SOUTH   AFRICA   AND   WORLD   POLITICS

Realities in a Changing Situation

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The Changing World Scene

Although there have been profound changes taking place in recent
years in the pattern of international relations, both political and
economic, the view of world politics from South Africa seems still to be
a rather simplistic one.   There is a tendency to see the world in the
static mould of the cold war, i.e. a bipolar world in which middle and
small powers are either openly aligned with one of the two super-powers,
or non-aligned in theory but pro-Communist in practice.   We perhaps fail
to appreciate that the world is in the process of dynamic and rapid
change which is affecting fundamentally the relationships between states.
South Africa is not isolated from this process of change, and some of
our external problems are related directly to the changing situation which
at the same time also provides new opportunities.

The first half of the Seventies has seen the end of the dominance of
world politics by the two super-powers, for a variety of reasons, and
at the same time new initiatives to negotiate issues dividing the Soviet
Union and the United States.   Although only limited success has so far
been achieved in these negotiations, there are no serious indications
that the era of détente between the two, which replaced the confrontation
of the cold war, is ending.   Parallel with the détente between the two
super-powers, has been the détente in relations between the United States
and Communist China.   Although here again the results of the increased
communication between the two powers, high-lighted by President Nixon's
visit to Peking in 1972, have not yet fulfilled the expectations aroused,
there is no indication of any American desire to return to the policy towards
China of the Fifties and Sixties, and the latter is now playing a growing
role in the international community.   On the other hand, there are no

signs of a détente in the relations between China and the Soviet Union,
and a major factor in world politics continues to be the competition
between these two Communist powers for influence in the world.

Europe and Japan, as major economic powers in the world, have
been playing an increasingly independent role in international politics.
Although political unity in the European Community has obviously not been
achieved as quickly as many hoped, Western Europe, in the process of
grappling with its own particular problems, has come to rely less on the
United States which has been pre-occupied with internal and external
problems of its own. European sensitivities, and even suspicions, about
the United States' bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union, and the
tendency of European governments to dissociate themselves from American
foreign policy - especially as regards Vietnam and, since October 1973,
also the Middle East - have accentuated the divisions in what used to be
known as the Western Alliance, even if this has not resulted yet in a
unified European foreign policy.

Japan, too, has found the need to develop its own role in world
politics, to match its economic role, in place of a simple reliance on
American protection and on a special relationship with the United
States - a relationship which was discovered by the Japanese not to have
much substance when the Sino-American rapprochement took place in 1971-72.
Japan then had to move quickly to develop its own relations with Mainland
China and to improve its relations with the Soviet Union.

While the two super-powers remain completely unchallenged in their
overwhelming military strength (and are likely to remain so for the
foreseeable future), their ability to use this power to exert their
political will has become much more limited, and their authority over
their respective client states or satellites has diminished. (This is,
of course, more evident in respect of the United States than of the Soviet
Union.)

Under these circumstances the concept of the Third World, which emerged
during the bipolar period, has largely lost is political meaning. Regional
arrangements and regional powers are now emerging, concerned more with
their own problems and less with ideological commitments or world-wide

alliances. As Alistair Buchan has pointed out, a "diffusion of power"
is occuring within the international system.[1] While the threat of con-
frontation between the super-powers is thus reduced by this diffusion of
power, the possibility of local conflicts has increased, and generally
the world has "entered a period of such complexity that it makes the
clear distinctions of the previous quarter century - distortions and
myths though they may often have been - seem like the boyhood world of
Rousseau's nobel savage".[2]

To illustrate the complexity further, we must add to this brief
picture of the changing power pattern in the world, various other
factors now drastically affecting world politics.

The energy crisis, which is linked to the wider question of the
supply of raw materials, could be considered to fall more appropriately
under an economic or financial heading, rather than politics. But
obviously this matter cannot be divorced from international politics in
respect of either the causes or the effects of the crisis. The dependence
of the industrial countries of the West and also Japan on imported oil
has affected their relations with countries in the developing world,
especially those which are suppliers of oil, but also those which are
suppliers of other strategic raw materials. As all industrial nations,
except possibly the Soviet Union, are net importers of most of the raw
materials they require, the suppliers of these materials are given a new
political power in the world, which is illustrated, in particular, by
the current strong position of the OPEC countries, especially the Arab
states. This in turn has had a negative effect on Israel's relations
with the Western countries. Arab influence over other developing
countries, including those in Africa, has also increased.

