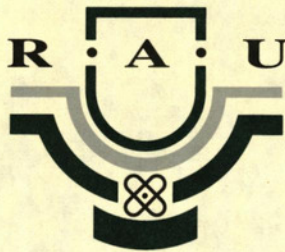


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Geagte dr Eloff

Ek neem die vrymoedigheid om die ingeslote voordrag voor te lê vir oorweging deur die Kodesa-werkgroep wat (onder meer) na die rol van die internasionale gemeenskap gedurende die oorgangsproses kyk. Die referaat bevat 'n aantal voorstelle oor hierdie rol (pp. 6 e.v.).

Die uwe

J.P. Harrie (Sekr.)

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Introduction

South Africa's foreign relations are being treated a bit like a stepchild in the current process of political transition from apartheid to majority rule. Understandably, most of the attention and energies of South Africans and foreigners alike are directed at the search for a new post-apartheid internal order. Precious little interest has been shown in the foreign policy dimension of the domestic transition.

This paper looks at the conduct of South African foreign policy during the phase of transition. It is a period that could, by many accounts, last well into 1994. The presentation therefore focuses on South Africa's international relations in the run-up to a new constitution being promulgated (and the so-called new South Africa actually coming into being).¹⁾

The foreign policy of transition, it will be argued, should involve more than managing - in a technical sense - South Africa's reintegration into the community of nations after decades of mounting ostracism. It should not simply be a question of restoring or establishing links with as many foreign counterparts as possible. Nor should foreign policy in this phase merely be aimed at accumulating political points abroad for President FW de Klerk's reforms at home. The foreign policy of transition should serve other more fundamental purposes too. On the one hand, the groundwork should be prepared for a new international role for a post-apartheid South Africa. On the other, the scene should be set for greater and longer term foreign involvement in a new South Africa. For this dual task, specific domestic requirements need to be met.

Although the substance of a post-apartheid foreign policy falls outside the scope of this paper, the suggestions made here are bound to influence future foreign policy. The proposals would create both opportunities and constraints for South Africa's foreign policy makers of tomorrow.

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF TRANSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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From international isolation to reintegration

The extension of South Africa's foreign relations will remain a major external feature of the process of internal political transition. South Africa has since February 1990 gradually been returning to the world community. Four decades of enforced isolation have been making way for international reintegration, by which is simply meant the restoration of links severed as a result of ostracist pressures or the establishment of new ties where these had previously been impossible because of enforced isolation.

Managing the process of international reintegration, it has been suggested, is one aspect of the foreign policy of transition. We therefore need to get some sense of the progress already made in restoring South Africa's international links and of the distance that still has to be travelled before this country's international relations have become fully normalised.

South Africa's return to international participation and indeed respectability can be charted with the help of a selection of indicators in the general areas of political and diplomatic, economic, and socio-cultural relations.²⁾

- * South Africa has begun to shed elements of its pariah image, specifically perceptions of a regional ruffian (destabilising neighbouring states), a colonial power (controlling Namibia) and most importantly a racist oppressor (upholding apartheid). South Africa's signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1991 has probably also helped to improve its international image.
- * For the first time since the early 1970s, South Africa's official representation abroad has lately been expanding. Among the countries with which South Africa has exchanged or agreed to exchange diplomatic, consular or trade missions since the beginning of 1990, are Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania, the Soviet Union (subsequently Russia and the Baltic republics), Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Togo and Turkey. There has

also been an upgrading of South Africa's existing formal ties with Denmark, Sweden and Argentina.

