

## **Essay Review**

### **South Africa's Foreign Policy and the World**

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South Africa's relations with the rest of the world have been a subject of more intense debate at the United Nations and the O.A.U. than any other international problem; but the continuing debate is also about the Republic's internal race policies subsumed in the term apartheid. Recent works on the subject\* agree that South Africa's foreign policy is the direct product of the Republic's internal race policies. The least satisfactory of these is Cockram's examination of Vorster's foreign policy. Unlike Barber and Vandenbosch, who analyse South Africa's foreign policy in the context of the world at large, Cockram does attempt to give a comprehensive outline of South Africa's concern with its immediate neighbours in Southern Africa and other black African states in the continent at large. This, however, is done rather superficially and in a somewhat disjointed way; after a discussion of South West Africa, she deals with Israel, and when she returns to South Africa's relationships with neighbouring states, Rhodesia and Portugal are kept separate. The result is a series of essays hardly linked together; indeed there is little real discussion of apartheid which, after all, is the cause of the unifying element in South Africa's rather

defensive foreign policy.

Nevertheless, Cockram's discussion of Israel and America are of interest. South Africa's special relationship with Israel is partly based upon the fact that South Africa has the ninth largest Jewish community in the world and several former South Africans hold or have held prominent positions in Israel, such as Mr. Eban, the former Israeli Foreign Minister who was born in Cape Town. South Africa has always taken great interest in Israel and she has likened her own position in Southern Africa to that of Israel in the Middle East. South Africa has always supported Israel, both in and outside the U.N. Cockram points out how this special link between South Africa and Israel has been complicated by the fact that Israel has worked hard to have good relations with black African states, which South Africa regards as her enemies.

In order to improve its image in black Africa Israel withdrew its diplomatic representation in South Africa, an action which was considered 'a slap in the face of South Africa'. Reacting to Israel's withdrawal of its representatives from the Republic, the South African Prime Minister, Dr Verwoerd, pointed out that in the past, 'South Africa and particularly the Jews of South Africa had done much for Israel as a young state'. Verwoerd accused Israel of attacking South Africa in the hope of currying favour with the non-white states in Africa. Cockram tries to show how

\* J. Barber, *South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945-1970*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1973, 325 pp. R.10.20. G. M. Cockram, *Vorster's Foreign Policy*, Pretoria, Academica, 1970, 222 pp. R3.75. A Vandenbosch, *South Africa and the World: The Foreign Policy of Apartheid*, Lexington, Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1970, 303 pp. no price indicated.

difficult it was for Israel to seek to spread her influence in black Africa without showing her disapproval of apartheid. Thus in the United Nations Special Political Committee on Apartheid in October 1967, the Israeli representative, Mr. Barromi, spoke of 'the suffering and martyrdom of the people of South Africa', and appealed to the U.N. to stop the strife. Israel has repeatedly supported the U.N. on South West Africa. The point that Cockram brings out in this brief chapter is an illustration of how the Republic's race policies summarized as apartheid, have been a source of embarrassment and discomfort to even those countries that have certain admiration for South Africa's achievements.

South Africa's relations with the United States are traced through a long history of friendship which was 'forged in battle' in the days of 'the military alliance during World War I, followed by the cooperation of President Wilson and General Smuts in drafting the Covenant of the League of Nations. During the Second World War the two countries were once again allies and at the conclusion of the War, 'General Smuts once again took part with the United States leaders in the drafting of the Charter of the United Nations'. To illustrate the development of good relations between the two countries, Cockram refers to General Smuts' statement in which he said, 'The United States is rapidly becoming the hub of general world interests, and our relations with the United States are increasing on a tremendous scale'. Cockram illustrates how this relationship, too, began to change with the independence of Ghana and other black African states, and with growing American criticism of apartheid at the U.N.

Nevertheless America has maintained economic and cultural links and also generally supports the Republic's attitude towards Communism. Cockram sees this as a contradiction in American policy, but this is perhaps because she underestimates the role played by American Negroes in exerting pressure upon their Government to condemn apartheid as a policy which violated the Charter of the U.N. on Human Rights.