Although South Africa is not a supplier of oil, it is a source of
other important raw materials, and this cannot but have a bearing on South
Africa's international political relationships.

The question of international trade, which has risen dramatically
in the scale of priorities for all governments in recent decades, cannot
in the modern world, be divorced from international politics. This
applies also to monetary relations which have become so critical in recent

years. The connection between economic, political and security relation-
ships is of necessity a close one, and the changes in the pattern of
economic relationships thus intimately affect world politics. South
Africa, as a growing economic and trading power, is involved in these
changes.

The predominance of economic factors in international relations has
brought with it more interdependence between states then in the past.
Other matters which now also receive priority attention, such as the
protection of the environment and the control and use of the sea, add
to this growing sense of interdependence, as they are issues which are
not limited by international boundaries.

The above matters are ones which are dealt with between governments
and therefore remain truly international. However, the interdependence
of countries and peoples is also being strengthened by other factors
which can more properly be defined as "transnational". These factors include
the growing role of the multinational company or transnational corporation,
which Mr. George Ball has argued "is a modern concept evolved to meet
the requirements of the modern age" at a time when the nation state "is
still rooted in archaic concepts unsympathetic to the needs of our
complex world".[3] The role of the MNC is a controversial one, especially
where nationalism remains strong, but nevertheless the power of certain
big corporations gives them the opportunity for great influence in today's
world - influence which cuts across national boundaries and which is not
everywhere under the full control of governments.

The spread of information and ideas, whether they be scientific,
social, political, ideological, etc., through the mass media and through
faster and more advanced forms of communication, is another important
underlying factor strengthening transnationalism and interdependence.
The spread of ideas, especially those which can influence internal
social change, is something which governments may try to control.
But experience shows that, even when a government has strong control over
the media, the flow of ideas cannot be stopped entirely.

This brief survey of some of the current developments in the
changing world picture, affecting international relations (including those
of South Africa), is perhaps an over-simplified one, but it serves to

indicate at least the complexities and some of the realities of the world
in which South Africa must move. Some of the factors mentioned affect
South Africa directly; others less so. But, in any case, it seems
necessary to try to avoid simplistic assessments of South Africa's
position in this complex world; and, faced with the realities, even to
revise some too easily held assumptions.

The Question of South African Isolation

Against this framework of a rapidly changing international system,
can it be said that the oft-stated proposition, namely that isolation is
the basis of South Africa's position in the world, is ture? There is
certainly much apparent evidence to support this proposition, when one
looks at the almost complete absence of diplomatic links with other
African states; the acute problems in the United Nations and other inter-
national organisations; the universal and frequent criticism by other
governments, not only in Africa; the arms embargo and lack of any defence
alliances; the international sports boycotts; the pressures from private
groups in Western countries on companies investing in South Africa; the
unsympathetic press coverage; and so on.

All these pressures and threats, which have been steadily increasing
over the past two decades or more, are consciously directed at increasing
South Africa's isolation. But what real effect have they had in areas
of vital concern? James Barber, in the introduction to his survey of
South Africa's foreign policy from 1945 to 1970, states that, while South
Africa has faced considerable diplomatic isolation, at the same time "she
enjoyed one of the fastest economic growth rates in the world. This
simply could not have been achieved without extensive international
contacts and co-operation." He goes on to say:

> "The contrast between diplomatic and economic contacts calls
> into question the basis on which South Africa's international
> relations should be examined. Should we, for example, concentrate
> on activity at the United Nations, or should we rather examine
> the flow of trade and investment? Obviously it would be a mis-
> take to concentrate exclusively on one form of contact to the
> exclusion of all others, and in South Africa's case particular
> caution must be exercised in accepting too easily that the
> widely reported, public, diplomatic reactions represent the
> whole picture."[4]

Given the importance of international trade in today's world and the

industrial countries' need to secure the supply of scarce resources,
together with South Africa's economic strength and its wealth of natural
resources, it is not surprising that all the efforts in the U.N. and
elsewhere to isolate South Africa in the economic sphere have largely
failed. In fact, South Africa's external economic relations have
prospered rather than declined, and there is no indication of any
change in this trend. Even in Africa, where trade boycotts have been
officially maintained by many countries, the amount of trade has been
increasing, not only within Southern Africa, but with countries further
north (although specific figures in this regard are not available).[5]
The ability of South Africa to furnish economic and technical assistance
and the desire of some African states to be able to trade openly with the
Republic, are at least among the factors in the current efforts to settle
political differences through communication and negotiation.

