

# FOREIGN POLICY OF NEW SOUTH AFRICA: REINSERTION AND REGIONAL AFFIRMATION

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(...) Southern Africa (...) will only prosper if the principles of equality, mutual benefit and peaceful co-operation are the principles that govern its future. Reconstruction cannot be imposed on the region by outside forces or unilaterally by ourselves as the most powerful State in the region. It must be the collective enterprise of people in Southern Africa. (Mandela 1993)

## Introduction

South Africa is a country of particular importance to understand contemporary international relations. Located in the southernmost part of the African continent, bordered by the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, South Africa occupies a strategic geopolitical and geo-economic position. With the end of the Apartheid regime in the early 1990s, the country entered a phase of international reinsertion, which has as a fundamental component the normalization of relations with other African countries, especially its neighbors in Southern Africa. The goal of this work is to analyze the foreign policy of the New South Africa (from Nelson Mandela to Jacob Zuma), with the main concern of elucidating the role that regional integration has for the South African ambitions in the world system.

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To understand the actions of South Africa post-1948, is necessary to understand the roots of the construction of the South African State. Thus, a brief history of the colonization process in the region is of value to the analysis. As occurred in other regions of Africa, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach the area of the Cape of Good Hope, in the fifteenth century, but facing problems with local chiefs and other strategic points in Africa under their rule, Portugal abandoned the site. Throughout the sixteenth century, the Cape of Good Hope started to be used as a replenishment point and, on the next century, the British attempted to establish trading posts in the region.

As stressed by Farley (2008), who, in fact, managed to establish successful bases in the region in 1652, was the Dutch through the Dutch East India Company. The factory established over time was expanded and became a settlement colony. During the seventeenth century, the Dutch came into conflict with the local population in some occasions: it was in this period, as well, that a class of pastors farmers was formed, the Boers. Along with the growth of the Boers, the emergence of *Afrikaaner* identity occurred, paternalistic and discriminatory.

In the early nineteenth century, the British managed to take control of the Cape of Good Hope, which increased the tension between the British and the Boers, strengthening the construction of the *Afrikaaner* nationalism. The Boers founded the State of Orange in 1854 and, ten years later, the Republic of Transvaal, which was renamed as Republic of South Africa both, according to Visentini and Ribeiro (2010), based on racist legislation. In the late nineteenth century, therefore, there were four regions of white rule in southern Africa. The Colonies of Cape and Natal, with white majority and English speakers, and the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, controlled by whites of Dutch origin.

In 1910, the English established the "Domain of South Africa", formed by the provinces of Cape and Natal (British) and Orange and Transvaal (Boer), which have adopted the principle of segregation as a base for social relations. Thus, the beginning of the construction of the racist State commenced; followed by a series of laws that made it legal and increased racial segregation in the country. Emphasis should be given to the Native Land Act of 1913, which restricted the ownership of land to blacks in 7% of South Africa's territory,

creating the foundation for what became the bantustans during the Apartheid period.

In 1948, the National Party, controlled by *Afrikaaners* and without British influence, won the elections. From then gradually the system of racial segregation known as Apartheid and the succession of laws that legitimized this oppression were implemented. As stressed by Pereira (2007, 55): “What characterized the new period was the dissociation of political and economic power; the British population kept economic power, while Afrikaaners held political power. Thus, the institutionalization of Apartheid became the pillar of the new development outbreak.

According to Swart and Plessis (2004), throughout the 1960s, South Africa sought to increase economic, political and military cooperation with other 'white' countries, as Portugal and Southern Rhodesia itself, which had not yet become independent. From a regional perspective, the policy of destabilization was adopted, targeting the newly independent countries of southern Africa contrary to the Apartheid regime.

The Apartheid regime was strongly affected by the end of the Portuguese Empire in Africa with the independence of its colonies and the Carnation Revolution in the metropolis, in the mid-1970s. South Africa was heavily involved in independence struggles in Angola and Mozambique, largely due to its need to control Namibia (Farley, 2008). With the independence of the two colonies, South Africa found itself compelled to get involved in the conflict established, especially in the case of Angola.

The new context led South Africa to revise its foreign policy, beginning a period that became known as *détente*. The ultimate goal of Pretoria was to create a system of constellation in southern Africa, which should ensure its political, military and economic interests in the region. In 1979, South Africa calls for the formation of a Constellation of Southern African States with anti-Marxist nature, but it did not succeed.