- * President De Klerk has travelled more widely abroad than any of his predecessors since 1948. Since his appointment as State President in September 1989, he has paid official visits to, among others, Namibia, France, Greece, Portugal, Belgium, Britain, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, the Ivory Coast, Cape Verde, Madagascar, Morocco, Swaziland, Senegal, Kenya, the United States and Luxembourg.
- * In the process of establishing or restoring formal ties with other countries, South Africa has lately concluded bilateral agreements dealing with trade, air and shipping links with, among others, Hungary, Madagascar and Italy.
- * The customary denunciations of South Africa by particularly the UN General Assembly, the Organisation of African Unity and the Commonwealth, have since February 1990 given way to far more moderate expressions of criticism and even to unprecedented commendation of the De Klerk government's political reforms.
- * Economic sanctions have been lifted or relaxed by scores of individual states, including Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Israel and Hungary. For South Africa, the most important developments in this field have been the lifting of the European Community's restrictive measures (beginning in December 1990) and President George Bush's decision in July 1991 to lift the package of economic restrictions imposed under the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.
- * Socio-cultural interaction between South Africa and the outside world has also become much easier. Examples are the greater freedom of movement for South African passport-holders abroad, the expansion of South African Airways' international routes and the (re)introduction of more foreign airlines to the South African route, and South African sports organisations' readmission to world bodies and international competition.

While the overall trend is unmistakable - an accelerating return to the international fold - South Africa still has several

hurdles to cross before full or normal international links have been restored. Its diplomatic network is still far smaller than the country needs or could sustain; its number of foreign missions remains well below that of states of comparable size. President De Klerk's frequent foreign journeys have not led to a reciprocal flow of top-level visits to South Africa. (Dutch Premier Ruud Lubbers will be the first to pay an official visit to South Africa in August this year.) South Africa's membership of intergovernmental organisations has not expanded; in the UN, the South African delegation's credentials are still not accepted. In the economic realm, the oil embargo is still formally in place. Despite the lifting of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, scores of US states and cities retain their own restrictive economic measures against South Africa. Military sanctions, notably in the shape of the UN Security Council's mandatory arms embargo of 1977, remain unaffected by the erosion of restrictions in other areas.

The retention of several forms of isolation is related to another obstacle: the ANC still insists that several types of sanctions should remain in force until the organisation decides to call them off. For the first 18 months after its unbanning in 1990, the ANC evidently found it difficult to decide on the conditions under which particular sanctions could be relaxed; its leaders repeatedly moved the goalposts. (Among the conditions variously mentioned by Mr Nelson Mandela and others, are: there should be "real change" in South Africa; there should be a "fundamental change in the living conditions of the majority"; apartheid should be abolished; a majority government should be democratically elected; constitutional negotiations should begin; violence should cease and political prisoners should be released.)³⁾

Realising that the sanctions weapon was fast slipping out of its hands as more and more states lifted restrictions against South Africa, the ANC in July 1991 agreed to a phased relaxation of sanctions tied to specific political conditions. In the first phase, people-to-people sanctions (sports tours, tourism, cultural exchanges, etc) would be lifted once obstacles to

constitutional negotiations, such as the release of political prisoners, had been removed. The second stage calls for the lifting of all remaining trade and investment sanctions, except for the oil and arms embargoes, once an interim government has been agreed upon. In the final phase, when a fully representative government has been installed, the oil and arms embargoes would end.⁴⁾ It was no coincidence that the ANC's new approach followed hard on the heels of the OAU's decision in June 1991 to support a phased relaxation of sanctions against South Africa.⁵⁾ Nor was it a coincidence that the October Commonwealth summit in Harare approved a formula strikingly similar to the ANC's phased ending of sanctions.⁶⁾

There are evidently foreign actors who take their cue on sanctions from the ANC. Although diminished, the ANC therefore retains some influence over other states and private organisations in their dealings with South Africa. In short, the ANC can still to some extent affect the pace of South Africa's return to the international community. (There is by contrast no meaningful international support for the PAC's demand that sanctions be tightened in all areas.)

The ANC's relaxation of its policy of isolating South Africa, coupled with the all too evident erosion of sanctions, have taken much of the steam out of the sanctions debate between the De Klerk government and the ANC. Yet, isolation through sanctions remains a divisive issue within South Africa: all (predominantly or exclusively) white political parties and the Inkatha Freedom Party are among those that have all along opposed sanctions, whereas the Pan Africanist Congress finds itself at the opposite pole. The ANC presently stands somewhere in the middle.

