

THE RAMAPHOSA ADMINISTRATION AND THE RETURN TO SOUTH AFRICA'S PROTAGONISM: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES TO FOREIGN POLICY

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Introduction

In the State of the Nation 2018, Cyril Ramaphosa explained that South Africa is facing challenges such as rising unemployment, growing social inequality, low growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and limited government capacity to expand investments in social areas. Although not citing — at least directly — any specific name, it is a fact that the newly appointed president related these challenges to previous administrations. He even said that, unlike the early years after the end of the racist regime (*apartheid*), when there was a decline in poverty, in recent years what was seen was an increase in poverty².

Criticism of previous administrations was not restricted to internal challenges only, but also to South Africa's role in the international system. Roughly speaking, the new administration understood that Pretoria was losing its prominence, so there was a need for changes in foreign policy as a means of recovering this condition. A reflection of this discontent can be found in the initial months of the former Minister in the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), Lindiwi Sisulu, when speaking in Parliament in 2018, she exposed the need for South Africa to recover its leading role, which, in her perception, had been conquered during

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² State of the Nation is the speech given annually by the President to the Congress. Its main objective is to explain the measures and plans that the government has been adopting.

the Mandela administration, when the country was seen as "a moral compass and a voice of reason in a world increasingly overcome with selfish and narrow interests" (Sisulu 2018, n.p)³.

Sisulu's speech indicated that the decrease in this role was the result, even if indirectly, of the choices made during previous administrations. It is based on these critics that this article has as its main objective to compare the foreign policy that has been developed by Ramaphosa administration with those adopted over the governments of Mandela (1994-1998), Mbeki (1999-2008) and Zuma (2009-2018). Taking into account that the current administration is in progress, and based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources, it seeks to demonstrate that the processes of international and regional insertion that are being carried out, bring as main characteristic the search to strengthen the interaction between foreign policy and economic development, in the same way that the Mbeki and Zuma governments, to a greater and lesser intensity, did.

For this purpose, and along with this introduction, the article is structured in three other sections. The first concerns the understanding of the main characteristics found in the foreign policy developed over the administrations Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma. The second, on the other hand, refers to the Ramaphosa administration, whose objective will be to demonstrate the existence of points that symbolize convergence or divergence in its foreign policy when compared to previous governments. Finally, the third section corresponds to the final considerations, when it is expected to conclude that the current foreign policy maintains universality in foreign policy, multilateralism and economic diplomacy, initiatives that were already constant in previous administrations.

Between successes and challenges in foreign policy: the administrations Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma

The pursuit of expanding South African international relations, as well as making the country increasingly active on the continent, can be considered as two of South Africa's main objectives in post-apartheid. Initially, such objectives can be found in the Mandela administration, which in 1993, that is, even before assuming the presidency of the country, had published in the *Foreign Affairs* journal the article *South Africa's Future Foreign Policy*, which

³ It is worth mentioning that in 2019, Sisulu was replaced by Naledi Pandur as minister of DIRCO.

indicated the ways in which the foreign policy should be guided. At that time, points that were valued by the traditional powers were highlighted, which also gained prominence in the post-Cold War period, that is, human rights, multilateralism, the promotion of democracy, respect for the sovereignty of States and the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means. In addition to these, another feature that gained relevance was the universality of foreign policy through the strengthening of strategic partnerships and the admission or readmission to international organizations and multilateral articulations⁴.

An example of this expansion can be seen in the interactions between South Africa and the United States, and between Pretoria and Iran, Cuba and Libya, countries that assisted the African National Congress (ANC) in its fight against *apartheid*, and that were widely criticized by Washington (Hamill and Lee 2001). With regard to admission and/or readmission to international organizations and multilateral articulations, it is worth mentioning the Commonwealth, the United Nations (UN), the Non-Aligned Movement, the G77, among others that were transformed into spaces of greater South African performance (DIRCO, 1996). The valorization of multilateralism, the strengthening of strategic partnerships and the defense of points estimated by the traditional powers, not only guaranteed South Africa's role in the international scenario, but also raised "the country to the status of strong moral dimension" (Van Wyk 2002, 182).

