

NELSON MANDELA'S PRESTIGE DIPLOMACY IN SOUTH AFRICA (1994-1999)

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This paper aims to analyze the elaboration and decision-making process of South African foreign policy during the Government of Nelson Mandela, from 1994 to 1999. This period is marked by the reintegration of South Africa into the international community after the end of the *Apartheid* regime that had remained in force in the country since 1948. The election of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1994-1999) of the *African National Congress* (ANC) marks this transition and opens the way for South Africa to seek the reorientation of its foreign policy towards the African continent.

Having in mind the aforementioned period, marked by the end of the Cold War and the resulting changes of the process of erosion of the international order after the USSR collapse, this research seeks to evaluate how the South African Foreign Policy in Mandela's government tried to reposition the country in this context. This study considers the variables and indicators, internal and external, that influenced and conditioned the country's foreign policy in that time, as well as the main actors responsible for conducting foreign policy. It should be noted that presidential diplomacy played a fundamental role in the country's international insertion in this context. For this reason, the role of Mandela will be an object of special attention.

The concept of foreign policy adopted in this paper fits in the realistic perspective of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). In this sense, it is understood that the foreign policy of the states points to the country's main

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objectives and lines of action, as well as it is composed by the strategies that this actor will adopt in the face of the variations in international dynamics, i.e. evaluating the relative power which each state holds in comparison to others (Figueira 2011). Thus, unlike the ecumenical point of view that gives more weight to internal dynamics in the formulation of foreign policy, it is understood in this paper that foreign policy is a product of national interest and it is based on rational calculations of opportunities for international insertion.

To achieve its goal, this study is divided into two main sections. The first part analyzes the historical evolution of South Africa's international insertion in order to understand the main foreign policy frameworks of the *Apartheid* regime. The second section is dedicated to foreign policy analysis of Nelson Mandela's government (1994-1999). In this way, the aim is to evaluate the country's foreign policy and the role of presidential diplomacy in reorienting the country's international insertion in the aforementioned period.

The importance of studying the recent past of *Apartheid* and segregationist colonization in South Africa will be highlighted towards the end of this work as a vital step into achieving a better understanding of contemporary matters. In addition, the main actors involved in South African decision-making also will be highlighted, as will the main indicators of the economic situation analyzed.

From colonization to South African *Apartheid*: regional detachment and sub-imperialism

The international insertion of South Africa is limited by its geostrategic position and by the type of relationship that was established with its neighbors during colonization and *apartheid*. Thus, in order to verify how these issues have impacted on Mandela's foreign policy, this section is devoted to elaborating a brief history of the evolution of South Africa and the characteristics of foreign policy during the racist regime.

Located in the southernmost part of the African continent, South Africa, surrounded by the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, has a history strongly marked by the *Apartheid* regime and the Calvinist (Dutch, French and German) and English colonization. Its first records of colonization are linked to the Portuguese, around the 15th and 16th centuries, when the Cape Town's geopolitical potential was already recognized, as a region which served as a fueling station for vessels on the route between Europe and Asia. This locality was the first region of Southern Africa to be occupied

by Europeans. At the beginning of the 16th century, the Portuguese empire had already lost space and competitiveness for the Dutch, for these had more developed boats and techniques (UNESCO 2010).

Dutch colonization began through the Dutch East India Company in mid-1652, and it was located in what is now known as Cape Town. The place served as a food supply point for Dutch vessels. These settlers dominated lands and brought slaves from various countries (Mozambique, Madagascar and India), and enslaved, expelled or even exterminated some of the local natives through conflicts or also through diseases brought by Europeans. Due to this, some of these local natives, called by *Khoisan*, migrated to the northeast of the country. Such migration also occurred due to racist practices carried out by the respective settlers who were instructed to relate minimally to the African population that already inhabited the place (Branco 2003).

Around 1795, due to structural changes in the international system resulting from the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, the British Empire, in a moment of great expansion, decided to invest in the conquest of the Cape. They dominated the Cape of Good Hope and, established on eastern South Africa, they implemented the capitalist mode of production in the region. Even with the advancement of the capitalist establishment, the Calvinist settlers decided to remain in the country and remain integrated to South Africa (Braga 2011).