The final end of South Africa's long period of enforced isolation will only come about once the major domestic players have reached agreement that remaining sanctions should fall away. That, in turn, will depend on progress in drawing up a new constitution. South Africa's international reintegration is thus inextricably linked to domestic democratisation.

Promoting and protecting the internal transition

Any state's foreign policy is aimed at safeguarding a particular domestic value system. Thus, until recently, South Africa pursued what has been termed "the foreign policy of apartheid". By the same token, the Soviet Union followed the foreign policy of communism, (or, finally, perestroika), Britain pursued the foreign policy of Thatcherism under the previous Prime Minister, and President Kaunda's Zambia conducted the foreign policy of humanism. Now that South Africa has entered a period of internal political transition - bridging the era of apartheid and a future democratic order - it is only to be expected that its foreign policy will be designed to protect this process and thereby promote a democratic outcome. This means guarding against disruptive influences from abroad and seeking external encouragement for a negotiated settlement in South Africa.

It must immediately be conceded that the identification of such positive and negative foreign influences is politically controversial. From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the two main players on the local stage, the National Party and the ANC, presently hold divergent views on the role that the international community should play during the transitional phase. The major point in contention relates to sanctions. The ANC regards the maintenance of sanctions as a positive external contribution: they are a means of keeping pressure on the Government to heed the ANC's demands, thereby strengthening the organisation's bargaining position. Sanctions are therefore a lever used by the ANC for domestic political purposes. The Government, by contrast, is adamant that the original justification for sanctions - a white minority government refusing to concede political rights to the black majority - no longer exists and that the retention of punitive measures could only retard economic growth to the detriment of particularly the disadvantaged black population.

The formal renunciation of economic sanctions by the ANC will have important implications for South Africa's domestic

politics. A divisive domestic political issue would be removed. The political contest between the ANC and the National Party would be played out on the local stage; the ANC would no longer call on foreign actors to strengthen its bargaining position vis-à-vis the National Party through coercive measures from abroad. This could in turn symbolise a new relationship of trust between the two parties.

More important for our purposes than the domestic implications of the ANC calling off sanctions, are the effects on South Africa's international relations. Such a move may well herald a 'new era in the country's foreign relations. The removal of the sanctions factor could lead major South African political parties to approach the international community with a new and unprecedented unity of purpose. One is thinking not only of an emerging bipartisan approach to foreign policy issues between the National Party and the ANC, but a much wider consensus involving most parties. This would certainly be possible in the case of the 19 parties participating in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa). Those choosing to remain outside Codesa - they presently include the PAC and all white right-wing parties - are unlikely to make common cause with the Codesa participants on either domestic or foreign policy matters.

An immediate issue that calls for a common approach, concerns the role that foreign nations should play to promote the process of constitutional reform in South Africa. This is in fact a matter being addressed by one of Codesa's working groups. It is an important question because the nature of external involvement could influence both the process of negotiation and its eventual outcome.

It seems likely that most South African political parties could now or in the near future agree on the following guidelines for foreign involvement:

- * The international community should try to encourage South African parties to seek a negotiated settlement of their

conflicts. Having invested so much time, energy and money in fighting apartheid, the outside world has at least a moral duty to support the search for an apartheid-free alternative through peaceful negotiations.

- * Foreign actors should not try to prescribe a constitutional settlement to South Africans but should be free to assist any local party in the negotiating process - at its request - through the provision of technical expertise and funding.
- * No foreign country should support violence as a means of achieving political ends in South Africa and should therefore not consider any request by a local party for supporting armed action.
- * Remaining economic and socio-cultural sanctions should be phased out.
- * Foreign nations should be encouraged to expand their economic and cultural ties with South Africa so as to benefit the people as a whole.

These, then, could be the basic tenets of what might be termed cooperative involvement from abroad during South Africa's process of internal transition.

