

# DUAL COLONIALISM AND THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL STATE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CASE

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## Introduction

South Africa is certainly one of the few countries that has assimilated in such a significant way two distinct colonization processes, at different times. The trading post of the Dutch imperial fleet on the Cape soon became a space for the occupation of European settlers, who, searching for a homeland, found in the vast lands around the Cape the space for the development of a new civilization. Of a Protestant majority, these new European settlers made of the land their acquired triumph. Between the revolutionary turmoil in France and the Napoleonic imperial appetite, the arrival of the English to the Cape region substantially transformed the socio-political relations in the region. The subsequent exodus of the Boers<sup>2</sup> enabled a cult for their self-assertion, and the South African space was filled by successive battles over the territory between the Boers, the English, and native peoples. At the end of the nineteenth century, the discovery of mineral riches on an unprecedented scale marked the transition from an economy still lagging behind to one with a modernizing foundation, with the development of a sophisticated financial system initially directed at the primary-exporting matrix, which would later on become the anchor for the incipient process of South African industrialization. The formation of the two Boer republics, beyond Afrikaner<sup>3</sup> nationalism, sought to contain the rapid advance of English imperialism in

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<sup>2</sup> From *Afrikaans*: farmers. Generic name formerly used to describe Afrikaners.

<sup>3</sup> Relative to ethnic group composed mainly by the descendants of the Dutch colonists and Germans of Protestant faith and also French Huguenots; also expresses those who speak the Afrikaans language.

the midst of the discovery of the largest deposits of precious minerals on the continent. After two traumatic wars, a political arrangement emerged: the South African Union (1910), an understanding between English and Boer elites, later on leading up to the federalization of the territories occupied by the Boer republics and the English coastal colonies.

As a founding member of the League of Nations, South Africa began to project itself regionally, assuming a mandate over the territory of South-West Africa, a German colony lost because of the First World War. In the midst of the crisis of liberalism in the old continent, the South African Union continued to centralize its bureaucratic apparatus, also expanding the channels of state intervention in relation to public enterprises and services in general. In the turbulent scenario of the interwar, there also was a stirring of ideological disputes, with, on the one hand, the quest for greater autonomy from British imperialism and, on the other hand, the appropriation of Nazi-fascist, Communist and, vigorously, African nationalist idearies. Despite supporting the allied forces during World War II, internal disputes escalated with the victory of a group opposed to the previous government's pro-English stance. Beginning in 1948, a nationalist project of Afrikaner origin was launched as the winner of the polling disputed by a white minority electorate. What followed was the institutionalization of social conflicts of a racial nature. Apartheid becomes the driving force of the new regime in Pretoria, contestatory on the one side and highly contested on the other.

Although still protocollary linked to English affairs, the Apartheid regime creates a more autonomous political nucleus and, gradually, moves away from Commonwealth tutelage until it joins the republic in 1961. It thus resorts to self-sufficiency, taking on the high costs of international isolation - materially present in UN arms embargoes, in ambiguous relations with Western powers and in the siege of young African countries. The departure of the Portuguese empire from southern Africa in the 1970s coincided with the end of the Bretton Woods pact, presenting new difficulties for South Africans. They were in a troubled process of containment of the nationalist guerrillas in the countries of the region, at the same time that their economy was stagnating with the impossibility of increasing the internal productivity and the significant changes in the international financial system. In the face of the *détente* of the Cold War and the wave of regime changes around the world, South Africa has faced a scenario of insoluble internal conflicts and, seeking to ensure the Apartheid's survival, attempts to reshape it to fit in an order that no longer existed. With the progressive negotiations of the African national opposition headed by the African National Congress (ANC) and the United States, finally, the last Afrikaner government finally faced a process of democratic transition, even sacrificing some of its most ambitious national projects.

## From the mercantile trading post in the Cape to the Anglo-Boer wars

South African history manifests itself in the unique aspect of its *sui generis* colonization, which resulted in the contemporary, modern South African state, nominally the Republic of South Africa. Until the arrival of the first Dutch settlers to the Cape, the territory that today comprises the South African geographic space was inhabited by populations of tribal origin, mostly of the Khoisan<sup>4</sup> ethnic group and Bantus<sup>5</sup> peoples. The pre-colonial economy was focused on subsistence, being basically restricted to the agricultural production, the cattle raising and the hunting. There were, therefore, political spaces that were poorly developed and poorly integrated with each other, on the margins of the European mercantile center. In 1652, an expedition of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) settled in the Cape region, which became a supply station for the company. As a result, the region once secluded from greater proximity to the dynamic centers became a relevant trading post, aligning itself with the inaugural phase of international insertion of a European naval power that was in the early stages of its mercantile capitalism.