Such Dutch peasants who occupied present-day Cape Town, also called *boêres* by the English, were discontented with regard to the hostility and the British way of life, a feeling aggravated after the British Parliament's abolition of slavery (1807), which intensified the conflict of interests between Englishmen and Calvinists, as presented in Branco's thesis: the *boêres* did not accept the fact that the ex-slaves were put on an equal position with the Christians, which, according to them, contravened the laws of God (Branco 2003).

In addition, the *boêres* no longer received special treatment by the metropolis, due to administrative and commercial issues and there was a lack of support by the Company in assisting them in conflicts with local population. In this context, the group developed a consciousness and identity of its own, preserving their rural way of life and the religion brought by their ancestors, with no desire of returning to Europe. In this sense, the *boêres* manifested an Africanized feeling of belonging to a certain African territory and decided to migrate to other regions of the country, later called The Free State of Orange and the Republic of the Transvaal (Branco 2003).

During the 19th century, a series of conflicts took place on the African territory. The rise of the Zulu group, consolidated by the union of three local

clans, caused the so-called *crushing* of other ethnic groups occupying the territory near the coast of the Indian Ocean. Due to the expansion of the Zulus, members of other ethnic groups sought refuge in the Cape Colony, looking for a job with the English. The migration of the *Afrikaners* also resulted in clashes with other groups of different ethnic groups, in addition to enslaving other blacks in the region. Seeking autonomy for their way of life, the *Afrikaners* founded two republics: the Free State of Orange and the Transvaal, both slave states, Calvinist and Dutch-speaking (Visentini 2012).

In the second half of the aforementioned century, about 6,000 Indian immigrants arrived in the city of Natal. In this way, the South African territory was under the British, Calvinists and Zulus, added to Indians and other ethnic groups that looked for jobs working for segregationist whites. At the time mentioned, the country's black population was 10 times greater than the white population. After the discovery of diamond deposits (1865), the British, who occupied most territories, conquered Afrikaner republics, contributing to the increase of rivalry between other peoples, dominating, at the end of this century, much of the local mining industry. Thus, at the end of the 19th century, English dominated economic and militarily much of the African territory (Braga 2011).

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by the end of the conflicts between the English and the *boêres*, and a law was approved by the British Parliament on May 31, 1910 (South Africa 2016), originating the South African Union and entailing a series of consequences.

The country's constitution contained principles that would profoundly affect the course of South African history: English and Dutch were recognized as official languages; a unitary state and the parliamentary system were established; some peculiar laws of each province were maintained, especially those concerning the racial question. Louis Botha became the prime minister of a country with 4 million blacks, 500,000 mestizos, 150,000 Indians and 1,275,000 whites (Braga 2011: 66 our translation).

The racial segregation and the white elite's sense of superiority had been present in South Africa since the arrival of the Calvinists, and when they became independent from the British Crown, they developed a segregationist legislation. One example is the *Native Plan Act* (1913), which divided the territory of South Africa into two parts: 93% of the territory was designated exclusively for the white minority, which at that time represented 10% of the population. The black population, which corresponded to 75% of the population, was left with only 7% of the territory (Pereira 2010).

As a reaction to the new republic and to the South African Party,

which had taken control of the government, in 1912 the *African National Congress* (ANC) was created, a party organized by black intellectuals seeking for the liberation of their peoples. Already in 1914, the National Party was founded, formed by *Afrikaners* and farmers who advocated for the noninterference of the English in the region. The white elite motivated by capitalism as a mode of production contributed to the rapid growth of the country and monopolized local control (Braga 2012). The demographic formation and social arrangement established between these elites and the majority of the population eventually laid the foundation for the social segmentation instituted in the 1940s.

Despite all historical contexts, *Apartheid* was effectively instituted in 1948, when the Reunited National Party, represented by *Afrikaners*, won the presidential elections. The new government introduced the segregationist regime through a series of laws that limited Black people's share of urban spaces, education and other areas of society, aiming at the development of industry and the creation of *homelands* for the Black. In response to this oppression and inspired by the acts of civil disobedience advocated by Ghandi (Braga 2011), the ANC expanded its scope of action against discriminatory laws, creating the so-called *Freedom Charter* (1955) written by leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo (Pereira 2010).