Arms embargoes by some countries, especially the U.K. and the U.S.,
have created problems, but they have not prevented South Africa from
building up a considerable defence capability. While there are no defence
alliances and a minimum of open co-operation with other defence forces,
this degree of isolation does not appear to have noticeably weakened
South Africa in the defence field.

The expansion of formal diplomatic relations with other states has
been to some extent limited by U.N. General Assembly recommendations aimed
at isolating South Africa. But in this regard it is noteworthy that,
in spite of numerous U.N. resolutions, the number of diplomatic and
consular missions abroad has steadily grown over the years, and it is
only in Africa that there has been some reduction. In fact, in no
region where South Africa has vital economic links, have diplomatic
relations been broken, and in regions where South Africa has been expanding
trade relations and forging new links, such as in Asia and Latin America,
a number of new missions have been opened in recent years.[6] It would
perhaps be true to say that the shortage of qualified personnel has been
a greater limiting factor on the growth of South Africa's Foreign
Service and its representation abroad, than the efforts of other
governments and international organisations to isolate the Republic
internationally.

The political problems encountered in international organisations are

real ones in the contexts of those organisations, and they have become
more acute during the past year. South Africa has not been able to
participate effectively in United Nations activities for many years, but
membership still remains important because of the opportunity it offers
for contact and communication, and thus for the resolving of political
differences with other states. Furthermore, the ending of U.N. member-
ship would make membership of other international organisations more
vulnerable, in particular the Specialised Agencies related to the U.N.,
which deal with technical matters of more direct concern to South Africa.
But even the ending of membership in these organisations would not
necessarily mean the isolation of South Africa in the technical fields
concerned. For example, South Africa has for many years not been able
to participate in the activities of the World Health Organisation and
was forced in the early Sixties to withdraw from the Food and Agriculture
Organisation. But this has not meant by any means that South Africa has
been isolated in the field of medical science, or been detrimentally
affected in the development of agriculture. What it has meant, of course,
is that South Africa has not been able to contribute from its know-how
and experience in these fields to the multilateral efforts in the
developing countries.

The focus of this paper concerns politics, and in this regard
isolation is a factor for South Africa in its international relations,
a factor which distinguishes it from almost all other states in the
world. But it is necessary to appreciate, when considering the realities
of the world today, that politics is only one dimension of international
relations, and that other related dimensions have increasingly high
priority.

Under the circumstances, therefore, there is some justification for
the conclusion of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Parliament in
September, 1974, that isolation is a threat and in some respects South
Africa has been isolated, but that "in most spheres, in the important
spheres, their attempts (at isolation) have failed". In this regard
Dr. Muller referred to the expansion of international trade and of
diplomatic relations, especially in Latin America. He also mentioned,
as being positive factors in international relations, South Africa's
economy and its advanced technology - with reference inter alia to the

nuclear energy field.[7]

Dr. Muller may have had domestic political reasons, on this
occasion and others, to look on the bright side of South Africa's
international position, in order to counteract Opposition accounts of
growing political isolation. But the facts he mentioned are real ones
of growing significance in a world where trade, monetary questions,
technological advances, energy problems, scarce natural resources, etc.,
are matters of increasingly high priority. The rhetoric of critical
public statements, offical and unofficial, in other countries and in
international organisations can be misleading and give an impression of
isolation which is in fact "sometimes more apparent than real" - as
suggested by Professor Jack Spence.[8]

Western Attitudes and the African Context

In none of the Western states - which are our important trading
partners - is South Africa high on the list of political priorities.
In no case has South Africa become anything more than a peripheral
issue in election campaigns, for instance - with the possible exception
of New Zealand this year, where it has been suggested that the issue of
rugby contacts may be one which counts against those on the Government
side who favour isolation of South Africa.