Initially, the colonization of the Cape was restricted to the immediate interests of the VOC, that is, to the supplying of the vessels. Allocations of Dutch settlers were prioritized for the supply of basic consumer goods, which soon led to interests in land use differing from those advocated by the company. With the arrival of the reformist Simon van der Stel, there was encouragement for the development of a vigorous forestry and agricultural industry. At the same time, there was the “growth of a Calvinist society that saw itself as the chosen people of the Lord, entering the Promised Land” (Evans 1999, 10).

The relations between the *Khoikhoi* tribes present in the Cape region and the VOC were initially peaceful and determined by the barter of beef on the part of the autochthone people and metals and tobacco by the settlers. With the successive expansion of the cultivated land by the so-called free citizens of Dutch origin, there was an increase in tensions between the original peoples and the new settlers, who were not subordinated to the official channel of communication between the VOC and these peoples. Even though “the Khoikhoi-free people were gradually transformed into dependent

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<sup>4</sup> It is also spelled as *coisã* or *coissã* and refers to the grouping of two ethnic groups originating in the southwest African, *Khoi* (or *Khoikhoi*) and *San*.

<sup>5</sup> With more than 400 subgroups, the Bantu form the largest ethnolinguistic group in sub-Saharan Africa.

workers and cattle ranchers at the service of the whites, [...] in 1658/1659 the VOC began the introduction of slaves in the Cape” (Hagemann 2001, 29-30). Thus, the Cape colony quickly entered the international slave trade, many originated from other Dutch colonial spaces such as Sri Lanka, India, and Indonesia.

In the midst of the decline of the Dutch naval empire, a British flotilla landed on the Cape under the promise of safeguarding the colony’s integrity in the face of any French threat, since the French were in the midst of revolutionary turmoil. As early as 1803 England returned the Cape to Holland under the Treaty of Amiens, nevertheless, the departure of the English was very short; with the Napoleonic blockade, the English occupied the Cape definitively (Evans 1999, 10). The Cape colony moved to the orbit of influence of British imperial colonialism. This new reality profoundly transformed social and political relations in South Africa. Disgusted by the English administration, a large contingent of Boers began to leave the Cape colony and migrate north-eastward to the South African plateau. This process triggered the definitive territorial occupation of the South African space, as it is known today.

Outlined by the great rivers that cross the territory, the Boer republics - nominally the State of Transvaal and the Free State of Orange - were established, and recognized by England in 1852 and 1854, respectively. Isolated, these republics were impregnated by a strict Calvinist religious *ethos*. As Evans (1999) points out, the Boers were bothered by the matter of the English giving preference to trade instead of valuing the role of the land, as well as their neglect of the divine status of the white people as superior. Until the mid-nineteenth century, South Africa was a relatively backward economy, almost entirely dependent on agriculture. In short, markets were small, the conditions were difficult, and the progress was slow, which applies both to the economy of the original inhabitants and to that of the European settlers (Feinstein 2005). It is relevant to observe that the triggering of this process of South African territorial colonization was assimilated in the Boer collective imagery in a very peculiar way, which in terms of political culture, well delineates the communitarian spirit that would guide the discourse of the African statesmen to the South African Union - from 1910 on - and the Republic of South Africa - from 1961 on.

In 1866 the world’s largest diamond deposits were found in the region where situates the city of Kimberley, and in 1886 the discovery of large amounts of gold in the Witwatersrand transformed the local scene of the Transvaal. Mineral wealth soon attracted the eye of the English, who saw the need to control the territories then under Boer rule. From then on, South African capitalism enters a new stage in which large landowners, especially

gold miners, resort to cruel and inhumane measures to dislodge the native populations from the mineral rich areas. The flow of English capital into this sector stood out. Although mining activity was based on the exploitation of cheap labor and unleashed a model of export of minerals, the South African economy was rapidly dynamized by reinvestment in the mining sector and application in other sectors of local production, still marginalized. It was mainly in South Africa that a racial version of primitive accumulation took shape in the African continent (Cooper 2014, 21).

Amin (1976) states that the predominance of the simple mode of commodity production is rare, being found in New England between 1600 and 1750, in South Africa of the Boers between 1650 and 1880, and in Australia and New Zealand from the beginning of white colonization until the rise of modern capitalism. These societies of small farmers and free artisans converged on a *modus* that had a strong tendency to turn into a fully developed capitalist formation. South Africa's reality was one of plenty of land and a shortage of labor. Through perennial practices of social discrimination, Boer and British colonial spaces kept blacks, mestizos, and Asians generally as a low-cost labor force.