A corollary of the first guideline is that foreign actors should discourage South African parties from obstructing the negotiations embarked upon through Codesa. This was indeed done during the March referendum campaign when major Western states warned the Conservative Party and its supporters of the dire international consequences of a "No" vote. Whether or not these warnings actually influenced the outcome of the referendum is of less importance for our purposes than the fact that key powers actually intervened in a domestic political contest with the clear intention of promoting a particular result. This could be regarded as a form of cooperative involvement: there was a convergence of interest between the intervenors, the Government and Codesa. (It was of course a novel experience for a Nationalist government in South Africa to have the international community openly backing its side in a test of white voter opinion.) It is not impossible that this type of external intervention could again occur in future, perhaps with a

different obstructing party as the target.

As long as progress continues to be made in constitutional negotiations, foreign involvement in the process itself is unlikely to extend much beyond some technical and financial support. But what if the negotiations reach deadlock or, worse still, break down? What kind of role could the international community then play?

Foreign governments could try to restart the negotiation process through conventional diplomatic (peaceful) methods of dispute settlement. Individually or collectively, foreign actors could

- * provide good offices, i.e., serve as a channel of communication between the disputing parties;
- * engage in a fact-finding mission (inquiry) to clarify the facts in contention;
- * mediate by actually entering negotiations between the conflicting parties and suggesting terms of settlement; and
- * resort to conciliation, using a commission or international body to find a solution through compromise.

Third party intermediation could of course only succeed if the foreigners' services are accepted by the conflicting parties. If not, third party involvement could take the form of imposition, where a powerful external actor orders the disputants to cease their conflict behavior and imposes some compromise by threatening punishment for non-compliance. The UN Security Council is one possible "imposer".

Should the international community believe that the South African government (whether the existing one or a new white government) was deliberately obstructing the negotiations, sanctions would probably be brought back. Should the Government go so far as to unilaterally suspend the negotiation process, the international community may well consider non-peaceful means of pressuring Pretoria to resume negotiations with its black opponents. Foreign intervention could then take the form of support for a renewed armed struggle by the liberation movements. A more drastic form of intervention would be the

imposition of a blockade to enforce sanctions. And then there is the ultimate form of intervention, namely, a direct military attack by foreign forces. The latter seems most likely in a situation of civil war in South Africa.⁷⁾

Official South African diplomacy (or what remains of it) would under these calamitous conditions be forced on the defensive more than ever before. It would be fighting a futile rearguard action. And Pretoria's diplomats would then also have to contend with a reinvigorated alternative diplomatic corps run by the ANC - in a world far more receptive to the latter's message than to Pretoria's.

But let us return to the optimistic scenario in which the constitutional negotiations remain on track. In these circumstances, South African diplomacy would need to encourage cooperative international involvement - and discourage contradictory tendencies. By promoting a set of objectives supported by most political parties in the country, South African diplomats would at long last be seen - both here and abroad - as serving the interests of society as a whole. What would detract from the credibility of the message, though, would be a virtually all-white diplomatic corps carrying it into the world. South African diplomacy needs to reflect the changing political realities in the Republic not only in the messages conveyed to the international community, but also in the messengers used.

Keeping the outside world informed, interested and involved in South Africa during the transitional phase, would require Pretoria to abandon its familiar "lying low" posture. This was a natural response to international unpopularity and adversity: South African diplomats abroad adopted a low profile to avoid attracting negative attention. Now, however, South African representatives abroad need to make their presence felt to ensure an external environment conducive to the Republic's domestic process of democratisation. Cooperative involvement by other states will only come about if South Africa manages to counter any international tendency to forget about the Republic

and leave it to its own devices now that apartheid is finally being abolished.

A second and entirely different adjustment that has recently been made in established South African diplomacy, is the shedding of Pretoria's deeply ingrained anti-communist orientation. Such an orientation has no selling power in the world of the 1990s, nor is there any longer room for the "praetorian-ideological" style of diplomacy⁸⁾ that Pretoria had previously developed into a fine art.