Cockram pays special attention to South Africa's relations with Malawi which was the first black African country to establish formal diplomatic relations with the Republic; and this came at a time when South Africa was

trying desperately to get out of isolation. Thus Malawi's role and her persistent call for a dialogue with South Africa was seen as that of the 'Devil's Disciple'. Indeed, the Republic's breakthrough in Malawi was by the establishment of contact between the Republic and Madagascar and Mauritius. Cockram's contention that the Republic's success in establishing contact with Madagascar and Mauritius can be attributed to Malawi's positive response, is of considerable doubt. These two countries had their own reasons for seeking to establish good relations with the Republic. South African hopes that were raised as a result of these successes were soon to fade as a result of O.A.U.'s rejection of establishing contact with South Africa before she showed signs of changing her internal policy. The relations between the Republic and Madagascar were short-lived as they were brought to an abrupt end in 1972 when the army took over in that country.

Cockram also discusses other aspects of South Africa's foreign policy such as 'The Defence of the Cape Sea Route', and the 'Manufacturing of Weapons by South Africa'. She points out, and rightly so, how such matters play an important role in South African foreign policy and indeed constitute one of the major sources of the Republic's strength *vis-a-vis* outside pressures. It is because of its gold that South Africa continues to defy the world and it is also through its gold that the economy continues to boom and attract large numbers of immigrants from Western Europe. Geopolitics has always been an important aspect of foreign policy, and the defence of the Cape Sea route has helped to draw South Africa closer to Britain. The Simonstown Agreement is an example of the importance to South Africa of her geographical position, and the growing presence of the Russians in the Indian Ocean has greatly enhanced this.

Barber and Vandenbosch examine South Africa's foreign policy in a world-wide context. Both authors present a historical background to the Republic's present policy and trace the country's foreign policy showing how it has been shaped in recent years by the need to explain apartheid to the world at large. Barber covers the period between 1945 and 1970, and demonstrates how, because of apartheid, South Africa became a victim of the U.N. which it helped to create. He analyses South Africa's

foreign policy by using a chronological framework consisting of four periods. In the author's view each of these periods has distinct characteristics based on the 'changing circumstances faced by policy-makers and their perception of and response to these circumstances'. He also shows the relationship between internal and external developments; and in this the period between 1948 and 1959 is seen as the most important in South Africa's international relations. Before the Nationalists came to power in 1948 they had been extremely critical that Smuts was concentrating too much of his attention on international affairs, but in 1955 they established the Ministry of External Affairs, which had hitherto been part of the Prime Minister's Office; this was an admission on their part that South Africa could not afford to ignore the impact of foreign affairs on its society. South Africa faced a rapidly changing world, as decolonization in Africa was in the process of being effected. Barber clearly traces the origins of South Africa's dilemma and shows its failure to come to grips with the realities of the world situation after the Second World War. Both Barber and Vandenbosch make the point that South African Nationalist leaders were convinced that their country's anti-communist stand and its subscription to Western values, would automatically attract support from the Western world. In a chapter dealing with South Africa and 'a Divided World', Barber maintains that 'the South African Government was prone to interpret international politics as a simplistic power-cum-ideological struggle between communism and anti-communism'. Dealing with the same subject, Vandenbosch discusses how the South African Prime Ministers have all held the view that their country's anti-communist stand should influence the attitude and the thinking of the West towards South Africa. Nationalist leaders have viewed their country's objectives in the world as being the same as those of the rest of the Western World. Not only did South Africa regard itself as the bastion of western civilization in Africa, but, as Vandenbosch points out, also 'as indispensable to the white world'.

All three authors fail, however, to emphasise the fact that South Africa's view of the world was quite different from that of the rest of the international community which had emerged after the Second World War. Thus, South Africa

and the rest of the world were operating on entirely different cognitive maps. South Africa saw the world in terms of anti-communist and communist blocs. She failed to recognize the realities which characterized the world after the Second World War. The first of these realities was the establishment of the United Nations as an international forum, dedicated to the safeguarding of humanity throughout the world, which inevitably included self-determination to nationhood for all peoples and the restoration of human rights.