During the 1960s, according to Rizzi and Schütz (2014), the country acted in the international setting seeking to intensify political, military and economic relations with other countries with white ethnic domain. Internally however, the government intensified its violence in order to suppress the expansion of increasingly popular anti-regime movements, and turned the activities of the ANC and other black liberation parties illegal. Given this scenario, the leaders of these movements decided to head towards armed struggle, and started looking for economic, military and political support abroad (Graham 2010).

Identified as a terrorist by the South African government on returning trip from Europe in search of allies, leader Nelson Mandela was arrested in April 1964 and sentenced to life imprisonment. The defendant, who had already acted as a lawyer, represented himself in the landmark Rivonia Trial, justifying a large part of his actions (Braga 2011).

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices - submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defense of our people, our future, and our freedom (Umkhonto We Sizwe 1961).

The establishment of *Apartheid* is a central element to determine the

kind of alignment that the country would adopt at the international level. In the context of the Cold War, the country chose to approach the Western Bloc. This alignment constitutes a pillar for action at the regional level, especially since the outbreak of independence movements on the African continent. In this framework, South Africa acted as a sub-imperialist power³, aimed to ensure that neighbors did not form governments aligned with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or nationalists. That is, the *apartheid* regime operated as an extension of the imperialist powers on the continent, acting mainly in alignment with the United States of America (USA) and England. Until the 1970 decade, in addition to interfering with liberation and independence movements in southern Africa, as well as interfering directly in the cases of Angola, Mozambique and Namibia, South Africa also implemented protectionist measures aiming at ensuring economic, political and military power against Marxist movements in the region.

In terms of international context, the 1970s were marked by the erosion of American hegemony. The country was struggling with the Vietnam War, as well as a financial crisis in the aftermath of the golden age of capitalism post-World War II. For this reason, Richard Nixon's government (1969-1974) decided to adopt a policy in which regional allies were encouraged to play a greater role in addressing regional security problems. In the face of this, the USSR, in turn, chose to deepen its ties to revolutionary and nationalist movements in the so-called Third World (Visentini 2010).

On the African continent, the combination of the two superpowers' actions represented a radicalization of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary tendencies in the struggles of independence. The most significant independence process was in Angola, which from 1960 to 1975 received some US\$ 54 million from the USSR (Höring 2015). Besides being a country with great potential in terms of natural resources, it was the site of a war of independence in which South Africa took direct action and opened space for the generalization of the conflict in Southern Africa. The sub-imperialist profile of the *Apartheid* regime, fighting against the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), is quite a symbol of South Africa's profile of regional insertion.

In contrast to the 1960s, when South Africa achieved a jump in economic growth, reaching a position among the ten largest economies

³ The concept of sub-imperialism refers to the fact that after World War II regional economic centers such as South Africa emerged and although they had relative economic and political autonomy in regards to global economic centers, they aligned with hegemonic powers, acting as gendarmerie for imperialist interests in their respective regions. In Brazil, the work of Ruy Mauro Marini (1962) establishes an in-depth discussion of these processes.

in the world according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Pereira 2010), the crises of the 1970s hit the South African economy.

In addition to the independence of Angola, the process of independence in Mozambique, also governed by a Marxist party and directed against the *apartheid* regime, brought challenges to regional governance in South Africa. The influence of the USSR and Cuba in these regions motivated the significant and insufficient increase in South African government investments in military equipment. In this war, South African army troops did not resist the conflicts against about 40,000 Cuban soldiers, 30,000 Angolans, 1,000 tanks, 1600 anti-aircraft missiles, 1,000 armed vehicles and thousands of weapons such as AK-47 and its modifications, grenades, mortars and other Soviet armaments (Shubin 2008).

With its involvement in the civil war in Angola and its support of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), South Africa's military spending amounted to about 5% of the country's GDP and more than 18% of public expenditures in the years of 1977 and 1978. In the ensuing years, 1980 and 1989, due to clashes against Angola, Mozambique and Namibia, military spending represented 4% of GDP and 13% of South African government spending. In 1989, expenditures on Defense and Security fell sharply, a fact that already indicated the decline of the *Apartheid* regime (Batchelo and Saal 1999).