But while South African diplomacy is coming to terms with the post-Cold War era in which communism is in retreat across the globe, the South African Communist Party (SACP) has evidently been given a new lease of life. (It is more than a mere irony that a Communist Party seems to grow in this day and age - moreover in a country in which there had long been an officially sanctioned anti-communist crusade.) The ostensible increase in SACP support is of relevance here because of the party's ties with the ANC. They are more than mere allies: they permit overlapping membership. South Africa's government-in-waiting, the ANC, consequently displays a strong communist presence and presumably also influence. This feature has implications for foreign relations. It is doubtful whether there is much enthusiasm in the West for the ANC's marriage to the SACP. Yet, South African diplomacy in the phase of transition would have to alert the world to the possibility that the first post-apartheid government may well include communists among its members.

Perhaps South African diplomats could sugar this particular pill for their Western hosts (and no doubt for themselves) by looking at the ANC-SACP connection in some other ways too. By drawing the SACP into government, it could be argued, the party would by force of political circumstance become more moderate (read: less communist). Or to put it more crudely, cooptation is a proven route to moderation. It should also be conceded that the SACP has already abandoned many of its orthodox Marxist-Leninist beliefs and displays many social democratic features. Not to be

discounted either, is the possibility of the ANC and the SACP going their separate ways as two independent parties each with its identity and membership. Such a divorce during the period of political transition may make it easier for South African diplomats to "sell" the ANC abroad as the heir apparent.

A third adaptation required of South African diplomacy during the period of transition, is that it needs to extend its gaze far wider than the traditional areas of interest. In the era of isolation, South Africa had few friends and fewer allies. Large parts of the world were effectively closed to the Republic. Now the diplomacy of isolation needs to be replaced by the diplomacy of participation. This not only requires greater manpower but also the development of knowledge and understanding of what were previously terrae incognitae. What might help in the situation, and also make the diplomatic service more representative of the general populace - and thus improve its credibility both at home and abroad - would be the timely merging of the diplomatic corps and the ANC's own "foreign service". This could indeed follow agreement on an interim government.

In the process of expanding its foreign relations, and as familiar external threats disappear, it may well be asked whether South Africa still needs certain "old friends" as much as before. Taiwan and Israel obviously come to mind. The important consideration is whether a state on the road back to international respectability should still be seen in the close company of so-called pariah states. A state is after all supposed to have no permanent friends, only permanent interests.

But Pretoria should also be cautious in making new international commitments or restoring old ones, lest the impression be created that its foreign relations are still serving white interests only. It can then be asked whether the Government's highly partisan position on the recent war in the Persian Gulf was appropriate? True, Pretoria backed the winning side, but would it not have been better, given popular sentiments among black South Africans, to have merely taken a principled stand on the issues involved? By the same token, one should question

President De Klerk's effusive praise for President George Bush and the US during his visit to Washington in 1990. Apart from the unequivocal identification with the US, Mr De Klerk's public outpouring of pro-American sentiment - in President Bush's presence - tended to leave an impression of South African servility.

Growing international involvement means that the Republic will, in the fourth place, increasingly be called upon to help address global issues of the day, such as the ecology, nuclear proliferation and population development. Previously, South Africa found itself involuntarily excluded from many areas of international functional cooperation. South Africa probably experiences a considerable lack of expertise regarding collective problem-solving at global level and will urgently have to address this deficiency.

Fifth, South Africa can approach the world community with a new confidence born out of the knowledge that the government of the day's commitment to a process of democratisation conforms to the international Zeitgeist. No longer condemned to defending the indefensible, South African diplomacy is bound to acquire a new assertiveness. In the place of the old defensive, apologetic, turning-the-other-cheek approach to the world, South Africa can now afford to become somewhat bold and even demanding in dealing with other states. Instead of projecting the image of a delinquent state at the mercy of the international community, South Africa can be expected to assert itself now that it can defend its interests from a moral basis too.