From the First Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881), the immense costs and successive defeats led the British to opt for the armistice with the Boers, agreeing on a Boer self-government in Transvaal under British dominance, to which would be relegated the external and native territories matters. The immense amounts of gold discovered in the Witwatersrand throughout the decade, however, would offset the costs of a possible new war for the British. The Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) must be understood as a war for resources, also considering that it reflected the desire for independence of the African population in relation to the British Empire and England. It is possible to see in the context of war the connection between exploitation of the native population, the interest of the various parties in appropriating enormously valuable gold supplies, the strengthening of the nation-state of England, advancing imperial militarism, and meeting the needs of finance and banking capital based in the city of London (Stander 2014, 186).

The vast territory of South Africa, rich in minerals, allowed an accelerated growth of the South African local economy, as it immediately inserted itself organically in the international market. Foreign capital has allowed the dynamization of sectors not yet fully developed, such as the textile industry and basic manufactured goods. According to Evans (1999, 100), the purpose of the British was to force the Boers to renounce their sovereignty, in a dispute that resulted in the political arrangement of the South African Union, a territory of English colonial rule that ensured greater regional political autonomy to Boers.

## South African Union and the construction of national unity

South Africa is an artificial entity created by the British. Today's borders date back to 1910, and like many African countries, South Africa is a product of the colonial heritage of the British Empire (Steward 2014). Until the end of the nineteenth century, there was no unitary, abstract state in the region, with the Boer settlers forming their republics (Osterhammel 2010). This new political unity emerged from an arrangement between Afrikaner and British settlers, who materially constituted the effective military power in the territory. In this political arrangement, there was the formulation of a federative pact, with some administrative autonomy for the four provinces (Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal).

In the midst of rapid economic modernization in South Africa, racial tensions would take on even more severe political dimensions. In 1912, the African National Congress (ANC) was founded, a South African movement of resistance to the political regime founded in 1910. In 1913, the Land Act was enacted, which implied the division of land between the English settlers, the Boers and other African peoples. By racial criteria, the black, mestizo and Asian populations in the South African Union got 13% of the territory, while the remaining 87% were divided among the white, the English-speaking and Afrikaner settlers. This dual colonial reality was manifested by the perception that "antagonisms between Afrikaners and English dominated partisan politics for most of the period" (Simons & Simons 1969, 612).

South Africa underwent a *sui generis* process of modernization on the African continent, after twenty years becoming an industrial nation, forming a new society, which, in addition to the new white economic elite holding the mining capital surplus, included a working class with racially determined subclasses. In the formation of this particular type of capitalism, the economic surplus did not fall into the hands of a self-absorbed aristocracy such as that of the *ancien régime*, but of an incipient Afro-bourgeoisie that became central to the establishment of the economic bases of the future Apartheid regime. Although on the one hand the English reproduced some of the old European social structures, the South African space saw flourish in its four corners a model of state little tied to purely oligarchic relations. Even with the predominance of oligopolistic conglomerates in the mining sector - certainly the most expressive in the young South Africa - the functions of the state already showed to be more aligned with a nascent central bureaucracy, thus not corroborating with the thesis that the Union would properly be an oligarchic state.

With the outcome of World War II, South Africa doubled its GDP per capita (1933-1945) and saw its manufacturing sector skyrocket, allowing

for real wage increases for even African workers. Enjoying a third of world gold production, South Africans soon ceased to be international debtors and began to cover their domestic spending and external debts with ease. The growing state planning was conditioned by the increase in public revenues, made possible by the higher ability to collect taxes during the war years (Natrass & Seekings 2010).

## The prevalence of Afrikaner ideology and the institutionalization of Apartheid

The 1948 elections brought to power the National Party (NP), a conservative Christian nationalist political party. The then-sworn in Afrikaner head of government, Daniel Malan, had a history of defending the adoption of a republic for South Africa, instead of the British monarchy (Bloomberg 1990). This can certainly be attributed to a reflection of the memory of the losses in the Boer wars, in which they had suffered, in their point of view, injustices by the English. From the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War in 1902, Afrikaners lamented their loss of political autonomy with the dissolution of their two republics and the consequent incorporation of territories as spaces of the English colonial administration. The restoration of their violated rights was one of the foundations of the new government, which had defeated the South African Party (SAP) of Jan Smuts as a contestation to the South African alignment to the United Kingdom during World War II.