The military might of South Africa was called into question in 1988, when the country was defeated in battle against Angola, which had Cuban and Soviet support. The end of this conflict, known as the Cuito-Cuinavale battle, resulted in the independence of Namibia and the withdrawal of South African and Cuban troops from Angola (Pereira 2007).

Another relevant event in line with the independence of the former Portuguese colonies was the end of the Bretton Woods agreements (1945-1971) after the demise of the dollar-gold standard (Fernandes 2015), as well as economic and trade sanctions suggested by the United Nations (UN). The loss of relevance of gold as the ballast of world economy directly affected the South African economy and fueled its economic crisis (Braga 2010).

In addition to these international factors, national constraints have also contributed to the collapse of the regime. As detailed in Pablo Braga's (2011) thesis in 1976, high school students organized a series of protests against the segregationist educational model that forced the teaching of *Afrikaans*, the official language of *Afrikaners*, in schools. The protesters were met with aggression by police officers, and dozens of students (an estimate not yet revealed precisely) were killed and hundreds more were injured. The date kicked off what became known as the "Soweto Uprising", as the

tragedy prompted a series of demonstrations and rebellions by students and by militants then backed by former ANC members and the armed wing of the party, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) (1961). In this way, the uprising increased the tension between government and Black militancy and gained greater attention in the international scenario (Braga 2011).

The *Apartheid* regime already had difficulties in maintaining the costs of its isolation; the “separate development” that had taken place in previous decades no longer addressed the local economy, which was also compromised by the high costs of the defense and national security sectors, largely focused on the conflict with Angola. In addition, the country lost important international trading partners. The Soweto Uprising contributed to a series of international campaigns against *Apartheid* and also to the only UN sanction imposed against the South African regime, in 1984 (Pereira 2007).

Still regarding the costs of maintaining the regime, between the 1960s and 1990s, the South African government invested heavily in the Defense and Security sectors. In 1960, the defense industry spending equaled 7% of government spending, and as early as 1966 this budget accounted for about 15.5%. As for security spending, they accounted for 22% in 1963, reaching a high point of 24.3% in 1968. In the 1990s, security spending fell to 18% of government spending (Mohammed 1999).

In the second half of the 1980s, South Africa had a high unemployment rate, among whites and blacks, and the economic crisis forced the South African government to think about adjustments to the segregationist regime. Thus, in 1986, in an attempt to obtain the maintenance of the regime, some laws that restricted the mobility, housing and employment of Black people in white territory were abolished. These adjustments were meant to give an idea of a pseudo-opening of the regime, but the strategy was designed in order to maintain the regime and put an end to the civil demonstrations (Visentini 2012).

In 1989, Frederik W. De Klerk rose to power in what would be the beginning of the last *Apartheid* government in South Africa. In 1990, racist-based laws were abolished, the legalization of Black resistance parties was approved, the exiles were repatriated and political prisoners were released, including Nelson Mandela. This was the beginning of the negotiations between the white government and the Black. Even though it organized sabotage attempts directed at the ANC, the government eventually decreed the end of *Apartheid* in South Africa and the beginning of a new era for the nation (Pereira 2010).

In this way, it can be observed that the foreign policy developed

during the *apartheid* regime was restrained by the need to maintain the regime itself. Thus, the country acted as a sub-imperialist regional power, with the aim to ensure that Black movements and communist groups did not gain strength in the region. In this way, South Africa did not constitute a space for rapprochement with neighboring countries. Understanding such detachment is crucial for understanding the country's post-*apartheid* actions.

Foreign policy in Nelson Mandela government (1994-1999): primary objectives and external constraints

The previous section sought to assess in general terms the historical evolution of South Africa's external insertion until Nelson Mandela came to power (1994-1999). Thus, as a complementary analytical effort, this section seeks to analyze which main actions the South African government sought to undertake during the period and how these objectives were conditioned by the international conjuncture at that time.

April 1994 marked the first democratic elections for the presidency of South Africa. Mandela was elected with 62.65% of the votes, a few months after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize (1993) with Frederik De Klerk – both of them received the award due to their work towards the end of the *Apartheid* regime and the beginning of a new and democratic South Africa (Visentini 2012). The newly elected president, one of the great icons of the fight against racism, had taken up the challenge of leading the long-awaited New South Africa in a post-*apartheid* scenario in the midst of a post-Cold War multipolar international system.