All Western industrial states are to a greater or lesser degree
desperately engaged in trying to cope with internal and external problems -
economic, monetary, social and political - in a highly unsettled world,
as indicated above. They have no apparent inclination also to get
involved directly in Southern Africa. In fact, their concern, in
their own interests, is that there should be stability in this region.
This does not mean that there is, or has been, any specific commitment
to South African racial policies as a means of maintaining stability,
but there is good reason for Professor Spence's view that South African
policy-makers have been able to act on the assumption that "Western
élites in both political and economic spheres have been, and still are,
essentially supporters of status quo in Southern Africa".[9] South African
policy has, therefore, been directed at maintaining and strengthening
an image of stability and prosperity, because of the importance of the

links with these Western industrial states. In today's uncertain world
there is less reason than ever for these states to alter their attitudes,
unless they are compelled to do so as the result of a fundamental change
in the Southern African sub-system. Such a change, as Professor Spence
again points out, "would have to be profound enough significantly to
threaten Western political and economic interests in the region".

Lest it should be thought that this conclusion gives grounds for
complacency about South Africa's international position, one should hasten
to add that efforts are being redoubled in various quarters to find effective
ways of disrupting South Africa's external economic relations, and of
reducing links in other areas, such as sport. However, the most important
factor now is that the Black African states are clearly preparing to press
for stronger measures, inter alia in the economic field, if the current
efforts to settle differences in Southern Africa through negotiations
fail.

The relevant question for us at the present time, therefore, is
whether the dramatic ending of Portuguese control in Mozambique and
Angola is bringing about the fundamental change in the Southern African
sub-system which might compel Western powers to alter their perception
of the South African situation - in spite of their reluctance to do so
in view of other vital preoccupations. In this regard, South Africa is
at present more vulnerable on the issues of Rhodesia and South West
Africa than on its own internal policies, because the major countries
of the West are already becoming increasingly committed to a solution
of these issues in terms of African demands, and are less likely to
resist pressures for effective action in the U.N. and elsewhere to hasten
a settlement of both these issues, than they would be on the issue of
the South African domestic situation - at least for the time being.

This important question brings us directly to the basic issue of
South Africa's relations with the rest of Africa. This forms the subject
of another paper, but it cannot, of course, be entirely avoided here,
because of its bearing on South Africa's relations with the rest of the
world, and in particular with the industrialised countries, which are our
main trading partners. Africa may not have a high priority in these

overseas countries, but the African states collectively do have an influence through their numerical strength as a group at the United Nations and in other international organisations related to the U.N., as well as in bodies such as the Commonwealth.

Pragmatically, most Western states and Japan would like to maintain relations with both South Africa and the Black African states, and they do not wish to have to make a choice in this regard. These governments have for years tried to avoid giving the impression that they are lending support to the South African Government. Hence their increasingly critical public statements. When they have to take a stand, for instance in refusing to break trading links or in preventing other extreme action by the United Nations, they obviously find it highly embarrassing. If the Black states increase their pressure and demands, as they appear likely to do now, if no settlements are reached in Southern Africa, South Africa may well find that its difficulties in the United Nations and with important countries overseas will increase. Already Japan has placed limits on its economic relations with South Africa, against what would seem to be its own economic interests, largely because of the importance it attaches to its position in the United Nations and its reluctance to antagonize the African group there.

Our relationships within Africa are therefore the key to better relations with the rest of the world, and it is only through normalising relations in Africa that a deterioration of South Africa's position in the world as a whole will be prevented. South Africa does not have any real dispute with other states outside Africa, and, as already indicated, our links in many fields, other than the strictly political, are growing. Even in the U.N., the disputes over "apartheid" and South West Africa are basically with the other African states; if these disputes can be settled in Africa, they will automatically disappear from the U.N. agenda. But nevertheless it is important to appreciate that these disputes, while they last, do affect our relations with other countries, and in the future they could affect them seriously.

Domestic or International Issue?