Assertiveness should not be confused with aggressiveness, though. The latter was an outstanding feature of Foreign Minister Eric Louw's brand of diplomacy (although by no means exclusive to him). A more tangible form of aggressiveness was evident in the 1980s, the era of South Africa's "coercive diplomacy" in Southern Africa.⁹⁾ Now that the season of violence in regional relations is over, South Africa would probably need to sharpen such standard diplomatic skills as persuasion and negotiation in dealing with its neighbours. This is the sixth

adjustment called for.

Seventh, South African diplomats should prepare the ground internationally for new political masters in Pretoria (or Mamelodi). This is by far the most difficult adaptation since it is not clear exactly who will govern the new South Africa (will it, for example, be the ANC alone or in a coalition with one of more other parties?), nor precisely what type of foreign policy the next government will follow. All that can be said with certainty is that the first government elected under a new constitution will be very different in racial composition and political complexion to any of its predecessors.

The prospective new rulers themselves also have an important role to play in this process of foreign policy adaptation. Foreign observers can be expected to read into their current conduct an intimation of things to come in future. The foreign policy of the ANC in opposition may thus serve as a guide to the foreign policy of the ANC in power. From this perspective, recent actions by ANC leader Nelson Mandela are bound to raise eyebrows if not hackles in several foreign capitals. His public expressions of solidarity with the likes of Presidents Fidel Castro and Muammar Ghaddafi and PLO leader Yassir Arafat are not exactly calculated to win respectable friends and positively influence important people abroad.

It is hard to believe that the ANC could have been unaware of the poor impression that Mr Mandela's identification with these leaders would make in many Western states. Why, then, did he do it? And does it have any significance for a post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy? On both counts, one can only speculate.

One possible explanation for the ANC's embrace of leaders widely loathed in the West, is that the organisation wanted to cock a snook at Western nations - perhaps in retaliation for the latter's support for the De Klerk government's reforms and their perceived desertion of the ANC. Alternatively, the ANC wished to assert its independence in foreign relations, making clear that it would not be constrained by Western sensitivities.

Identifying with these three leaders may also be part of a more general pattern of solidarity with the Third World, particularly those nations that seem to be "bullied" by the West. Another possibility is that the ANC leader was merely repaying old debts: Messrs Castro, Ghaddafi and Arafat have long supported the ANC. (Why then not the same expression of gratitude for the then Soviet Union and China?) A final, perhaps more cynical, explanation is that the ANC realises that it would be politically inappropriate to associate too closely with Cuba, Libya and the PLO once it is in power. The ANC therefore has to pay its dues now, in the luxury of opposition where it is less exposed to foreign criticism.

Should the latter consideration apply, it follows that Mr Mandela's warm feelings toward foreign leaders of dubious repute have little bearing on a future ANC government's foreign policy. Should any of the other explanations be correct, the ANC's current behaviour may well be an indication of its conduct once in power: its foreign policy may, at least in style, be characterised by a keen sense of independence and assertiveness in dealing with the West, coupled with a strong rhetorical identification with the Third World.

Finally, South African diplomacy during the transitional phase should not merely serve short-term objectives but should lay the foundations for sound international relations in the post-apartheid era. Put differently, South Africa ought to manage its gradual international reintegration in a way that would ensure longer term benefits, instead of being guided by immediate considerations of prestige or party political gain.

One of the longer term dividends for South Africa of cooperative involvement from abroad in the current reform process, is that foreign states may in future feel a moral duty to help safeguard an eventual constitutional settlement. They would in a sense serve as the external guarantors of a new democratic constitutional order. States with a high moral profile in international politics, such as the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Canada, may have a particular role to play in

this regard. Other states may wish to help protect South Africa's new order for no other reason than to safeguard their material interests in the country. Either way, the role of informal guarantor could prove problematic for other states. There are questions about the propriety of such a role (should outsiders "police" South Africa's new internal order?) and about its effectiveness (can a guarantee be enforced in practice?) Add to that the risk of the informal guarantors being drawn into a distant domestic conflict.