Facing the real challenge of designing a new South Africa, the president had to deal with the severe wounds left by the segregationist past. However, it is worth noting that, once released from prison, Mandela was already a part of the group which was rethinking how to formulate policies for the new South Africa. In 1993, in the run-up to the 1994 elections, the ANC already presented the developed guidelines for the basis of foreign policy in the new South African diplomacy (Gallas 2007). As presented by Nelson Mandela, in an article published in the journal *Foreign Affairs* (1993)

The pillars upon which our foreign policy will rest are the following beliefs: (1) that issues of human rights are central to international relations and an understanding that they extend beyond the political, embracing the economic, social and environmental; (2) that just and lasting solutions to the problems of humankind can only come through the promotion of democracy worldwide; (3) that considerations of justice and respect

for international law should guide the relations between nations; (4) that peace is the goal for which all nations should strive, and where this breaks down, internationally agreed and nonviolent mechanisms, including effective arms-control regimes, must be employed; (5) that the concerns and interests of the continent of Africa should be reflected in our foreign-policy choices; (6) that economic development depends on growing regional and international economic cooperation in an interdependent world. These convictions stand in stark contrast to how, for nearly five decades, *apartheid* South Africa disastrously conducted its international relations (Mandela 1993: 87).

It must be noted that the presented objectives are in contrast with the guidelines that ruled the external insertion of South Africa during the *apartheid* regime. Despite this fact, it is important to emphasize that the government of Nelson Mandela was characterized by being one of national unification. After electing a president, Nelson Mandela's party, due to not having reached two thirds of the general votes, had to grant the position of vice-presidency to the National Party, a place filled by the ex-head of government of the previous regime, Frederik de Klerk. Thus, the alliance with De Klerk meant that the reformulation of the constitution, the restructuring of the country would have to be done in convergence with the other parties (Rizzi and Schütz 2014). Although the conceptual perspective adopted here understands that the external insertion of a country is a synthesis of the national objectives, therefore relatively unrelated to the domestic disputes, the observation of the internal political scene shows that this new South Africa is a country of national unification and not one of complete rupture with previous structures.

As stated by Daniel Gallas (2007), the new South Africa presented new political and economic principles, but also had new constraints related to the internal environment. The new government was more accessible to the population, which resulted in more demands, such as those by trade unionists, NGOs and academic centers. The analysis written by Gallas emphasizes the internal indicators carefully, resulting in the diagnosis of the following four indicators:

Internal disputes between bureaucrats of different state departments and the confusion about the institutional role of each government cell; the greater involvement of Parliament in the definition of foreign policy; the greater participation of civil society in the definition of foreign policy – one of the pillars defended by the ANC during the *apartheid* years; and finally the importance that the President's cabinet gained in defining the country's diplomatic line, due to the image of Nelson Mandela (Gallas 2010: 21, our translation).

Still in terms of the country's economic reality and taking the above-mentioned analysis as a counterpoint, Ian Taylor's study (2016) portrays an economic reality of the new Africa slightly different from Africa during the previous years, since the country was still having high rates of budget deficit, hampering the country's economy and making it difficult to implement programs that sought income redistribution to reverse inequality inherited by the segregationist regime (Taylor 2016).

[...] the National Party government had increased the country's budget deficit from 0.9 percent of the GDP in 1989-90 to 10.8 percent in 1993-94 through a "rashness of reckless spending" which had its roots in the emergencies of the 1980s (interview with Terreblanche July 15, 1999). During this period, large sums were spent on defense and security, while corruption became endemic (Taylor 2016: 18).

In terms of internal bureaucratic disputes related to international policy, the adjustments in the scope of action of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) relate to adjustments in the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Defense (DoD). Due to the reformulation of these departments, disagreements about the performance of these sectors were generated.

The DFA prioritized the establishment of good bilateral relations, and not with a purely economist bias of attracting foreign capital. The DTI, by reducing its trade missions in many countries, left several tasks in charge of DFA officials overseas. Admittedly, these officials did not have the necessary training and knowledge in the field of foreign trade to conduct the negotiations, Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute for Global (Gallas 2007: 22, our translation).