The nature of these disputes will be dealt with in Mr. Chambati's paper,

but it is relevant, when considering the wider picture of South Africa's
political position in the world, to stress that our disputes with the
rest of Africa are a reality with which we have to come to grips. Even
though the basic issue in dispute concerns Black/White relations within
the Republic, we cannot escape the reality of this dispute simply by
claiming that the situation, being domestic, is not the concern
of any other state. The fact is that the issue of relations between
Black and White in South Africa has become internationalised, whether or
not this fact can be justified in terms of traditional international law
or of the United Nations Charter, strictly interpreted, Professor Gerrit
Olivier has stated[10] that the entrenchment in international law of a
state's jurisdiction over its internal affairs "has proved to be of
little or no avail to South Africa ever since the founding of the U.N.",
and he quoted Professor Joseph Frankel as pointing out (in 1963) that
"reaction to Nazi atrocities which Hitler was left free to commit within
the sanctuary of his domestic jurisdiction, has led to widespread concern
with human rights everywhere". Professor Olivier has concluded:

> "To abrogate this principle of non-interference altogether
> would obviously be bad policy. But to stand or fall by it
> as the keystone of our foreign policy .... is
> totally unrealistic."

There is a further point in this regard, which is now becoming more
relevant, namely that the Government's policy of separate development
itself, which involves the creation of new independent states, in effect
makes the issue an international one. There is even a growing tendency
now for this policy to be presented as one of "decolonisation", and
there is no doubt that the question of decolonisation became accepted
long ago as an international issue, in spite of attempts by the colonial
powers in the early years after World War II to protect themselves
behind the domestic jurisdiction clause of the U.N. Charter. In any case,
whether separate development is a process of decolonisation or not, the
ultimate success of this policy will depend on international recognition
of independent Homelands.

From Defensive to Positive Policies

What are the consequences of accepting the reality of the internation-
alisation of the question of Black/White relations in South Africa? It
would seem that the first consequence should be a move away from the
defensive posture which South Africa has adopted for so long. Attempts to

defend the South African position from behind a legalistic shield of
domestic jurisdiction have obviously failed, and similarly attempts to
justify and explain internal policies, on the basis that other governments
and peoples are misinformed or have a distorted view, have not made much
headway and are not likely to. The fact is that, even if all the lack of
information and distortions that do exist, could be corrected, there
would still remain basic differences of principle about the policy
itself. The governments of neighbouring African states, for instance,
are not misinformed about the situation in South Africa; the fact is that
they disagree in principle with the South African Government. This
dispute over principles cannot be wished away simply by endless explanations;
it can only be ended by radical changes in the facts of the South African
situation, thus removing the grounds for the disagreement (which, to be
realistic, is not a likely course of events), or through negotiations in
which accommodations can be made on both sides, in order to reduce the
area of disagreement and provide for a gradual normalisation of relation-
ships.

In 1969 the Prime Minister emphasised the importance of our relations
with Africa (as he has done many times since) and stated: "To the extent
that we establish the right relations with Africa, to that extent will
our problems diminish in other parts of the world."[11] In this regard he
said further that it was essential that the African states, and others,
"must understand the essential nature of separate development".[12] However,
it seems clear that there is no way of simply convincing our fellow African
states, especially our neighbours, to accept this policy in theory, and to
co-exist with a South African system in which the Government continues to
apply the policy - in the hope that some day in the future it will prove
acceptable. There is wide acceptance in Africa of the position that it
is for the peoples of South Africa themselves to reach a settlement, with-
out direct interference from outside, but that in the meantime there will
be no co-existence, which implies acceptance of the "apartheid" system.
Instead, efforts will be continued to ostracize or isolate South Africa,
as a pressure for change.[13]

We will, in the final analysis, not get over this problem of normal-
ising relations with the rest of Africa until the internal situation has
changed or developed in such a way that there is clear evidence of internal

acceptance by our own Black people, followed then by acceptance in
Africa. This obviously cannot, and will not, happen at the stroke of
a pen internally, or through any sudden change of attitude externally.
It will have to be a developing process of change, with communication and
negotiation internally and externally, so that relations can gradually
improve. But the differences will certainly not be overcome, if we
insist that the issue which divides us from Africa, and which thus affects
our relations with other states outside Africa, is a purely domestic one
in which other governments have no right to be concerned, because to
insist defensively on that position is to fly in the face of the realities.

If then we are willing to discuss and even negotiate with other
governments over this basic dividing issue - and it seems we may have
reached that point - we have to accept that accommodation and even
concessions may well be necessary. It can never be expected in negotia-
tions that all the 'give' will be on one side. However, such a willingness
to negotiate realistically should not be confused with appeasement.
Negotiations do, it is true, imply the need for compromise, but at the
same time both sides in negotiations can expect to gain from them, and in
South Africa's case we have a great deal to gain from successful negotia-
tions with our fellow African states, even if this means agreeing to
changes which they require in return.