Among its most emblematic measures, the newly elected South African government enforced the deepening of racial segregation and the maintenance of a dependent labor force in the countryside, as well as migrant workers in the gold mines. It escalated repression rather than seeking to co-opt an African elite. The result was the Apartheid (Cooper 2014, 28). While France and England abandoned the colonial domination as an imperial project, South Africa appropriated it as a national project. A racialized capitalism came to support the South African industrialization. The victory of the nationalists, however, should be considered the initial stage of South Africa's own anticolonial revolution, that is, the political and economic control of the South African space exclusively by South Africans, although these were a social minority willing to secure the intensification of racial tensions through legally instituted means.

Due to the participation in the war, though marginal, South Africa had a considerable domestic increase in industrial performance, which led to a massive urbanization throughout the 1940s. Here, a migration took place,

especially of black peasants, until then little inserted in the process of rapid modernization that the country was going through. With more job opportunities, cities became the stage of greater political engagement, due to the urban profile of this new South African reality. An already segregationist South Africa than used more rigid mechanisms to curb these collateral and, from the perspective of the Afrikaner elite, unwanted developments. Among the tougher measures are the laws prohibiting interracial marriage and those that forced black, Asian and mestizo populations to carry a passport within their own country.

With the strikes spreading from the mining sector to the infant industry and with the South African state's difficulty in containing labor movements of the black population, the regime censored the prerequisites of a "modernizing" industrial economy, making a free labor market unviable for its capitalist development. New state controls on labor antagonized South African industrial needs and seriously impeded progress. In the name of defending the interests of the most relevant constituency of NP, nominally rural-based Afrikaners, the government reflected the backwardness of its culture and proved itself unprepared to adapt to the demands of a modern industrial economy (Innes 1994, 168).

In 1958, the new Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd made a public defense of the separate development, a model according to which former territories of the non-white peoples would be returned, conforming to their own societies. Apartheid used the rhetoric of self-determination of peoples as a justification for the formation of enclaves in the national territory, called homelands, which would soon be known as Bantustans. These territories were implemented through the Bantu Self-Government Act and, although they did not enjoy international recognition, the South African government identified the Bantustans as embryonic independent nations. The external pressure for the international non-recognition of the Bantustans was the result of systematic denunciations against South Africa in a UN increasingly balanced by new African states, who saw in these enclaves the deepening of the regime of racial segregation.

## The building of the republic and state capitalism

One of the most critical political promises of the NP to its constituency was the adoption of a new South African republic, totally independent from the United Kingdom, that is to say, with a South African head of state. In October of 1960 the government carried out a referendum with the white population and by a slight majority of 52,29% of the votes the option for the



republic prevailed. The remarkable resistance of the electorate came from the province of Natal, where the white majority spoke English. They feared that, away from the United Kingdom, South Africa would be even more vulnerable to communism and pro-rupture African nationalism.

With the adoption of the republic in 1961, South Africa not only departs formally from British tutelage, but also prompts a deeper and daring process of nation-state consolidation from the overlapping Afrikaner identity. The South African tradition was to delegate foreign affairs to Britain, but the NP fixed its eyes on the domestic scene when it came into power in 1948 (Munger 1965, 91) and with the republic it rehearsed the formulation of a foreign policy more identified with the new political reality of the regime led by the less moderate and unfavorable Afrikaner base to the old mediations with the internal pro-British lobby groups. In place of the old conciliation between the English and Boers built by the formation of the South African Union, efforts for a domestic - though never absolute - hegemony became the Republican pillar in the South African context.

The country that until then enjoyed privileged contributions of English capital in the African continent was willing to draw a more autonomous route. By leaving the Commonwealth of Nations as well, the most caustic Afrikaner politicians actually celebrated the resurgence of a Boer republic, now shaped in a post-war reality, at an intermediate stage of industrial development. It is from this period that South Africa effectively consolidates its “national capitalism, understood as the model that is the modern synthesis between nation-states and industrial capitalism, the institutional attempt to manage money, markets and accumulation through a central bureaucracy to the benefit of a cultural community of national citizens” (Hart & Padayachee 2013, 57).

Jackson (1990) and Clapham (1996) point out that the emergence of African nation states from the decolonization of the 1960s was accompanied by the absence of empirical sovereignty. As they lacked absolute internal legitimacy, these states had no monopoly on the government’s control over the territory of the state, as well as a certain capacity to defend the territory. Therefore, a significant part of African states existed through legal sovereignty, relegated to merely formal recognition within the international system. There must be a subtle differentiation between the understanding of the formation of African national states as the dismantling of colonial empires in the 1960s - especially English and French - and the reality already established in South Africa. Although it did not match in levels of development the European powers, the new South African republic already showed its unique identity as an effectively sovereign and independent national state on the African continent.