It is important to emphasize that several bureaucrats who were in government were characterized by either holding history of supporting the old regime, seeking to maintain the resources of the white, or lacking the technical capacity to hold the office they occupied, as a result of institutionalized racial exclusion in education during the *Apartheid* (Gallas 2007).

As for the second point analyzed by Gallas (2007), regarding the more active participation of the parliament in international affairs, this is due to the majority of the congressmen being members of the ANC, filling 266 of the 400 seats. The Parliament, with a majority bound to ANC, was one of the key actors for the signing of trade agreements with the European Union (EU), where the interests of union and agricultural sectors would

be represented by South African congressmen. In addition, the Parliament also had an influence on the recognition of the People's Republic of China and, not with standing, on the arms trade. The third observation relates to the great visibility that the government of Pretoria made possible for civil society, giving unions more legitimacy, although they often criticized some political actions carried out by Mandela and undesired by the mostly black population (Gallas 2007).

The main actors in civil society who engaged in the formulation of South African foreign policy were non-governmental organizations and academic centers. Among the most important entities are the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD, former Foundation for Global Dialogue), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS, former Institute for Defense Policy), the Center for Policy Studies, the Center for International Political Studies and the African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes. (Gallas 2007: 25, our translation).

Regarding the fourth and last point of the analysis, referring to the internal constraints of South Africa's foreign policy, between 1994 and 1999, it can be noted that the presidential diplomatic role assigned to Nelson Mandela, who represented an emblematic image of struggle and resistance against *Apartheid* and gained great prestige in the international scene. Madiba, as the Xhosas referred to Mandela, had already used his image and recognition in the search for international support during negotiations with the former regime, pressing for international sanctions to be maintained until the end of the negotiations. With the end of the regime, Mandela resumed his quest for cooperation and capacity building with several countries, necessary actions for the proper functioning of public policies designed to address human rights, the environment, regional economic growth, the offer and redistribution of jobs in South Africa (Gallas 2007).

Despite the end of the regime, Mandela's government still saw inequality growing in his country, and a high level of unemployment still plagued the Black community, due to policies developed during the *Apartheid* regime, such as a low level of education, which made it difficult for Black people to find a place in the labor market (Visentini 2012). As a response to this problem, which affected the country's internal development, the government launched the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Program (GEAR) (1996), with proposals for economic growth, greater job offer, and an increase in exports of manufacturing goods (Rizzi and Schütz 2014). Despite Mandela's efforts and attempts to repair the country's economic inequality, his government faced the economic reality of the

previous government, which sometimes made it impossible to implement programs that proposed the redistribution of labor income as a priority point (Taylor 2016) .

In terms of the international situation, the scenario at that time introduced some structural challenges for Pretoria. The end of the USSR and the consolidation of the United States of America as the sole power formed a new international order led by Washington. In this context, Mandela's South Africa sought to conform to the precepts of this new order. In economic terms, the country tried to adapt to the Washington Consensus and the neoliberal prescriptions. Thus Mandela sought to assure to the international community that the change of political regime did not represent a deep rupture in the country's cooperation with western powers or with international organizations. In terms of security, the new international agenda indicated the priority for the so-called new issues, terrorism, drugs and human rights. The country, which had already abdicated of its nuclear program for war purposes in order to reintegrate itself into the international community, sought to maintain the image of a collaborative regional power. It should be noted that the international context in the early 1990s was quite unfavorable for the African continent. Africa was not among the strategic priorities of the Great Powers, especially not for the USA. It was thus difficult to attract foreign investment and strategic partnerships to the continent. For this reason, Mandela sought to use his prestige as a lever to approach the West. In this sense, there is no rupture with the type of approach to the international community that was being conducted by De Klerk.

At the regional level, the country had to face the debt of decades of interventionism led by the racist regime. Thus, the construction of a regional policy had as its primary objective the quest to overcome the historical distrust of neighbors. The Mandela Government had to face this major challenge in order to consolidate its new African foreign policy. On the one hand, the country sought to strengthen a regional policy based on the defense of human rights, democracy and the integration of the continent to the global market. On the other hand, it had to secure a regional leadership position in a period marked by a number of security crises on the continent, making sure that a more assertive attitude did not reignite the fears of sub-imperialist politics.