On the South African side, the proposed international safeguard against undemocratic tendencies would probably be welcomed by the National Party and other smaller political groupings that may be concerned about their rights under a majority government. The liberation movements, having for so long solicited international support in their declared struggle for a democratic alternative to apartheid, should from one perspective welcome external involvement to safeguard the fruits of their long struggle. From another perspective, a future government may object to such a watchdog role on the grounds that it could restrict its freedom to restructure South African society. Such a government is moreover likely to guard jealously over the sovereignty of the state over which it has just taken control.

Perhaps the way out of the dilemma is to see the role of external guarantor as an informal one without any official powers of enforcement. The role should also be a consequence of cooperative involvement rather than a conscious objective thereof. By encouraging cooperative involvement from outside, South African diplomacy would thus by implication create opportunities for political watchdogs among the country's foreign partners.

South African foreign policy should in the interim period between the demise of white rule and the advent of a black-dominated government also promote the basic longer term objectives of security, prosperity and stability.

Here a critical factor is the encouragement of greater foreign

participation in the South African economy. This involves not only trade, but also the importation of capital in the form of investment and loans, and the transfer of foreign technology to South Africa. Increased external economic penetration is vital for economic growth which, in turn, is a prerequisite for prosperity and stability and ultimately also security. A new political order that is not underpinned by a strong economy is likely to experience severe strains caused by unfulfilled material aspirations.

Sanctions have in both intent and effect restricted South Africa's international economic relations. The mere easing of economic sanctions will not, however, automatically restore or expand the Republic's foreign economic ties. South Africa in some respects finds itself in a harsher world than before the drastic intensification of its economic isolation in the mid-1980s. Following the demise of communism, Eastern Europe has become the focal point of Western economic interest. This may well be happening at the expense of Africa as a whole, which (to use the overworked but telling term) runs the risk of becoming marginalised in the world economy. And then there is also the growing trend towards bloc formation and protectionism in the international economy, developments that could be particularly damaging to the Third World, South Africa included.

It would be a tragedy if South Africa moved out of enforced economic isolation only to be condemned to economic marginalisation along with the rest of Africa. This country's present and future rulers should realise that the major economic powers have immediate interests far removed from South Africa and Africa. The world does not owe South Africa a living. A major challenge to South African diplomacy in the transitional period would therefore be to market South Africa as a worthwhile economic partner for many years to come. Needless to say, economic salability begins at home.

Concluding remarks

Now that apartheid is disappearing, there may be a growing international tendency to forget about South Africa. And once a post-apartheid government has actually been installed - and the South African problem thus ostensibly resolved - this trend may become even stronger. Many countries would probably take the view that they had done their duty by somehow contributing to the struggle against apartheid; what follows thereafter, is none of their responsibility. The isolation of a state caused by its perceived international irrelevance or by the indifference displayed by countries of consequence, could affect it as adversely as ostracism through punitive measures.

South African foreign policy would already during the phase of internal transition have to try to counter this potentially damaging external tendency. If anything, a new South Africa would need the world more than ever before. Not only will the country's material well-being be critically dependent on the world economy, but the fate of a new democratic order may to some extent be tied to the action or inaction of the international community.

These considerations inform the dual initiatives of expanding South Africa's participation in international relations and increasing external penetration of South Africa. The latter has been termed cooperative involvement from abroad, the encouragement of which should be a major task of South African foreign policy in the current period of political transition. Apart from its potential longer term benefits, cooperative involvement could also serve the immediate purpose of promoting and protecting constitutional negotiations.

To draw other states into the South African situation and to steer the country back to full international participation would require several important adaptations to established South African diplomacy. South African diplomats are already operating from a domestic base that is undergoing fundamental change, and they also have to contend with an international environment that

has undergone profound changes over the last few years. This country's diplomats need to help prepare South Africa for the new world of the 1990s, on the one hand, and prepare the world for the new South Africa on the other hand.

In the final analysis, as South Africans know only too well, success in the realm of foreign policy is determined by events on the domestic front. South Africa's diplomats will, as ever, be at the mercy of the politicians at home. By the same token, the international community can hardly be expected to make either constitutional negotiations or a new South Africa succeed if the local players do not have the will to do so.

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