If, on the one hand, for whites, South Africa is an advanced capitalist state in the final stages of imperialism, on the other hand, for the black population it is still a colony (Gordimer apud Stander 2014, 25). This unique identity is expressed through the search for national self-assertion allied to a capitalist development that sees the Western European model as the flagship for modernity, yet filling it up with institutions that are not modernizing or even anti-modernizing. What is clearly observable is the fact that these political and economic developments make Boer South Africa as a “young center”, an expression coined by Amin (1976). In other words, in spite of the idiosyncrasies of the regime, which is highly contested morally and politically by the international community, South Africa quickly constitutes the organic nucleus of peripheral capitalism in the international system along with other Third World powers.

The internal and external political costs resulting from the deepening of the Apartheid have not gone unnoticed by the Pretoria authorities. The armed struggle gained place in the political dispute to the regime in South African soil, mainly through acts of sabotage, organized in collaboration between a clandestine ANC and a SACP with close ties to Moscow. From 1960 to 1962 the agitated African continent saw the most expressive process of independence of the former colonies. In Southern Africa, mostly British, there have been several national liberation movements boiling, which would clearly affect South African positions as a regional actor in order to maintain political stability through the *status quo*.

Even if South Africa were to become a regional capitalist pole, its specific type of less dependent capitalism also entailed a gradual withdrawal from traditional western allies, such as England and the United States, which voluntarily joined the arms embargo against South Africa sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council in 1963 (Gennenhuys 1984, 11). Faced with this embarrassment, South Africa was compelled to solidify through its own means a national defense industry that responded to the growing demands of South African defense and security forces in domestic and cross-border operations. According to Cepik (2009), in terms of equipment, due to the embargo, South Africa ended up developing its own industry of armor and artillery that in our days position the country well globally.

## South African engagement in the regional scenario

Southern Africa was the space of colonization of two empires, basically the British and the Portuguese. Regardless of which country in Southern Africa one is discussing, the involvement of the Pretoria regime can always

be seen, whether in the occupation of Namibia, in the large-scale aggression in Angola, in the terrorist action in Mozambique or in the assistance to the racist government in Rhodesia (Shubin 2008, 239). It is therefore clear that South Africa was actively engaging from the broader political and diplomatic sense to the strictly military and operational in its region. From a perennially recalcitrant anticommunist rhetoric, South African policymakers exposed the rationale behind the interventions in Southern Africa around the containment of communism and similar liberation movements.

Perhaps at the most Afrikaner moment in South Africa as a sovereign political entity, the Rhodesian elections provide for a consistent political alliance around the Apartheid regime. In 1962, with the victory of the Rhodesian Front (RF), a white local elite gets ahead of the negotiations between the British and the African elite for the independence of the territories in Southern Africa and seeks to circumvent the already real black political participation of the country, using the systematic racial discrimination and guided by a harmful vision of African inferiority with the purpose of securing privileges for the white minority (Mungazi 1998, 131). The result comes in 1965 with the Declaration of Unilateral Independence. Under Ian Smith's leadership, the white minority government of the RF does not achieve significant international recognition, especially from the British government, and maintains substantial ties with Pretoria to deal with the containment of African nationalists and the formation of guerrillas struggling to take immediate power.

Although Rhodesia received massive military support from South Africa since 1967, Vorster saw the need to contain the war in the neighboring country because it anticipated that the situation could escalate into chaos and rupture. In this, an informal alliance was formed with the Kaunda president, paving the way for a regional *détente* (Jaster 1989, 52). US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger pressed for the South African government of John Vorster to moderate the climate of negotiations for the transition of power in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, which would take place in 1979. On the American part, what they feared was precisely an engagement of the type that came to take place in Angola with the presence of Cuban troops and the extensive support of the Soviets.

After the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, the African continent saw the dismantling of its last colonial empire. With the withdrawal of the Portuguese, room was opened for the political independence of Angola and Mozambique, two large colonies, the first facing the Atlantic and the second, the Indian Ocean. This reality left South Africa without a buffer zone on its northwest and northeast borders (Muiu 2008). Portuguese colonial maintenance in southern Africa until the mid-1970s was very relevant for

South Africa, which had been blocked from fly zones since 1963 by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) member countries.