In the regional scenario, the search for a new insertion started to be considered as one of the main objectives of the Mandela administration. In a way, this new insertion in the African continent symbolized the break with one of the main legacies of the racist regime, namely, the image of South Africa as the very incarnation of the European colonizer on the continent, as well as demonstrating that the country is an integral part from Africa. Even, as Mandela indicated, "first and foremost we are part of the African continent, and Africa's problems are ours too" (Mandela 1999, n.p).

For this purpose, the strategy was also characterized by universality in foreign policy and the higher value of multilateralism, which reflected in the admission to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). However, unlike the success achieved in international insertion, such a choice did not guarantee that the protagonism expected by Pretoria would be achieved, since the country's performance in certain episodes was widely criticized. A first example can

4 "the principle of universality underscores the willingness of South Africa to establish diplomatic relations with all countries of the world regardless of the domestic or the foreign policies of those countries" (Schraeder 2001, 234).

be found in Nigeria, a country that entered the 1990s marked by political instability, characterized by the cancellation of the presidential election — disputed between the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDC) of Moshood K.O. Abiola (victorious party) —, and the military coup carried out by Sani Abacha in 1993.

Initially, Pretoria sought to mediate such groups via agreements and meetings, which included the presence of Thabo Mbeki — Mandela's future successor in the presidency of South Africa — and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. However, the ineffectiveness of these initiatives was seen in the so-called "Ogoni 9", a case marked by a flawed trial and without judicial review that culminated in the hanging of the journalist and political activist in the Ogoni cause, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight more activists who were against the regime imposed by Abacha (Lewis 1999; Barber 2005)⁵.

In this case, Ogoni 9 was essential in changing South African performance in this episode. In fact, from then on, Pretoria was guided by the search for external support to the continent for the creation of means to generate the isolation of Nigeria. Examples of this were the incentive to create sanctions by the UN, the insistence on the suspension of this country from the Commonwealth, and the incentive for countries to stop buying Nigerian oil. However, even though there was a suspension in the Commonwealth, Nigeria did not become isolated, as countries like the United States, France and Germany remained interested in guaranteeing access to Nigerian natural resources, especially oil (Jordam *apud* Adelman 2004). In addition, the political cost of the South African strategy occurred mainly on the African continent, as in addition to not securing Nigeria's isolation, the search for sanctions against Abuja was interpreted as unilateral and authoritarian, characteristics that referred to the current foreign policy during the *apartheid* regime (Van Wyk 2002; Hamill and Lee 2001).

In addition to the case of Nigeria, another example to be highlighted refers to the two wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In the first conflict, which was marked by the actions of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo* (AFDL, in french) against the Mobutu Sese Seko regime (1965-1996), Pretoria sought to act via a peaceful solution between government and opposition, the result of which it was Mobutu's exile in Morocco. In the second war, as a result of the AFDL's growing unpopularity

⁵ The Ogoni community is a minority group that inhabits southeastern Nigeria, a region rich in oil and marked by the extensive exploitation of this resource by oil multinationals. Throughout the 1990s, this community became known for fighting the degradation of the environment and economic neglect by the Nigerian government, in its area (Lewis 1999).

and the intervention of countries like Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, what was seen was the South African interest in peaceful means being undermined by the military intervention desired by Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola (Adelmann 2004).

In addition to symbolizing the mismatch between success on the international stage and the difficulty in reaching another regional insertion, the suspicions regarding South Africa's performance in episodes involving Nigeria and the DRC were factors that demonstrated the existence of the gap between Pretoria's interest in being more present in Africa and, in fact, the achievement of this objective, since the distrust in relation to the country remained present. It is in view of this mismatch that the Mbeki administration developed its foreign policy, and, in particular, sought to spread a new economic and political ideology to the continent, also known as the *African Renaissance*.