A positive policy of this nature would no doubt have an immediate
healthy effect on South Africa's relations with countries elsewhere in
the world, as has already happened as a result of South African initiatives
to seek negotiated settlements of the Rhodesian and South West African
questions. Such a positive policy would make it unnecessary to engage in
extensive propoganda campaigns in Western countries, which, however they
are dressed up, are simply evidence of a defensive posture. In this regard,
it does not help at all to point fingers at other countries where conditions
of life may be worse than in South Africa, because this is simply another
form of the defensive policy, and once again it avoids the real issue which
is the dispute within Africa over the principles involved, as well as the
hard facts of the situation. Any gimmickry in our foreign policy, including
the use of clever advertisements overseas, and concentration on questions
of South Africa's "image" abroad, do not go anywhere near the root of the
problem. At best they can merely serve as palliatives, while there

is always the danger they will be seen as "cover up" attempts.

There is a further problem with a defensive campaign in Western
countries. As already argued above, South Africa's isolation in the
world generally is more apparent than real, and in a world where trade,
monetary problems, resources, technology, etc., are of vital concern,
South Africa's external links have been growing in several directions.
The apparent isolation of South Africa is due to the prominence given to
political issues in the media and in official statements of other govern-
ments, but this situation is considerably aggravated by any high-lighting
of the divisive political issue in South African external propoganda,
official and non-official. The fact is that governments will not be
influenced in this way, and it is they which decide on policy towards
South Africa, because the public, generally speaking, in these countries
is indifferent. An illustration of this appeared in a recent report of
an attempt by a conservative American Senator to defend South Africa in
the Senate Chamber. The report stated that, when he started speaking,
"about half the Senate members stirred restlessly in their seats before
heading for the lounges".[14]

Confidence and Independence : A Regional Role

A further point about a defensive type of external policy is that
it appears to demonstrate a lack of confidence, whereas in fact South
Africa today has reason for considerable confidence in its external
relations generally, on the basis of its strong economic position, its
rich store-house of natural resources, its growing self-sufficiency in
its energy requirements, and so on.

There are reasons for confidence, too, in South Africa's military
and strategic position in the world. Although this area is the subject
of a separate paper, it is relevant to mention it here, because the
attempts to convince the West of South Africa's strategic importance for
them have generally been based on a rather negative and unsubtle approach.
The stress, for instance, has often been on anti-communism, which frankly
has no wide appeal in today's post-bipolar world. There has also been
a tendency to concentrate on and exaggerate potential threats. Instead
of this negative approach, which tends to draw attention to political
weaknesses, a more positive and realistic approach is needed, which takes

into account the realities of a changing world situation and which, for
instance, sees South Africa more in a regional role, as a stabilising
factor in the region, rather than as a link in a world-wide Western
defence network. We have, in other words, to get away from the thinking
of the cold war, with the defence of the status quo, and rather accept
that the world is changing and that South Africa's role in it is
changing accordingly.

This desire to be linked to the Western defence system and the
countless statements over the years, almost pleading for recognition as
a valuable anti-communist ally, illustrate what has been the main thrust
of South African foreign policy since World War II, namely to maintain
strong links with the West, particularly the United States, Britain and
France. There have been good reasons for this policy, such as trade,
but it has in the past been linked to a wider philosophy which has
perceived of South Africa as part of the so-called Western world - or the
"free world", as it is still sometimes described in cold war terminology.
(There was in the past also an inclination to describe ourselves as part
of the "civilised world", although this term, with its implications,
wisely seems to have been dropped in South Africa, but not yet in Rhodesia.)