From a domestic perspective, South Africa began to face stronger resistance from ANC, culminating with the Soweto uprising in 1976, strongly repressed by government forces. Pretoria is thus facing a double crisis: external and internal. The new situation led South Africa to adopt a new strategy of defense policy, based, according to Pereira (2007), both in the economic and

military sphere, aimed at increasing its neighbors dependence, undermining external support to the ANC and ultimately replacing hostile governments by allies.

In the 1980s, South Africa began to also face economic problems originated in the fall of gold and raw materials prices, in a crisis context which affected the whole world system. This situation was aggravated by the military and security spending and the financial sanctions that were imposed to the country (Pereira, 2007). The Apartheid regime started to become untenable, and South Africa was forced to change its domestic and international route.

### **The new foreign policy: from Mandela to Zuma**

Between the late-1980s and early-1990s, South Africa has undergone a process of profound transition in its social, economic and political structures. The demise of Apartheid provided conditions to end the isolation of the country in the international system.

Until the mid-1980s, South Africa sought to preserve the system as the main and almost sole aim of its foreign policy. The racist regime sought to justify its actions in defense of the interests and values of the white elite, inserted in the context of the Cold War. This segregationist, reactive and defensive regime had, however, offensive features in actions which allowed extraordinary success in the short term, notably in the neighborhood. However, at the end of the 1970s, the collapse of Portuguese colonialism also affected the balance of power in Southern Africa.

Thus, the Apartheid regime vanished between 1980 and 1994 by domestic pressures and international circumstances arising with the change in the international system. Internally, with the wave of violence and civil unrest, the depletion of the production model in which the Apartheid regime layed for decades gradually occurred, based on the generation of workforce surplus in the Bantustans to provide for the economic activities of the *africaners*<sup>3</sup> centers.

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<sup>3</sup> At that time, the South African economy, especially in urban centers, started to required qualified workforce, not supplied by the white elite anymore, which, somehow, made part of the black workers to enter that market. Moreover, a progressive stampede of support of the business community to the government, which, by economic interests, saw in the black workforce chance of qualification.

Externally, the set of international sanctions, of various kinds, but especially economic, which from the end of the 1980s began to be imposed on the Apartheid government, isolated the country. The United States of America, United Kingdom and other Commonwealth members closed their borders to trade with South Africa and recommended the end of direct foreign investments and financial transactions in the country. In fact, the *Afrikaaner* government began to no longer finance their spending with repression, defense and regional external interventions, having to enact debt moratorium (1985). The economic recession has worsened by the departure of transnational companies in the country and by capital flight.

The solution found was the negotiated transition. The pact between the Apartheid government (National Party) and blacks was seen as the only way to ensure the maintenance of resources to the white elite, while including blacks in the political process. This process did not occur simply due to many internal conflicts with the aim of destabilization.

President Frederik de Klerk began to dismantle the regime with the release of Nelson Mandela (1990), with the National Convention of Peace (1991) and with the 1994 elections, with the right to vote for blacks, Indians, mestizos and whites; President Mandela was elected, representing the ANC. In 1994, elections were held and the ANC won a majority of votes (62.65%) and Mandela ascended to the presidency, but did not reach the two-thirds needed for approval of the constitution without support from other parties. The National Party won 20.4% of the voting and had the right to appoint the vice president, a position filled by De Klerk.

The interim government took office in May of the same year and began working on the new Constitution, on the organization of the committees responsible for the judgments of the abuses of the segregationist era (National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation), seeking also to reorganize the economic and social structures, inherited from centuries of exploitation of racial

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However, the rules of the regime (restriction of free movement, separate access in public areas, housing and education) impaired this practice.

bias. Negotiations also established an interim Constitution, outlining general principles that would govern the interim government and the Constituent Assembly to be formed (principles that left the property and other resources of power in the hands of the Afrikaner elite, as GINSBURG, 1996).

In clear terms, the movement that led South Africa to transition from Apartheid to a new democratic government included also the foreign policy of this period. The main feature of this process was the search for the reintegration of the country in regional politics and the normalization of international relations. To Visentini and Pereira (2010), South Africa has forged an alliance with the West, although its external action has been almost always reactive to the processes of the world system.