The main alternative to this impasse was to seek to legitimize its regional actions through the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Thus, in face of the security crises that broke out in southern Africa during this time, the country ensured that the measures adopted were taken via the regional body.

Among the security crises faced by the country in this period, two

stand out. The first was the crisis in Zaire (later, Democratic Republic of Congo). With the outbreak of the conflict, and the involvement of other states such as Uganda and Rwanda, Pretoria diverged from Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia, who eventually sent troops to Congo in 1998 (Rizzi and Schutz 2014). South Africa was against this intervention and only later, through SADC, did it validate the military actions of its neighbors. The country's concern was a generalization of the conflict contaminating Southern Africa. It should be noted that Mandela's position was opposed to Mugabe's, leader of Zimbabwe and first to express support for the Congo. Here we note the dispute for regional leadership between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The second crisis that deserves attention is that of Lesotho between September 1998 and May 1999. Following the controversies and protests regarding the election results, in which the Lesotho Congress Party for Democracy won with a large majority and secured 79 out of 80 seats, President Mandela authorized, via SADC, the use of military forces⁴ to contain the protests. This intervention in the neighboring country, allegedly carried out with the aim of "restoring democracy and legality" was observed by neighbors as a hegemonic action. It should be noted that the decision to intervene, even at the risk of fueling the fears of the neighbors, shows that Mandela's government had as one of its priority objectives the consolidation of regional leadership. In this context, President Mandela sought to use his prestige with the international community to strengthen his actions at the regional level.

In addition to his recognition of presidential diplomacy, Mandela saw great importance in diplomatic representations through consular channels and through international organizations and fora. As for the representation of the country, there were 30 diplomatic missions around the world under the *apartheid* government in 1990, which jumped to 124 diplomatic missions in 1996 (Rizzi and Schütz 2014). In regards to its activities in fora and international organizations, the country intensified its participation in these arenas, aiming to disseminate and fulfill the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1951), democracy and the environment.

In South Africa's new foreign policy, post-*apartheid* (1994) and post-Cold War (1991), the projection of the country was sought in a continental and global way, and South Africa was a member of 45 international institutions in total, including UN Conferences, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), SADC, and others. The country joined the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, in the context of the UN, and began to claim for a place among the permanent seats of the United Nations Security Council, taking

⁴ South Africa sent 700 troops to contain the rebellion in this country which in an enclave inside of South Africa.

the role of spokesperson for the interests of the African continent in regard to the organization (Visentini 2012).

New South Africa began to act in an internationally active way, such that, in addition to a greater approach to the US, mainly during the Clinton administration (Gallas 2007) and the EU, it also approached Canada and New Zealand in campaigns against the trade and use of landmines. Prioritizing strategic relations with the promising People's Republic of China in 1996, the country subtracted its relations with Taiwan, which until then had close trade and economic ties with South Africa and the ANC, ranking between the five major importers of South African products. Gallas (2007) corroborates the neglect of South African representatives on the issue of human rights involving the government in Beijing, striving for the best relationship between the People's Republic of China and South Africa.

Despite maintaining its links with the US, it is important to note that the new South African policy has not cast aside allies in the struggle against *Apartheid*, maintaining relations with isolated countries by the Americans, such as Sudan and Cuba (Visentini 2012, our translation).

In addition to the above-mentioned cases, the country also approached Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Libya, Sudan and Cuba, due to the support given by those in the struggles against the former regime, and it also strengthened its relations with India and other countries in the developing Global South (Rizzi and Schütz 2014). Nevertheless, the Mandela government also had to act, directly or indirectly, in conflicts in the southern region of the African continent, as had occurred in armed disputes in Angola, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Congo, Burundi and Lesotho (Gallas 2007).

Although the concept is controversial, South Africa can be classified as a medium power⁵. This can be said especially because the country started acting as leader of the region and abdicated its sub-imperialist actions. It should be noted that in the context of the 1990s, because of the collapse of the USSR, the US relationship with regional powers changed drastically. There was no more condescendence towards the autonomist projects of these countries. In the case of South Africa, which had developed a nuclear program, there was pressure for the country to remain more discreet in its regional performance.