Although discussed in previous moments in African history, as carried out by Cheikh Anta Diop, who linked the rebirth to the rescue of African native languages, the *African Renaissance* spread by Mbeki can be understood from two dimensions. The first is related to the transformations seen in both the international and regional scene, both favorable to the continent⁶. At the international level, such favoring is related to the greater presence of traditional and emerging powers in the African continent, motivated mainly by the search for natural resources (Visentini 2013). At the regional level, the increase in democratic elections, the decline or end of authoritarian regimes, economic growth and the decrease in the number of wars, are some of the examples that symbolized a continent in transformation. The second dimension concerns South Africa's role in this renaissance process, in which Pretoria would act to defend African interests on the international stage, as well as convince African countries to adopt political, economic and security changes.

In view of the proposal indicated by the *African Renaissance*, South Africa's foreign policy has gone through changes. Although marked by continuity, since the defense of human rights, democracy, and the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means were maintained, in reality what was seen was the major role of multilateralism and universality in foreign policy. In the international scenario, the favoring of both led to an intensification in relations

6 Discussing the concept of African Renaissance by Anta Diop, Phemelo and Mompati (2018, 174) highlight that "The language was one of the things that change a worldview". Thence he resonated that; "the development of our indigenous languages is the prerequisite for a real African renaissance, and in justifying his claim, he was quick to remind Africans of the detrimental effects of using foreign languages as a media of instruction in African schools".

with emerging powers. Although maintaining strong economic ties with the United States and the European Union, the South-South relations began to gain more and more space during the Mbeki administration (DTIC 2020). In bilateral relations, the main example can be found in the strengthening of relations with partnerships considered strategic, notably, Brazil, India and China. At the multilateral level, the appreciation of groupings in which the country had been integrated during the previous administration, such as the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, added to the insertion in several other groups, notably the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC), the New Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership, and the IBSA Forum.

Similar to the international scenario, the strategy adopted for insertion in Africa was guided by multilateralism and universality in foreign policy. While the first would serve to demonstrate the non-imposing character of the points adopted and defended by South Africa, the second would guarantee the strengthening of ties with countries that, due to their historical importance or political relevance, were better accepted by the vast majority of African countries (Landsberg 2000). Initially, the effectiveness of this strategy can be found in the New Partnership for Economic Development in Africa (NEPAD), an initiative created in 2001 that links development to respect for human security, good governance, and investment in the industrial, agricultural, environment, science and technology, infrastructural sectors, among other characteristic features of the post-Cold War scenario (NEPAD 2001).

Another example concerns the transformation of the OAU into the African Union, the process of which was marked by the predominance of two strands. The first was symbolized by Libya's desire to create the United States of Africa, that is, to move the continent towards the formation of a Federalist State. The second included the interests of Nigeria, a country that advocated greater participation by the organization in issues related to security, and South Africa, whose perception was that the new organization should be marked by the creation of rules, norms, and, fundamentally, for the commitment of member countries to respect these standards (Otavio and Cardoso 2014; Landsberg 2012a). In general, the second aspect was predominant, since points such as human security, the valorization and construction of principles, institutions, political structures and mechanisms that could regulate the behavior of States became part of the AU.

The successes achieved previously helped to formulate a third example symbolic of South African interest in being more active on the continent, the African Agenda, which can be understood as the continuation and intensification of the *African Renaissance* (Otavio 2017). Continuity, since it remains

faithful to the encouragement of the creation and adoption of democratic systems by African countries, to the search for peace and security on the continent, to the creation of means that lead to the economic growth of African countries, among other objectives defended by this doctrine of African renewal. Intensification, as it enhanced the interaction between South Africa and other African countries. In addition to maintaining or expanding strategic partnerships between Pretoria and countries such as Algeria, Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Mozambique and Botswana, this agenda has ensured that the country is increasingly inserted economically on the continent, becoming one of the main trading partners of countries such as Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Namibia and Zimbabwe (Mbekeani 2013).