The South African foreign policy in the transition period has been denominated "New Diplomacy", which guidance forecast the country not as an extension of Europe, but as a middle power, recognized by its Southern peers as such. Its regional policy should be implemented through non coercive instruments. South Africa hegemony in the region, thus, is intended to be altered from geopolitical to economic. Mendonça says (2000, 42. Tradução nossa): "African problems must be solved by Africans. Common interests and responsibility in relation to economic, sociological and environmental well-being of Southern Africa should be the foundation of cooperation and good neighborliness.

Thus, it is predicted that the major change in regional policy is based on the principle of an economic expansion of South Africa to the continent. The transition was marked by distrust of both the National Party and the ANC. The foreign policy of De Klerk, on the African scene, won a diplomatic success through treaties of cooperation and the intensification of economic contacts. They sought to ensure that the normalization of South Africa's foreign affairs happen after the completion of the constitutional negotiations.

#### The normalization of relations in Mandela´s government

Nelson Mandela formed the Government of National Unity in order to reorganize the country (with representatives from various parties who sided). The armed wings of the ANC and PAC were integrated into the defense forces of the country, which already had a quota itself. The situation of blacks linked to

unemployment, precarious housing, lack of access to land, education, health and conditions of social development should be resized (the Programme for Reconstruction and Development has consolidated this perspective).

However, the goals of this program did not achieve the desired success, but called attention to the possibility of direct foreign investments in the country. In 1996, year the promulgation of the new Constitution, the Program Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) was also created, with the proposed increase of economic growth in 6% annually, creation of over 1.3 million jobs outside agriculture and 11% growth in manufacturing exports. Generally,

(...) Mandela's government consolidated democracy in the country, but the right to come and go, which blacks have benefited, took thousands of poor people to leave the reserves and settle on the outskirts of the best cities in search of better life conditions (Visentini and Pereira 2010, 73).

Domestic and international issues during Mandela's term were intrinsically linked to a new South African posture. It was based on the thesis that the lasting solution to international problems would come through consolidation of democracy worldwide. Many of these principles were found in Western liberalism. Therefore, these principles followed four settings, according to Barber (2010): a) the notion of global division between the first and second world; b) the role of international organizations, central to enhancing human rights, peace and equality; c) the demilitarization and d) the position of South Africa on the African continent.

Mandela's foreign policy kept South Africa next to Europe and the U.S., as a way of increasing volumes of financial cooperation and technical assistance necessary for the conduct of internal programs to be put into action. For Mendonça, "[...] Pretoria's interpretation was that industrialized countries had a moral obligation to support the new country, for democracy they helped build could be consolidated. This aid would not have missed" (2000, 53. Our translation).

The South African government has cut ties with Taiwan and established them with the People's Republic of China (1998). Closer ties were strengthened with India, Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Malaysia, major trading partners. The country sought to break the isolation with respect

to Libya, Sudan and Cuba, which brought on tension in relations with the U.S., which had such countries as pariahs in the world system of the post-Cold War.

An essential aspect of foreign policy pursued by Mandela was related to the entry and participation in international organizations and forums. In 1994, South Africa joined the Organization for African Unity and also SADC and, since then, has sought to advance the process of economic integration in Africa. In 2001, the Third UN Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was held. In 2002, the Earth Summit took place in Johannesburg. Another key point in Mandela's foreign policy refers to the increasing number of South African embassies: in the early-1990s, still under the racial regime, the country had only 30 diplomatic missions in the world; in 1996, that number rose to 124 diplomatic missions, being the country member of 45 international organizations.

South Africa became a prominent promoter of proactive and positive causes in the world system. As an example, cooperation with Canada and New Zealand sought to eliminate landmines. In general, Mandela's foreign policy identified the countries of the developing South as the South African priority, aligning the African continent with the new political-economic partners in the world system. Concepts such as new partnerships, possible cooperation and promotion of peace characterized the period.

#### Mbeki's dubious policies

In 1999, the ANC remained in power with the victory of Thabo Mbeki (two terms between 1999 and 2008). During this period, South Africa consolidated itself as the continent's higher rate of development, which economic and military power can be compared to Brazil in relation to South America. As Olivier (2003, 815) argues, "[...] Mbeki paints its foreign policy with a broad brush and his vision of Africa is rotund, self-establishing an agenda that is ambitious, missionary and a bit romantic, but daunting in complexity and magnitude".