Steepleton (2010) states that South Africa's national defense forces have learned lessons from the US and France, based on the wars in Vietnam and Algeria. They relied on counterinsurgency theories, which presupposed that insurgent forces could defeat robust conventional military forces. With MK training in Mozambique and Bechuanaland, the South African government saw even more reasons to counter the establishment of a supposedly hostile regime in Maputo, although its greater concern was still the instability in Angolan soil that could easily entail changes in South-West Africa, still under South African tutelage. As Pereira (2010, 52) points out, the increasing isolation of South Africans, not only at the international level, but fundamentally in regional terms after the independence of Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, as well as the expenses with the military and maintenance of the state security apparatus, would make the system unsustainable.

South Africa, as a country bathed by two oceans - the Atlantic and the Indian - has always been a highly strategic geographical point. In 1955, England signed the Simonstown Agreement with the South Africans, formalizing its South Atlantic Naval Station, a foothold for the British navy in Commonwealth space. Both navies undertook regular joint operations until 1975, when the agreement was not renewed by the British because of the identification with the Republic of South Africa did more diplomatic damage than presented military advantages. The termination of a 169-year naval tie meant that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for the first time, would have no operational base in the South Atlantic (Roberts 1976, 4). On the other hand, South Africa's own departure from the British Commonwealth and its affairs with the adoption of the new republic would end up implying this scenario of a more significant military decision-making autonomy on the part of Pretoria.

As NATO asserted its military power in the Cold War in the northern hemisphere, there was the counterproposal of forming a South Atlantic Treaty Organization (OTAS), aimed at tackling common aggressors and the "Soviet threat." In 1977 the commander of the Uruguayan navy defended its institutionalization. It would involve South American countries in cooperation with the colonialist regimes of Portugal and racist South Africa. The Brazilian government, in the late 1970s, did not see viability in the proposal and argued that an arms race in the region could come to be due to the agreement. There was, in the midst of the Brazilian retraction, an alliance between South Africa and Argentina, which would soon be replaced by an approximation of the

South Africans to the Chileans - and also Bolivians and Paraguayans - under English auspices, in the midst of the Malvinas War (1982). The alliance would not have relevant practical developments, so Brazil came to see the need to ensure the security of the region. Soon, it started to defend the idea of a zone of peace - later the Zone of Peace of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS) - in place of OTAS. This new proposal would take shape in a postcolonial reality in Southern Africa, amid the regime transition processes of both Southern Africa and the Americas (Pereira 2013).

While on the one hand South Africa has consolidated itself as the most relevant regional actor in southern Africa, on the other, because of the chain of events that began with the departure of the Portuguese from their colonies, the regime in Pretoria experienced cumulatively increasing difficulties in maintaining a stable order in the region. The more realistic foreign policy approach throughout the 1970s allowed for some temporary diplomatic victories, which, however, did not prevent the deterioration of Pretoria-West relations. The isolation and arms embargo would lead South Africa to seek new partnerships in the international system. It was, after all, willing to carry out a national project that did not dismiss large national defense capabilities and was not intimidated by the pressures and criticisms on its regime of racial segregation.

## **From nuclear ambition to the latent economic-military wear**

On the African continent, South Africa is considered the only country that has been able to develop a nuclear program and an atomic arsenal. The adoption of a nuclear program evidences the clear attempt to seek South Africa's full political autonomy and consolidation as an effective medium power in Africa. Still in 1961, the first nuclear plant of South Africa was developed and from 1969 onwards the nuclear program took body. Initially the main supplier of uranium to the United States, South Africa played a strategic role in the US nuclear industry. After the discovery of the ore in American and Canadian soil, the US began to depend less on the South Africans.

Although the United States accepted Israel's entry into the nuclear club in 1970, the US government worked tirelessly in the late 1970s for South Africa not to enter. Carter's non-proliferation policy failed to prevent South Africa from acquiring the bomb shortly after Carter left, and successive US bureaucrats failed to stop Israel from helping the Apartheid state develop more advanced components of its nuclear arsenal (Polakow-Suransky 2010,

13). In a rare sign of collaboration between the USSR and the US in 1977, the Soviets shared the satellite data information that indicated the setting up of a site in the Kalahari Desert for the development of nuclear artifacts testing. The regime in Pretoria, through ministers and diplomats, vehemently denied that the site was in any way used for nuclear experiments.

While on the one hand there was concern about the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Third World, there was also the understanding that the restrictions imposed on the technological development of these countries served the interests of the nuclear countries in maintaining, from the perspective of the international political economy, the technology in itself as a power resource for differentiating these states from others. In addition, non-nuclear countries would become buyers of equipment and fuels that would promote the industry and the nuclear market in nuclear countries. Like Brazil and Israel, South Africa did not sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968, demonstrating that nuclear weapons capacity was in fact the ultimate goal of its program.