To a certain extent, the strategies of international and regional insertion based on the role of multilateralism and the universality of foreign policy, generated two consequences for the Mbeki administration that differed from those found during the Mandela administration. The first is related to the discontent on the part of Western powers, because the choice to approach countries widely criticized by the West led South Africa to lose its image as a country with a strong moral dimension (Titus 2009). In contrast to this first consequence, the second was the intensification in the regional integration process, symbolized by the partnership with several African countries and the activism in the creation of initiatives considered important for the *African Renaissance*.

The consequences previously indicated influenced the foreign policy adopted during the Zuma administration. In fact, the valorization of democracy, economic development and conflict resolution continued to be linked to the role of multilateralism and universality in foreign policy, which is symbolized by the greater interest in strengthening ties with emerging powers. In this case, the strengthening of ties with southern powers brought the invitation in 2011 to join the BRICS Group as an initial success. Although economically the country was distant from other members of the Group, it is a fact that the invitation to enter reflected the main characteristics of South Africa, that is, of being a regional power, characterized by the sophisticated infrastructure network, and by the commercial, technological and financial dynamism. In addition, it is worth mentioning that entry into this group guaranteed Pretoria to expand its economic relations with other member countries, notably China, a country that between 2005 and 2015 increased its exports and imports (DTIC 2020).

In the regional scenario, the economic relations resulting from the African Agenda were not only maintained, but also intensified during the

Zuma administration. A first example of this can be found in the formulation of the so-called Business Forums, which were created with countries like Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Namibia, Zambia and Angola. In the Angolan case, the Zuma administration sought to strengthen the South Africa-Angola Chamber of Commerce, as well as to ensure that South African companies operate more and more in this country (Zuma 2009). A second example of this economic diplomacy can be found in the prominence given to NEPAD, the consolidation of the SADC Free Trade Area, launched during the Mbeki administration, and in the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), an initiative created in 2010 and aimed at creating means to guarantee the improvement of the continent's infrastructure (PIDA 2012).

The desire for greater intensification in economic relations with several African countries can be framed as one of the two characteristics of the Zuma administration that demonstrated the continuity in the South African strategy of regional insertion, since the other refers to the resolution of conflicts through dialogue, which, however, proved challenging. A reflection of this can be found in Côte d'Ivoire, a country that since 2002 has been polarized between Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara. In this case, if Pretoria initially supported Gbagbo, throughout this conflicting process it started to support Ouattara. In addition to Côte d'Ivoire, another example can be found in post-Gaddafi Libya, when the country diverged from its main strategic partner, Nigeria. While South Africa chose not to recognize the National Transitional Council (CTN) as a legitimate representative of the Libyan people, Abuja not only legitimized CTN, but also sought to encourage other African countries to follow suit (Landsberg 2012b; 2012c).

In general, when compared to the Mbeki administration, the strategy based on multilateralism and universality in foreign policy, brought divergent consequences for the Zuma administration. Although on the international stage, the protagonism guaranteed South Africa to strengthen ties with the emerging powers and, consequently, become part of the BRICS, in fact, the frustrated performance in Côte d'Ivoire and the performance in the Libyan case were episodes that symbolized limits such strategy, especially with regard to insertion on the African continent.

Towards a new foreign policy? Trends and challenges in the Ramaphosa administration

In parallel with Zuma's resignation in early 2018, one of the demands that has gained preponderance in the country and, broadly speaking, can be understood as one of the main objectives of the Ramaphosa administration, concerns the search for solving socio-economic challenges — especially poverty and unemployment. To a certain extent, it is a fact that previous governments sought to create initiatives aimed at the same purpose, and even managed to improve some indexes. Examples of this can be found in access to drinking water, which went from 58% in 1994 to 91% in 2009, and in the scope of public policies, since in 2015 around 17 million South Africans were supported, while in 1994, there were 4 million (Cilliers and Aucoin 2016). However, some challenges remained, such as the high unemployment rate, is reflected in the relationship between young people entering the labor market (annually, around 1.2 million) and those who, in fact, manage to be employed (about a third of the total) (Ramaphosa 2020).