During his government, South Africa obtained international recognition as a regional leader. Laurie Nathan (cited in Barber, 2010) identifies three core elements in Mbeki: democratic, Africanist and anti-imperialist. In addition, Landsberg (2012) points out that, effectively, Mbeki's government



sought to reconcile domestic and foreign policies, when it confirmed the "[...] African Agenda"; South-South cooperation; North-South dialogue; and socioeconomic and political securitarian issues (Landsberg 2012, 80).

Mbeki gave priority to Africa under the concept of the African Renaissance. For Mendonça (2000, 70),

The concept of an African Renaissance that has occupied the center of African politics of South Africa, operates in this adversarial context of pessimism / optimism. It recognizes the effects of colonialism, his legacy to countries with arbitrary boundaries, convulsed by ethnic divisions, with unstable political institutions and poor economies based on declining production and export of raw materials; but also recognizes those regions that are beginning to open to modernization. More than one project, however, the African Renaissance is an aspiration.

Its relations with Asia (China and Japan) and MERCOSUR (Brazil and Argentina in particular) have widened. And its projection towards the continent deepened (especially in relations with Nigeria, essential partner to Mbeki). These relations with Nigeria have intensified with the collapse of Abacha in 1999. In October 2000 Mbeki made an official visit to Nigeria and was visited by President Olusegun Obasajo. There was also an intense approximation with Zimbabwe in the period. Mbeki efforts to the continent were not only bilateral. In early 2005, Mbeki was involved in negotiating the conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda and Comoros, as well as Zimbabwe and Swaziland.

The Organization for African Unity (OAU) was transformed into the African Union (AU) in 2002 at a meeting in Durban, South Africa. The South African and Libyan support were decisive for the expansion of the organization's goals and creating conditions for a more intimate cooperation between the countries of the continent and true integration. Just as the NEPAD, the AU has suffered from uncertainty about its primary focus. A clear difference between the administrations of Mandela and Mbeki referred to the employment of the South African forces in peacekeeping operations of the United Nations and the African Union itself, widely accepted during the Mbeki's term, namely: UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 2002; UN Assistance Mission in Iraq, 2003; UN Mission in Nepal, 2007; AU/UN Hybrid

Operation in Darfur, 2007; UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1999; UN Integrated Office in Burundi, 2007 (SIPRI 2011).

We conclude that the use of these troops promptly marked change in the type of role that Pretoria executed on the African scene, hoping to secure diplomatic prestige, claiming a permanent seat in the UN Security Council and seeking to legitimize its actions to the continent. Disregarding the dispute in Congo, Zimbabwe ended up constituting the greater external difficulty for Mbeki's government. The ambiguity of Mbeki's foreign policy refers to the hazy posture with Zimbabwe and Angola.

Internally, the Zimbabwean situation deteriorated in the 1990s when Mugabe sought to cling to power at all costs (with attacks on political opponents, election fraud, taking away freedom of expression, among other actions). As a result of the government's behavior in Zimbabwe, its economy collapsed (80% of the population lives below the poverty line).

Barber (2010) argues that Mbeki rejected the British 'megaphone diplomacy' for Zimbabwe and Africa in general. According to Mbeki, the population of that country should decide and solve its own problems and its current difficulties are legacies of colonialism and white rule. Therefore, for the President, South Africa should play a "quiet diplomacy" to encourage dialogue between the Zimbabwean government and its political opponents (Mugabe and Mbeki accused Tony Blair and John Howard of being racist, at various times). Mbeki defended Mugabe and his government, although there was no personal affinity between the two (for Barber, many Africans see Mugabe as a hero for being from the first generation of African leaders, the only one who is still in power).

The differences between Mbeki and his vice-president, Jacob Zuma, were acute between 2001 and 2005. After corruption charges for involvement in an arms deal, Zuma was dismissed in 2005 (Zuma had the support of left-wing allies of the ANC). From this point on the opposition to Mbeki's leadership started growing. In September 2008, Mbeki resigned (eleven ministers followed, including the finance minister, Trevor Manuel). With Mbeki's departure, the government was provisionally assumed by Kgalema Motllane. Trevor Manuel showed himself willing to return to the post of Minister, stabilizing the country's finances.