South Africa also failed to grasp the nature of the Afro-Asian bloc which was dismissed as but part of the communist bloc. South Africa did not seem to appreciate the fact that the process of decolonization resulting in the emergence of new nations was a response, on the part of the colonial powers, to the principle of self-determination and the granting of full human rights as dictated by the Charter of the United Nations. The new nations which constituted the Afro-Asian bloc were products of the direct application by the colonial powers of the principle of self-determination, and by the very nature of their birth, these nations were bound to oppose any resistance to the granting of freedom and independence. South Africa's foreign policy was, therefore, based on wrong premises and an erroneous interpretation of the U.N. Charter and what it implied. The result is that despite South Africa's efforts, exercised through the Ministry of External Affairs, the Republic's foreign policy has failed to change the attitude of the world towards apartheid.

In 1960 the British Prime Minister, Macmillan, warned in his speech to the members of the South African Parliament in Cape Town that South Africa and the West in general had to come to grips with 'the wind of change' which was blowing throughout the continent of Africa. In his reply to Mr. Macmillan's speech, Dr Verwoerd said that his country shared common objectives with Britain: 'peace and the continued existence of Western ideas and Western civilization'. The South African Prime Minister made it clear that his country 'wanted to be on the side of the West in the tense division which existed in the world'. Verwoerd missed the point. The question was not on which side South Africa stood, but whether South Africa was prepared to accept the realities of the 'wind of change'. The extent to which South Africa misunderstood the West was underlined

when Verwoerd went on to point out that 'it was easy to understand why South Africa was condemned by the Communist countries', because South Africa was 'unequivocally the symbol of anti-Communism in Africa'. He added that it was more difficult to understand why the Western countries, 'from whom we are descended and with whom we share such close cultural ties, turn against us'. The implication of Verwoerd's statement was that the West should support South Africa on racial and cultural grounds'; in fact he was calling for international racism — a point that all three authors should have emphasised.

Both Barber and Vandenbosch agree that at the heart of the difficulties between South Africa and the United Nations and the world was the race policy pursued by the Government of the Republic of South Africa; and Vandenbosch, more than Barber, presents a critical analysis of apartheid, enumerating a multitude of segregatory laws which characterize this policy. Both authors deal with the United Nations' attack on apartheid, and with South Africa's defence of her policy, which in short, is that the question of its race policies was a domestic matter and therefore outside the jurisdiction of the United Nations in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter. Although Vandenbosch discusses the treatment of Indians in South Africa to illustrate the international implications of apartheid, all the three authors fail to examine in detail the international dimensions of South Africa's race policies. They ought to have devoted at least a chapter to this question as the centre of argument in the United Nations is that apartheid has extra-territorial implications. Apartheid does not affect only those 600 000 alien Africans in South Africa, but all non-white people throughout the world. A book is yet to be written on the international dimensions of South Africa's race policies. However, given the present trend in the Republic towards relaxation of rigid application of apartheid, such a book may be a reflection of the past by the time it is written.

Similarly all three authors ought to have devoted a chapter to analyzing the difference between apartheid and political oppression in a number of countries in the world, including some new nations of the Afro-Asian bloc. Instead, Vandenbosch, for example, defends South Africa by arguing that 'Verwoerd put

the world conscience to the test', for its failure to condemn political oppression in countries like Ghana, Ethiopia and others:

When freedom was mutilated in Ghana or remained illusory as in Liberia and Ethiopia, these conditions were tolerated or ignored, but when aggression against South Africa was planned openly, it was not condemned. The United Nations did nothing to stop these hostile manoeuvres and even associated itself with attacks on South Africa.

But this misses the point. Under South Africa's apartheid, all non-white people are refused all human rights in white areas. In Ghana under Nkrumah, to which Vandenbosch makes reference as a country where political freedom was mutilated, any citizen had human rights which guaranteed him social justice, to ensure that an individual could live where he or she chose to live, could enter any hotel for a meal provided he could pay for it.