South Africa's links with the metropolitan powers in colonial times
prevented our identification with Africa and gave strength to the idea of
South Africa as an "outpost of Western civilisation". Then, as the
colonial powers withdrew from Africa, South Africa was forced to begin
to come to terms with its real position as part of this continent, and
there was an attempt to define the country's role as a "bridge" between
Africa and the West. This was spelt out particularly by Mr. Eric Louw
as Foreign Minister in the late Fifties, but it was a concept which made
no impression anywhere outside this country, and it was clearly motivated
by the desire to have South Africa seen by the West as an outpost and as
a bulwark against the potential spread of communism in Africa. It was
also indicative of a strong reluctance to accept the changes taking place
in Africa and of opposition to Black nationalism. This set the Whites
of South Africa against both the metropolitan powers, whose policy it was
to withdraw from their colonies, and also the African nationalists who
were achieving independence. Under the circumstances, the claim of some
Afrikaner nationalists to have been the first anti-imperialists of

Africa sounded rather hollow.

However, South African official attitudes have evolved during the
Sixties and early Seventies, beginning under Dr. Verwoerd and then more
clearly under Mr. Vorster, so that there is now a clear willingness on
South Africa's part, officially at least, to see itself first of all as
an African state with a role in Africa.[15] This change of attitude has
been met by an open recognition on the part of Black African states that
South Africa is an independent African state and that the Whites are fully
Africans. This was spelt out in the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969, and in many
statements of African leaders since then. It is doubtful, however, whether
this perception of South Africa as fully committed to Africa in the first
place, has yet permeated very far in the thinking of Whites in general,
who are perhaps still inclined to view themselves as an appendage of
Europe.

It is also doubtful whether the consequences have been fully appreciated
even in official thinking, in regard, for instance, to South Africa's
political relations with countries outside Africa. The time has surely
come for us to recognise realistically that South Africa is not part of
any Western grouping of states – if such a single grouping even exists
any longer in the fluid state of world politics – and that South Africa now
has a character of its own which should be expressed in a fully independent
foreign policy. In a world where the bipolar alignment of states has broken
up, and where there is a stronger tendency for regional groupings to develop,
South Africa has every reason to see itself as a regional power, with its
primary role in Africa. In establishing its links with other regions and
with major world powers, South Africa would then frame its policies on the
basis of its own interests and those of its region, rather then attempting
to keep itself aligned with a particular group elsewhere in the world, or
a particular major power.

In the bipolar world, when the two super-powers dominated world
politics, the policy of seeking shelter under the United States umbrella
was perhaps unavoidable. But now, with other centres of power growing and
world politics more flexible, this is no longer the case. In any event,
there is no guarantee for South Africa of United States or West European
protection against any threat to South African security. Such protection

would presumably only be given, if these powers felt that this region was vital for their own security, so that a commitment to its defence could be made in their own national interests. This is not the case at present, and South Africa has to face that fact realistically, and act accordingly.

This suggestion that South Africa should increasingly see itself as a regional power, unaligned with any major world power, is based on the facts of the situation and the indication that official attitudes have been tending in that direction for several years, as reflected in the efforts since the late Sixties to diversify economic and political links away from the concentration on Europe and North America, towards both Latin America and Asia, and more especially as reflected in the current policy of communication and negotiation in Africa. We have come a long way since Dr. Malan's election manifesto in 1948, when the assurance was given that, should Russian aggression lead to war in the world, "we will not remain neutral ... our sympathy will be on the side of the anti-communist countries, and if it is sought and practicable, our active support as well". Two decades later, in 1968, after the United Kingdom had imposed its arms embargo, Dr. Hilgard Muller commented in the House of Assembly: "It is no wonder that many South Africans are beginning to ask themselves whether it is in South Africa's interests to stand unconditionally by the West at all times."[16] There have been other voices raised, too, suggesting that South Africa should declare itself to be neutral in the struggle between the West and Communism, but these have all generally been a reflection of resentment at the refusal of Western countries to recognise the Republic as a valuable ally, rather than a positive and realistic appreciation of the realities and of the Republic's opportunities as an unaligned, regional power, and the Government has continued to maintain its vehement public stand against the Communist powers. Whether or not there was any justification for the reluctance of Western countries in the past to associate themselves too closely, politically or militarily, with South Africa, there no longer seems to be any need for South Africa to commit itself in advance, as it were, to any particular powers or to align itself with any particular group, except when special circumstances and its own interests so dictate.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made above to deal with some of the factors in South Africa's external relations, in the light of the political realities of a changing world situation. Looking at the present position of South Africa in the world and the trends for the future, it seems necessary in particular to see our developing external relations as a whole, and to appreciate that the political constraints, which are the most obvious perhaps, do not by any means constitute the whole picture. Political isolation, which is a reality, does not mean that isolation is the most crucial factor in our international relations, when other vital areas, such as trade, are taken into account.