Zuma's term

Jacob Zuma, also a member of the ANC, was elected president in 2009. Already in 2009, in the "Medium-Term Strategic Plan to guide the Governmental Programme for the Electoral Mandate of 2009-2014", the foundations of Zuma's foreign policy fitted the denomination of "Quest for the Africa Progress and Strengthening of cooperation." This notion becomes clear in the following pillars of external action taken by Pretoria:

- 1) Fill the gap between domestic and foreign policy, or the so-called 'national interests';
- 2) Promote the integration of the Southern Africa Development Community;
- 3) Prioritize the African continent through the 'African advancement';
- 4) Strengthen South-South relations; Improve strategic relations with the North;
- 5) strengthen political and economic relations; and
- 6) Participate in the global governance system (Landsberg 2012, 80).

The Department of International Relations of South Africa, in 2009, changed its name to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DICO), giving more emphasis to the goals of cooperation and development<sup>4</sup>. South Africa, from 2009 to the present, solidified its essential role as a representative of the African continent in most international organizations and international dialogue forums. Its regional leadership has been recognized and respected by most African countries and partners in the world system. Although Zuma has emphasized not following Mbeki's "quite diplomacy" on regional issues, it is observed that his government continued the non-confrontational approach, based on the notions of "promoting peace, security and stability." Zuma reapproached Angola, when he made his first official visit to this country, in August 2009, identifying that Luanda<sup>5</sup> would become the largest African partner of South Africa in his government, over Nigeria, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

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<sup>4</sup>It is worth mentioning that Zuma headed the intelligence service of the ANC during the struggle against apartheid, being in exile in Angola and Mozambique, with whose leaders maintained good relations, unlike Mbeki.

<sup>5</sup> Zuma and his entourage of about 150 South African businessmen visited Luanda, identified as South African "strategic partnership", believing in the potential of bilateral relations between the two countries in all spheres, economic, social and political. As a result of this visit, six agreements on trade and in the area of aviation were signed.

South African post-apartheid has endeavored to implement a non-hegemonic posture and non-confrontational toward its continental neighbors. The two main pillars of South Africa's cooperation with the countries of southern Africa in the contemporary world are the SACU and SADC, as will be seen below. In both South Africa has played an important role, besides hosting the secretariat of NEPAD since its inception.

From 2001 onwards, the "Butterfly Strategy" came to compose the relations of South Africa, in two equally important notions: west and east, in what referred actions and partnerships with the South. Commercial and political connections with Asia increased in importance, especially with China, and a closer relationship with Latin America began to occur, especially with Brazil.

### **Resizing regional relations**

The reintegration of South Africa after the end of Apartheid Regime has its basis on regional relations. Over more than forty years during which the National Party ruled, relations with neighbors were strongly affected by the deliberate policy of destabilization and by the aggressive posture of South Africa. The main regional organization has its origin in an attempt to contain South Africa. In the Front Line States (FLS) <sup>6</sup> lies the motivation for the creation of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

SADC was established in 1980 with the name of Coordinated Conference for Development in Southern Africa, with the Lusaka Declaration, involving nine countries<sup>7</sup>. After the independence of Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe, according to Murapa (2002), the leaders of the Front Line States felt the need to address also economic issues. After a meeting in Tanzania, it was decided to develop the possibility of establishing a regional mechanism for economic

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<sup>6</sup> The Front Line States were created in 1975 by the Heads of State of Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique. The FLS were born as a cooperation forum among States, without being a formal institution with the objective of coordinating policies in support of national liberation movements and reduce dependence of countries in the region in relation to South Africa.

<sup>7</sup> Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

development issues in the countries of Southern Africa. In this meeting lies the origin of SADCC.

In 1992, with the Treaty of Windhoek, SADC takes the place of SADCC and, two years later, with the end of apartheid and the new political context in South Africa, this country joins the Organization. The entry of South Africa into SADC is a mark in its regional reinsertion, and in the resizing of the objectives of the Community.