In seeking to break with socioeconomic challenges in general, and unemployment in particular, the Ramaphosa administration has been demonstrating that multilateralism and universality in foreign policy will continue to be fundamental to the country, as both favor the expansion of economic diplomacy. At the multilateral level, the importance of economic diplomacy is found in the greatest interest in the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), an initiative created in the 1990s, which, among its various objectives, seeks to strengthen economic ties between member countries (IOR-ARC 2014).

Along with this appreciation, another example can be found in the BRICS, a group that in 2018 was marked by the South African presidency. In this case, the interaction between Pretoria and other member countries can be seen in economic relations, since between 2018 and 2019 South African exports to the bloc grew by more than 110%, and in the same period, imports increased by around 106% (DTIC 2020). In addition, it is worth highlighting the access to loans from the Bank of the BRICS, an institution that in 2019 lent US \$ 790 million for South African projects, especially those related to Eskom, a company in the energy area that, in addition to having more than half of this amount, it also gained access to an additional \$ 180 million to implement renewable energy projects (Pandor 2019).

In bilateral relations, the economic diplomacy highlighted in South-South relations is seen in the interest for greater interaction with China. A

reflection of this can be found in trade, whose figures show that of the values found in the relationship with the BRICS, a large part is the result of trade with Beijing. In fact, between 2018 and 2019, trade was marked by an increase in both South African exports (122%) and South African imports (103%) to China (DTIC 2020). In addition to the economic, it is worth mentioning the cooperation in the medical field, since the Chinese government donated various materials aimed at combating Covid-19 (Pandor 2020).

Parallel to South-South relations, Pretoria also seeks greater interaction with traditional powers. In the economic relationship with Washington, for example, the figures for South African exports and imports were increased by 106% and 113%, respectively. Regarding the European Union, it is worth mentioning Germany, a country to which South Africa increased its exports and imports between 2018 and 2019, an average of 115% and 103%, respectively (DICT 2020). In a speech addressed to the German President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who was on an official visit to South Africa in 2018, Ramaphosa spoke about the strategic importance of Berlin at the international level, as both defend multilateralism and the promotion of peace, as well as domestically, as Germany is the country's third largest trading partner, and one of the main investors, with more than 600 companies operating in South African territory.

To a certain extent, the reflection of this greater interest in strengthening ties with traditional and emerging powers can be found in the percentage invested by South Africa in diplomatic missions. In figures, of the total resources directed to DIRCO for the years 2019 and 2020, around 68% are destined to the maintenance of 125 missions distributed in 108 countries (Pandor 2019). In this case, such investment corresponds to the interest in making these missions assist in the export of South African goods and services, in the field of tourism and, in particular, in the fulfillment of the goal related to the entry of FDI in the country, around US \$ 100 billion, a figure stipulated by Ramaphosa when he came to the presidency of South Africa.

At the interstate level, it is worth mentioning that investments were already announced in 2018 by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (US \$ 10 billion), and by China (US \$ 14.7 billion) (Shubin 2019). State and companies, the fulfillment of this goal converges with the so-called South African Investment Conferences, events that seek to expand the investment of large companies in the country, in which case the 2019 conference stands out, when more than 70 companies committed themselves to invest in the most diverse areas of the South African economy (Ramaphosa 2020).

Alongside economic diplomacy, universality in foreign policy and the appreciation of multilateralism can be expressed in the political-diplomatic sphere. However, unlike the Mbeki and Zuma governments, what is perceived is the Ramaphosa administration's quest to use such tools as a way to rescue the status of a country with a strong moral dimension, and, in this sense, to approach the foreign policy adopted by the Mandela administration. In other words, the interest in strengthening strategic partnerships and increasing the value of multilateral spaces is maintained. However, it again highlights the need for Pretoria to act in favor of characteristic features of post-*apartheid* South Africa, notably, democracy, human rights and conflict resolution.

