by a cautious commitment to regionalism.

Thus, Evans posits a rather 'conservative' vision of ANC foreign policy-making which is at odds with Vale and Maseko's second, 'Africanist reading of the Renaissance [which] is post-structural'.¹⁵ From this perspective 'radical' versions of the concept of the African Renaissance will have to tap into the 'African' experience in international relations. For Vale and Maseko this includes learning a number of lessons which can be derived from the African diaspora which has occurred over previous centuries. According to

Vale and Maseko, exploring the multiple dimensions of this rich experience - from a range of diverse sources such as Afro-American black consciousness through to the 'hidden' cultural and literary links which span the African continent - promises fundamentally to challenge 'dominant narratives of international relations and open space in which alternative views of Africa's future may be advanced'.¹⁶ As Vale and Maseko note, the potential of the concept of the African Renaissance lies in its 'emancipatory' function in redressing the imbalances of an international system which reinforces a *de facto* 'global apartheid'.¹⁷

But this Africanist reading of the Renaissance is itself dogged by a number of problems. Like many other 'post-structural', or 'post-modern', accounts Vale and Maseko's argument calls for an 'epistemological shift' in our understanding of social relations,¹⁸ but does not successfully articulate the nature of this shift. A further problem, which Vale and Maseko do to some extent take into account, is the problematic nature of 'leadership' in the Renaissance. As has been observed, much of the current debate revolves around the vision of Thabo Mbeki, the anointed successor to President Mandela, yet Vale and Maseko note that there has been¹⁹

a long and unsatisfactory history of foreign policy scholarship in South Africa which has rested on the role of personality in constructing interpretations of policy.

However, their account then goes on to assess whether the Deputy President is an 'Africanist' or a 'globalist' and, as such, does not outline an epistemological shift in analytical perspective, but rather presents little more than a continuation of the 'long and unsatisfactory' tradition they are attempting to move away from. What is revealed here, if nothing else, is that the debate over the meaning of the African Renaissance has to be widened to incorporate a more diverse range of voices than is currently the case.

Moreover, the concern with whether Mbeki is a 'moderniser' or an 'Africanist' in some sort of post-structural mould also implies that Vale and Maseko are of the opinion that the two interpretations of the African Renaissance are inevitably in opposition to each other. Unfortunately, if one accepts that South Africa's future foreign relations will be determined by a value-competition between these modes of thought, one wonders whether there will be lasting political 'space' for emancipatory debate.

The creative tension which such a competition might engender would be welcome, but the current lack of articulation of 'Africanist' interpretations of the African Renaissance has to be understood in relation to the powerful forces which, if one accepts Vale's and Maseko's conception of the idea, are arrayed against it. Not least is the need to meet the material demands of the

'monied elites (from across the racial spectrum) in South Africa who understand modernisation in terms of the generation of wealth'²⁰ and the self-reinforcing 'structural' forces which Vale, Maseko and Evans all accept underpin the international political economy.

This has obvious implications for the bilateral relationship with the United States. While relations are no longer distorted by a Washington (or Pretoria for that matter) preoccupied with the anti-communist crusade, nevertheless, South Africa will find itself subject to pressures to conform to a 'modernist' interpretation of its new international role. As has been observed earlier in this study, American diplomatic signals constantly reinforce the 'empowerment' role which the United States would like to play with regard to South Africa and, just as the South African foreign policy establishment has gone through a process of 'conservative' pact-making, so it will become subject to the search for a 'pacted' consensus on the part of the United States.

Hence the key test for the next generation of foreign-policy makers, commentators, academics and other interested parties within South Africa will be to try and reconcile these complex and seemingly divergent forces which will shape the course of the US-South African relationship in the post-Mandela era.

Endnotes

1. Parts of the following argument have been previously published in Broderick J, 'Clinton's Visit to South Africa', *Global Dialogue*, 3, 2 June 1998.
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3. 'McCurry, Berger "Encapsulate" Clinton's Africa Trip'. White House Press Release, 2 April 1998.
4. Booker S, *op.cit.*, p.13.
5. Thanks to Chris Landsberg, Director of the Centre For Policy Studies, Johannesburg for his comments on these two aspects of the visit.
6. See Vale P & S Maseko, 'South Africa and the African Renaissance', *International Affairs*, 74, 2, 1998, p.276. See also Mbeki M, *The African Renaissance: Myth or Reality?*. An address delivered to the South African Institute of International Affairs, 21 October 1997.
7. *Ibid.*, p.278.
8. *Ibid.*, p.279.

9. See interview with Aziz Pahad, *The Star* (Johannesburg), 19 September 1996.
10. Evans G, 'South Africa in Remission: the Foreign Policy of an Altered State', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34, 2, p.261.
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14. *Ibid.*, p.269.
15. Vale P & S Maseko, *op.cit.*, p.280.
16. *Ibid.*, p.281.
17. *Ibid.*, p.282.
18. *Ibid.*, p.282.
19. *Ibid.*, p.284.
20. *Ibid.*, p.279.

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12. *The Foreign Relations of South Africa's Provinces* by D Geldenhuys (1998)
13. *The South African Defence Industry and New Thinking on Security* by A Zacarias (1998)

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