The isolation of Pretoria led the regime to seek unconventional allies for technical cooperation and strategic program sharing. It approached regimes that also, by some means or another, experienced a certain degree of alienation from the international community, such as the post-67 Israel and Taiwan (Republic of China) after the change of the Chinese seat at the United Nations Security Council in favor of the People's Republic of China (1971). Under such a controversial regime, the UN sought ways to limit South Africa's military potential through embargoes and sanctions aimed ultimately at disarming the apartheid regime as well as the region. The rhetoric for global disarmament derived from pacifist postulations can lead to misleading inferences, as Morgenthau (1997) points out<sup>6</sup>.

With the depletion of the industrializing model of import substitution and the end of dizzying economic growth, coupled with the new reality around Southern Africa, South African governments sought to combine internal administrative reforms with a greater concern with their potentially stabilizing role as a regional power. Throughout the 1980s, then-South African Prime Minister Botha embarked on various reforms to resolve the contradiction between capitalist accumulation and popular demands. A new

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<sup>6</sup> He states that "reducing the amount of weapons actually or potentially available at any particular time could not have an influence on the incidence of war; it could conceivably affect his conduct. Nations limited in the quantity of weapons and men would concentrate all their energies in improving the quality of these weapons and men. In addition, they would search for new weapons that would compensate for the loss in quantity and assure them an advantage over their competitors" (Morgenthau 1997, 436-437).

basis of consensus would have to be created, implying the restructuring of the political and ideological foundations of Apartheid, transforming the process of accumulation through adjustment in economic policies and relations of state and civil society. The reforms sought to institutionalize consensus and coercion by reshaping the structure of production, distribution, and consumption to revive the economy that was weakening. There were attempts to restructure political institutions to strengthen relations between capital and labor (Muiu 2008, 122). And it was precisely at that time that the holding of power on the part of the South African state underwent a drastic change, when external economic pressures - specifically the American investment boycott - threatened the regime (Hidalid 1994, 136). The US Congress passed a bill in 1986 to freeze American investments in South Africa and bar the sale of arms to Pretoria by US companies.

## International Weakness and the Transition to Democracy

The setting of a South African political establishment that to a greater or lesser extent continued to degenerate policies of racial segregation led the country to a state of emergency. Although many of the regime's most controversial laws had been repealed in 1986, internal political deterioration had taken on alarming dimensions at the end of the decade. In addition, the very rapid changes in the outcome of the Cold War and the new independent environment in Southern Africa provided a complete change of scenery, now largely unfavorable to South Africa.

The Botha administration became rather skeptical of Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" for not having prevented the US Congress from imposing sanctions on South Africa. In response to the deteriorating relations, Botha's rhetoric denounced the West and its policies, in a clear call for South Africa's links with Africa. In a direct speech to the non-aligned states, the President of the state recalled Pan-African cooperation, claiming that the blame for the misery the West had inflicted on Africa and the Third World was hidden behind the campaign against South Africa. He claimed the meeting of leaders of the African continent in Africa to be necessary, not in other continents, for the reflection of their problems and search for solutions. In addition to the rhetoric, this approach evidenced the moment of high tension between South Africa and Western powers as well as a correspondingly distention with some of the neighboring regimes, including Mozambique and Zimbabwe (Jaster 1989).

With the South Africans' negotiated withdrawal from the territory of Southwest Africa by the New York Tripartite Agreement, conditions were established for a peaceful transition with free and monitored elections in Namibia. As in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola, the most formidable national resistance group seized power with ample advantage. Faced with this reality, the international community and the then NP ruler saw the political negotiations with the ANC as the most realistic outcome, since it was the greatest political force within the country, at least in terms of political representation.

The question, however, was no longer merely of an African national majority government as in previous decades, but the establishment of a model of liberal democracy, indeed open to the most varied fields of politics. In this way, the NP also saw the possibility of maintaining, although marginally, a prestigious influence in the constitutional paths of the Republic of South Africa and the ANC, in turn, considered numerous political concessions in order to reach an effective government transition quickly. From the meeting between ANC leadership Oliver Tambo and Gorbachev, it was understood that Pretoria's acts of aggression against other independent African states should cease, there should be independence for Namibia in line with UN resolutions, as well as the removal of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the "primary cause of the conflict situation in the region" (Shubin 2008).