Nevertheless, the political factor is important, especially in Africa where it can be the determining factor, which in turn affects our wider relationships. It is, therefore, essential that we come to grips with the basic issue in the political dispute in Africa, an issue which has become in fact international, whatever may be thought about the legalities.

The recognition now of our potential role in Africa, and of the realities of our relationships with the so-called Western world, of which for so long we have assumed ourselves to be part, could be the beginning of a healthier, more realistic, view of South Africa's position in the world as a whole, namely as a regional power with a distinctive African character.

Needless to say, for this view to become a reality in the years ahead, our political differences in Africa must at least be drastically reduced. A great deal depends, therefore, on the current process of communication and negotiations with other African states.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1.   BUCHAN, Alistair, *The End of the Post-War Era : a new balance of world power.*   London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974. p.140.

2.   *Ibid.,* p.82.

3.   Quoted in Samuel P. Huntington, "Transnational Organisations in World Politics", *World Politics,* Vol.25 No.3, April 1973, pp.333-368, p.363.   In this article Professor Huntington deals also with other "transnational organizations" which operate across international boundaries "in relative disregard of those boundaries". (Page 333).   He concludes that "today the revolutionary organizations in world politics are not the national or international organizations which have been part of the nation-state system, but rather the transnational organizations which have developed alongside, but outside that system", and that in the immediate future "a central focus of world politics will be on the co-existence of and interaction between transnational organizations and the nation-state".   (Page 368). He does also point out, however, that "predictions of the death of the nation-state are premature".   (Page 363).

4.   BARBER, James, *South Africa's Foreign Policy, 1945-1970.*   Oxford University Press, 1973. p.3.

5   See, for example, in this connection the South African Foreign Minister's statement in SOUTH AFRICA (Republic). Parliament.   House of Assembly. Debates, 11th Sept. 1974, col.2640.

6.   For details in this regard, see author's contribution on "The Department of Foreign Affairs" in Denis Worral (*ed.*) *South Africa : Government and Politics.*   2nd ed. Pretoria : van Schaiks, 1975, pp.332-347.

7.   SOUTH AFRICA (Republic).   Parliament. House of Assembly, *op.cit.,* cols.2629-2632.

8.   SPENCE, Jack E. *South Africa's Foreign Policy in Today's World.* Johannesburg : South African Institute of International Affairs, 1975, p.1.

9.   *Ibid.,* p.1.

10. OLIVIER, Gerrit, "Foreign Policy : A change Needed", *New Nation,* Vol.5 No.9, April, pp.17-19, 29.

11. *SOUTH Africa in the World,* lectures delivered at the Annual General Meeting of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, Pretoria, July 1969.   Cape Town : Tafelberg-uitgewers, 1970, p.102.

12. *Ibid.,* p.103.

13. This position is reflected in the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969, the recent Dar es Salaam Declaration (April, 1975) and statements of African leaders.   There are, of course, more extreme positions which envisage military action by African states.   (The Zambian position on

this, reflecting a wide consensus, was stated by the Foreign
Minister in Dar es Salaam in April, 1975, when he stated that
Zambia would "not take up arms to fight South Africa".) On the
other hand, there are a few states which, while not approving of
the South African system, are perhaps prepared in effect to co-
exist with it and engage in "dialogue". Most African states, however,
do not accept the words "dialogue" and "détente", because of the
implications of co-existence in these concepts. The Zambian
Foreign Minister, for instance, said in Dar es Salaam in April :
"I therefore state categorically, as I have said many times before,
that Zambia and her friends have not been engaged in 'dialogue'
with South Africa. After all, one can only dialogue with a friend.
The term 'détente' is not in our vocabulary." (The discussions with
South Africa over the external questions of Rhodesia and South
West Africa are seen in a different light and are acknowledged as
necessary and productive by Zambia and similarly minded states.)

This position provides a serious problem for those who wish to
see discussions and even serious negotiations take place with
other African states over the basic issue dividing South Africa from
Africa. It will thus be necessary for certain basic agreed principles
to be found, to which there can first be a commitment on both sides.
Principles included in the Lusaka Manifesto could perhaps be taken
as a start in this regard.