Mandela's foreign policy was aligned with the view of the ANC, which was also in a period of reconstruction, since during the former regime its main representations were exiled, imprisoned or even disappeared.

⁵ The debate over medium powers is vast. In general lines, a medium power can be defined as a unit of the International System with the power ability to act in a more assertive way, but this ability is limited if compared to that of the Great Powers, whose scope of action is global. Roughly, they are units of the system which prioritize to act in a regional level.

In 1991, Mandela took command of the ANC, being present in internal negotiations with members of the party, as well as in the international scope, discussing the programs of the party, international sanctions, constitutional reform and economic questions. The leader, along with the ANC, praised for a foreign policy that was non-interventionist and more focused on human security, democracy and African integration (Gallas 2007).

It should be noted that the international context at the time limited South Africa's international insertion options. The end of the USSR and the spread of the cult of globalization and neoliberalism pushed countries to adopt a liberalizing agenda. In any case, Mandela's government sought to establish a fairly ecumenical foreign policy, based on the diversification of international partners.

The ANC is in power until now. After Mandela, Thabo Mbeki (1999-2008) was elected to the presidency of South Africa. At that time, the country's central concern, both domestically and externally, turned to policies combating the high level of unemployment and, especially, the great outbreak of the AIDS epidemic. The HIV virus spread over a large part of the continent and forced the South African government, which found the country's life expectancy at age 56, to rethink its public policies for health (Visentini 2012).

Thabo Mbeki would step down as president in his penultimate year of office due to internal issues in his party. The following year, in 2009, Jacob Zuma, a Zulu, was elected president of the country. Unlike Brazil, the South African presidential elections occur every 5 years, and they also have the right to a re-election. In this way, the current ANC leader is in the presidency until now and still faces problems with inequality in the country, since the white elite continues to own much of the economic power in South Africa (Visentini 2012). According to a study published in *The Standard*, only 10 percent of the stock market in South Africa belongs to Black South Africans, who currently account for 80 percent of the population, almost all of South Africa's 54 million people.

Final thoughts

The foreign policy of the Mandela government was based on the search for the regularization of the state's external relations with the international community. In this sense, it opted for the diversification of external partners. If, on the one hand, the Mandela government extended ties with the western bloc and sought to insert the state into the economic liberalization era, on the other hand, it maintained relations with states

considered pariah such as Cuba, Vietnam and China.

In terms of the operationalization of this foreign policy, it is noted that the president himself was responsible for using a prestige diplomacy to redesign the international image of South Africa. For this reason, the foreign policy was very personal-based, although the ANC and the Congress performed leading roles in the formulation of foreign policy.

At the regional level, the country had to restructure its relations with its neighbors. In this sense, the actions in the crises of Angola and Zimbabwe, for example, demonstrate a tendency to seek a leading role in the region. However, in this period, the interventionist heritage of the racist regime was still quite present. Thus, Southern Africa became a priority area in Mandela's external agenda. Despite this, it can be said that it was during his time in office that the foundation of what would form South Africa's performance in the regional context in the subsequent decades can be found. It should be noted that the Mandela government, representative of dismantling the racist regime, did not substantially alter the foreign policy that had already been conducted in the government of De Klerk. In other words, there was a tendency for continuity. However, the option for SADC as a priority area for legitimizing actions at the regional level seems to indicate that the path of regional insertion had then been consolidated as the priority mechanism of the South African Foreign Policy for Africa.

Finally, although this research didn't intend to touch on issues such as the interactions between domestic actors, the rearrangements between elites and the effects on foreign policy, since a predominant realistic view on foreign policy has been embraced, this is an important indicator to understand the internal political scenario and the reasons for maintaining the essence of the country's international performance even when dealing with structural changes. In this sense, the perspective that external performance remains relatively unrelated to internal changes is confirmed. Despite this, Mandela's Foreign Policy represented the beginning of a shift in South Africa's external performance which, over subsequent governments, distanced itself more and more from the prevailing profile of the *apartheid* regime.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the foreign policy of Nelson Mandela's government in the wake of a new post-Cold War international structure, from 1994 to 1999, mapping the actors involved in this environment and the indicators and variables that conditioned the foreign policy of the country.

KEYWORDS

South African Foreign Policy; South African *apartheid*; Government Nelson Mandela.

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