The question for the ANC revolved around two basic premises: "one man, one vote" and the distribution of income and equalization of opportunities with the maintenance of a more heterodox pact on economic policies. To the ANC it cannot be attributed, therefore, any position of political and economic elimination of the achievements made in the last decades, such as the herculean infrastructure projects that allowed the territorial integration. What was in vogue above all was a post-Apartheid South Africa. The supposedly universal values condemned racial discrimination practices, but did so in a way that the South African state was wholly destined for all who lived there without distinction - at least in official rhetoric.

With increasing political liberalization, the South African space has seen a wide variety of political groups flourish. There were 26 parties involved in the transition process, in the broader discussions aimed at civil society as a whole. The Afrikaner ideology provided room for the proliferation of the most distinct ideologies, widely present in liberal democracies, especially those of the multi-party system. It had become almost imperative for the



ANC, which had been in hiding for so many decades, to make room for a proportional electoral system, even though its old struggle had approached a predominantly majority model that would ensure a large majority government to the ANC.

In the financial field South Africa also faced difficulties, because of the end of the dollar-gold standard in 1971, with the maintenance of the subsequent Bretton Woods institutions in a remodeled concert of world political economy. The exchange rates until then fixed went through stages of flexibility with the adoption of exchange rate bands and floating exchange rates. South Africa, the largest supplier of gold to the world market, has been thrown from seemingly triumphant progress to an agonizing decline. From 1948 to 1973, the country was marked by growth and stability, while from 1973 to 1994 stagnation and inflation predominated (Feinstein 2005, 200-201).

Arrighi & Saul (1973, 50) point to the fact that international capitalism would advance interests in controlling political-economic development processes described as peripheral centers and in particular centers of mineral exploration. And in fact, the new globalizing era pointed to the strict delimitation of the state's role in the economy with the spread of the almost unrestricted opening to international capital and the change in the institutional framework for countries to conform to the order centered on the Washington Consensus.

While the bipolar system allowed non-irrelevant bargaining power on the part of African states, the new reality introduced in the 1990s led the continent to a near-abandonment by those who were the biggest guarantors of governments and regimes in Africa. Instead of the wars of national liberation, several civil wars broke out, and the formally delimited sovereignties were organically fragile, with states that failed to establish a central bureaucracy powerful enough to coordinate territorially national political activity. Despite all of South Africa's effort in this regard, the transition meant an increase in civil violence by sectors of the population cut off from the circle of high negotiations between ANC and NP. Nuisances among the rising African leadership in various territories undermined the path to concerted regime change. While Mandela and Klerk were awarded the Nobel Prize for conciliation in the name of the Apartheid outcome, disorder and law-breaking boiled in places disputed by former Bantustan leaders, extremist Afrikaner groups, and all manner of agitation against the understanding of the party elites.

## Final Considerations

As well as attesting to the dual character of the colonization of South African space, it also seems that the modernization of the state, mainly from the South African Union, adopts a dual reality, in which for a restricted and privileged part of the population there is significant state-of-the-art employment with social benefits, and for the majority of the population - racially segregated - there is socioeconomic exclusion and a state that employs violence and criminalization in a systematic way. The relatively transformative capitalist development for a peripheral country in the international system presented in its contradictions the obstacles to full human development and more effective international integration in a post-colonial African reality.

Notwithstanding the different limitations, South Africa, in addition to its mineral wealth, established an effective central bureaucracy, allowing the functionality of state administration, the management of a more autonomous financial system and the indispensable subsidies for its industrialization process. Given its uniqueness, the formation of the South African national state allows for a more integrative and dynamic international insertion in international relations, having in force a functional sovereignty over its territory and its own political domain over its most sensitive decisions. Despite perennial structural problems such as high social inequality and alarming rates of unemployment, South Africa positions itself as an effective regional power on the African continent.

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**ABSTRACT**

Since the Dutch colonization of the Cape, South African space has become an effective geostrategic point, initially anchored in the mercantilism of the metropolis, and later, with the British arrival, through a process of commercial opening and expansion of territorial colonization of Europeans and of Asian populations secured by the British. After two internal wars, South Africa, in the early twentieth century, arrives at a political understanding, forming the South African Union, which opened up room, after World War II, for the rise of a conservative nationalist regime, responsible for the resurgence of the racial segregation already in place. Recognized as an anti-communist bastion in Southern Africa, South Africa develops military capabilities in the 20th century and a national market economy without equal in the continent. While affirming its national project, the country is limited by the growing discredit of the international community, which, through the UN and the OAS, issues embargoes and boycotts on the South African government.

**KEYWORDS**

South Africa; Colonization of Africa; State Formation; Apartheid.

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