The main difference is that political discrimination is based on ideology and not on the colour of one's skin. One can change one's political ideologies and indeed political ideologies change very fast, particularly in Africa. The Ghana that Vandenbosch described no longer exists because, with the emergence of new leadership, a new Ghana where political rights have been restored has also emerged. The pigmentation of one's skin does not change and to condemn a man because of the colour of skin is to condemn his creation. That is how the Afro-Asian views apartheid. But this is not to suggest that political oppression is acceptable. The question of comparing apartheid to a political system that enforces regimentation of political thought deserves a detailed examination. Also discussion of South Africa's foreign policy must include a careful analysis of what apartheid is in practical terms and how it is viewed by the non-white people, inside and outside South Africa. For it is important, to remember that Separate Development and the Bantustan policy means that 'the Africans were never to have South African citizenship but were to be assumed to have the nationality of their 'homelands' and the Bantustans were not to have independence at least for a considerable number of years'.

Vandenbosch rightly concludes that the Republic had clearly become a colonial power and placed itself subject to the provisions of

Articles 73 and 74 of the Charter, which lay down the obligations of members with respect to non-self-governing territories; and this made it increasingly difficult for a number of western countries to accept South Africa's argument that apartheid was an internal matter. Previously the western great powers had maintained that Chapter VII of the Charter did not apply to the situation in South Africa as it did not threaten 'any foreign state or government with hostile action'. But, the African States argued that if their pressures did not succeed, then they would fight. It is in this context that the African states in particular see the relevance of Chapter VII of the Charter to the situation in South Africa. This point, an important one, is not discussed fully; it is barely mentioned by Vandenbosch in passing.

Another problem that formulators of the Republic's foreign policy have had to face has been the question of South West Africa (Namibia) which the South African Government has refused to hand over to the United Nations' Commission for Namibia. Cockram and Vandenbosch devote a chapter in their respective books to this question and analyse how the South West African issue has been a source of confrontation between the Republic and the United Nations, with the result that South Africa has increasingly embarrassed some of its sympathisers in the west.

The whole question of South Africa's foreign policy as a subject of intense study in international politics, reveals as these three authors demonstrate, the complexities of the Republic's race policies. It also illustrates that in this century, more than in the past, events in one part of the world can easily involve other parts of the world. But the three authors under review have failed to enlighten their readers on the question why the world, through the U.N., has become increasingly critical of South Africa's apartheid policy. Even countries like France, which is generally regarded as a friend of South Africa, has said some harsh things about South Africa's race policies. Speaking in the United Nations General Assembly recently, the French Foreign Minister, Sanvagnargues said: 'The situation in Africa remains troubled by tensions and the injustices which persist in the Southern part'. The French Foreign Minister recorded once again France's 'complete disapproval of the policy of apartheid'. During the same debate the Brazilian

Foreign Minister said that South Africa's race policies were ethically 'against the universal values of human conscience'. On the other hand South Africa has argued that the world body applies a double standard in its handling of the issue of apartheid at the United Nations; and this too, is an aspect of the problem that these three authors neglect.

Another question which deserves more attention than it received in these books is that of South Africa's Outward Movement and Dialogue as part of its foreign policy, designed to explain to the world, particularly the Third World, apartheid in favourable terms. In recent years, particularly between 1966 and 1971, there was a great deal of interest among political observers about South Africa's desire to have dialogue with black African States. Barber in a couple of pages, deals with the subject superficially. Vandenbosch devotes several pages to the discussion of the subject and his analysis is more detailed; but even his fuller analysis does not seem to do justice to the subject which for several years provoked great debate among the African states at O.A.U. Conferences, and even threatened to split the O.A.U. between those for and those against Dialogue. It is true that since 1971 Dialogue has ceased to be an issue at O.A.U. Conferences, but the subject is by no means dead. South Africa is merely assuming a low profile while thinking deeply about the best way to promote Dialogue. The Outward-Looking Policy, as an aspect of South Africa's overall foreign policy, demonstrates clearly that country's efforts to present an intellectual rationalization of its apartheid policy.

All three authors in their analysis of South Africa's foreign policy show that the Republic, in spite of rigid race policies, is a dynamic nation which responds to world pressures. That its positive response to those pressures falls far short of the expectations of the international community on the principle of self-determination and the concept of full human rights, cannot be doubted. Both the Outward-Looking Policy and Dialogue as its appendage, are a manifestation of the Republic's effort to improve South Africa's image abroad. These three books are therefore, despite their short-comings, an important contribution towards an attempt to analyse South Africa's foreign policy, which is largely a reflection of that country's domestic policy, apartheid.