The decision of the South African government to become quickly part of the main integration process of the region and an important discussion forum shows Mandela's concern to make clear to the neighbors the new posture of South Africa post-apartheid. It must be recalled that, with the end of the segregation system, the conflicting views of the National Party and the ANC came into dispute: while the National Party called for an international presence focused on trade liberalization and attracting multinationals, the ANC aimed at developing through regional integration. Participation in SADC was, thus, the assertion of the second strategy.

Some years after the entry of South Africa, SADC undergoes a major change: the creation of the Organ on for Politics, Defense and Security (OPDS) in 1996. The creation of the OPDS, in a way, brings into SADC the Front Line States, which, according to Malan (1998), had ended their independent activities in 1994 and decided to act as the political-security arm of SADC. The Organ is created, however, almost as an independent structure, in the format of a Summit, which did not refer to the SADC Summit.

The double structure SADC-OPDS eventually translated into a dispute over the leadership of the region. The presidency of the SADC Summit was held by Mandela, while the presidency of the OPDS Summit was occupied by Mugabe, from Zimbabwe. Until the entry of South Africa into the SADC, Mugabe, as Schoeman (2007) points out, even informally, was the leader of the regional organization, since it was a major economic and military force, besides being an important figure in the anticolonial struggle. The figure of Mandela and the economic and political importance of South Africa, however, puts Mugabe in the background.

This confrontation by the main role in SADC and in the Southern African region is quite evident during the crisis in the Democratic Republic of

Congo in 1998. On occasion, as Francis (2006) points out, Zimbabwe was the first country to express support for the Congo, claiming that Rwanda and Uganda had invaded its territory and that SADC countries should intervene. South Africa, meanwhile, was opposed to military action. Finally, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia sent troops to Congo in an operation that was recognized as SADCs retrospectively. The action in the Congo makes clear both the opposing positions of Mandela and Mugabe as the problem of maintaining a regional organization with, in practice, two upper bodies.

South African foreign policy in the early years after the end of apartheid, thus, aimed at reintegration of the country in the region and image reconstruction of the country to the neighbors. The country's actions were, therefore, quite centered in the figure of Mandela, who had very positive relations with other countries in the region because of the support to ANC during the struggle against the *Afrikaaner* government and also, as Pereira (2007) reminds, the number of visits and conversations made by Mandela during the transition period in order to ensure support for his new plans for South Africa

The great exception to this attitude of rapprochement and cooperation of South Africa in relation to its neighbors was the intervention during the crisis in Lesotho in 1998. After the elections and with the imminence of a coup, the Government of Lesotho requested assistance from SADC to ensure its maintenance. What follows, as Maroleng (2007) reminds us, is a meeting between the Defense Ministers of SADC, of which Zimbabwe refused to participate, in what is decided that South Africa and Botswana should lead an operation in Lesotho under the auspices of SADC.

The operation, despite successful from the point of view of results, achieving stabilization in the country, which is consolidated with the holding of elections in 2002, is deeply criticized. The main question fell precisely on the participation of South Africa. As Neethling highlights (1998, 2), the operation "[...] was a dramatic event and a milestone for the new South Africa - the first time the post-Apartheid government employs troops in foreign territory in conflict". The accusation that South Africa had conducted a military

intervention in Lesotho to defend national interests<sup>8</sup> was reinforced by the negative response, some months before, from the same South Africa to participate in the operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The participation, or refusal to participate, in operations in the region and its own attitude toward crisis in neighboring countries also show, once again, the dispute, though not declared, of leadership in the region, led by Zimbabwe in particular. While South Africa followed its more friendly posture, which meant the lowest possible involvement in the domestic affairs of other countries - which explains both the denial to participate in the operation in the Congo as the decision to intervene in Lesotho – Zimbabwe also tried to assert its position of power pole, using its position in the OPDS.

It is only since the late 1990s and early 2000s, already during the Mbeki government, when South Africa began to adopt a more active foreign policy, symbolized by the African Renaissance. From a regional perspective, the clearest manifestation of this new phase is the major role in the formulation and conduct of the New Strategic Plan for Africa's Development, NEPAD. The early 2000s also coincided with reforms in SADC which, at least from an institutional point of view, solved the problem of OPDS, including it within the framework of the Community.

Moreover, this is the period in which the Zimbabwean crisis developed, when South Africa's leading role of mediator in the Southern African region was put to the test. The violent actions of Mugabe's supporters, which preceded the 2002 elections, and clashes with the main opposition force, the Movement for Democratic Change, put the country in a violent crisis.

The position of SADC as an organization initially was of solidarity to Zimbabwe, with some minor changes since 2001, with the removal Mugabe from the presidency of OPDS (Cawthra 2010). The moment, however, was actually of change in the structure of SADC, as already mentioned, which puts in doubt whether the action, in fact, represented some kind of condemnation to Mugabe's actions. South Africa, meanwhile, adopts a dubious posture, what

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<sup>8</sup> South Africa had significant investments in Lesotho, especially in the energy sector.

became known as 'silent diplomacy', and consisted in publicly show support to Zimbabwe, but confidentially, advise Mugabe to make reforms.

The adoption of this posture by the Pretoria government, according to Alden (2010), had two main reasons. The first issue was economic, considering that Zimbabwe was the main trading partner of South Africa on the continent and that economic sanctions could have a big impact on South African companies. The other reason was related to the regional context and the great instability that could be generated with the departure of Mugabe from power, with the possible influx of refugees.

The crisis in Zimbabwe reveals two aspects of South Africa's relations with the countries of Southern Africa. The first is the weakening of Zimbabwe, both domestically and externally, making it impossible to continue to contest the position of leadership of the region. The second issue to be considered is the South Africa's inability at that time to assume its leading stance in the region, given that it had not yet fully disentangled from the image of apartheid, and also why it could not take a firmer posture.

The actual reintegration of South Africa in the regional scenario materialized in the late 2000s, with Zuma's government. As pointed by Visentini and Pereira (2010), unlike Mbeki, who spent much of the period of apartheid in Europe, Zuma went into exile in neighboring countries, which ensures a very positive history of relations with Angola and Mozambique. Thus, there is a booster for regional integration and intensification of relations with neighbors. The emphasis on multilateralism, as it is a major axis of South African foreign policy, is also an easier form of reinsertion, given that it helps to diminish the mistrust of other countries.

### Final Thoughts

The foreign policy of the New South Africa has consolidated with Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma governments, to a greater or lesser degree, from the discourse and actions largely based on the notion of concretion of cooperation and construction/consolidation of new partnerships. These new directions, to East or West, but keeping attention to the North, qualified the reinsertion of the country in the post-Cold War world system.



The multipolarity of this system has enabled new actors with regional relevance to be able to consolidate its action on the system, in order to facilitate the formation of coalitions among equals, such as IBSA, BRICS and the WTO negotiations.

In this sense, the African continent has consolidated, naturally, as the essential and priority agenda of South African foreign policy. The continental demands, crisis, conflicts and regional integration processes have become a frequent theme during Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma governments, but with punctual and specific actions in each. While Mandela argued that all African countries had the same importance for the South Africans, in a sense of cooperation for peace building and democracy in the world, Mbeki – in a clear notion of what type of regional balance of power was sought - prioritized relations with Nigeria and Zimbabwe, as a way of legitimizing regional actions, given the context of the relevance of Mugabe’s government until the late 1990s. Zuma, in turn, rapproached Angola, as a counterpoint to the Zimbabwe decay in the region, and taking into account Luanda’s recovery and emergency as important pole of power in Southern Africa.

It is noticed, therefore, that the foreign policy of the new South Africa, prioritizing regional relationships and acting promptly in continental diplomacy, also reinvigorated the integration processes as vectors of the South African rapprochement to its neighbors. Thus, the medium and long-term perspectives are to consolidate these processes based, on the one hand, in the Angolan assertion and, on the other, in the South African maintenance as two alternative poles of regional power.

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**ABSTRACT**

South Africa is a country of singular importance for the understanding of contemporary International Relations. Situated at the Southernmost region of the African continent, coasted by the Indian and Atlantic oceans, South Africa occupies a geopolitical and geoeconomic strategic position. In the beginning of the 1990s, with the end of the Apartheid regime, the country starts a period of international reinsertion that presents as a fundamental feature the stabilization of the relations with the other African countries, especially its neighbors of Southern Africa. The objective of this article is to analyze the foreign policy of the New South Africa (from Nelson Mandela to Jacob Zuma), presenting as a central thread the role played by regional insertion for the South African ambitions in the international system.

**KEYWORDS**

South Africa; Regional Integration; Foreign Policy.

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