On the one hand, it is expected that the characteristic of a country with a strong moral dimension will guarantee Pretoria the protagonism that, in the perspective of current management, the country had. On the other hand, however, it must be stressed that such a choice does not necessarily mean a certain alignment with the traditional powers. Firstly, because the country understands the characteristic trend of the current international scenario, that is, multipolarity. Second, and as relevant as the previous one, because the Ramaphosa administration maintains an interest in strengthening ties with the most diverse types of countries. In other words, the search for status with a strong moral dimension corresponds to South Africa's desire to be active in themes or events that are seen as challenging in the international system.

Such a finding can be found in the Israeli-Palestinian cause, in which the Ramaphosa administration reaffirms that the maintenance of the downgrade in the status of the Embassy in Israel to office, which occurred during the Zuma administration, reflects the unfavorable South African positioning of Israeli activities in Palestine. Along with this cause, another example refers to Cuba, a country that has been gaining prominence since the Mandela administration. In addition to cooperation in combating Covid-19, since Cuba has sent more than 200 health professionals to work in South Africa (DW 2020), it is worth highlighting the solidarity with the Cuban people and the defense for the removal of the imposed economic embargo by the USA to Havana (Ramaphosa 2018c).

In addition to the previous cases, another example that expresses the search for protagonism on the international stage is related to the 2019/2020 biennium, a period in which the country occupies a non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council (UNSC). On this occasion, the current administration has shown an interest in acting on various topics, with emphasis on conflict resolution, such as those in Syria, Somalia and Yemen; and in the defense of the independence of Western Sahara (Ramaphosa 2018d). Activism about

Western Sahara and the resolution of the conflict in Somalia are examples that symbolize the continent's continued importance to South Africa. Even, as quoted by the current DIRCO Minister, Naledi Pandor, "Our foreign policy as South Africa is, and has always been based on our vision of championing an African continent which is prosperous, peaceful and democratic" (Pandor 2019, n.p).

As highlighted in this article, Africa's centrality in South African foreign policy is not merely rhetorical, and since the beginning of his administration, Ramaphosa has been demonstrating continuity in this objective. A first example that demonstrates interest in continental integration can be found in the AU, with South Africa not only assuming its presidency in the 2020 and 2021 biennium, but also demonstrating that in this period it will act in favor of one of the main initiatives linked to the Organization, Agenda 2063, created in 2015 and marked by several aspirations that symbolize the continent's quest to solve challenges in the fields of economics, politics and security (AU 2015). It is worth mentioning that among the objectives of Pretoria at the UNSC, the search for partnerships aimed at achieving one of the objectives of Agenda 2063 stands out, namely, to silence weapons on the continent by the end of 2020 (Pandor 2019).

In addition to symbolizing one of the main objectives of Agenda 2063, this element is in line with one of the characteristics of South African foreign policy, namely participation in the pacification processes. In this case, such an objective can be exemplified by Pretoria's interest in directing the AU presidency to resolve crises in Libya and South Sudan (Africa News 2020). In the Libyan case, it is worth mentioning that the instability generated after Gaddafi's death was not ended with the CTN, and, in this sense, South African support is found in the backing given to the AU High Level Committee on Libya (South Africa 2020a). With regard to South Sudan, the aid given by the African Union and the intermediation carried out by Ramaphosa, were important for the signing of the agreement between the opponents, the current president, Salva Kiir Mayardit, and the opponent, Riek Machar, of the South Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM-IO) (South Africa 2020b).

Alongside conflict resolution, the silencing of weapons is also related to another characteristic that remains present in the Ramaphosa administration, in this case, multilateralism. In general, since the criticisms made to the Mandela administration regarding the performance of conflicting episodes, Pretoria has guided itself in articulation with other African countries as a means to become increasingly present and active on the continent. In the

current administration, in addition to being an instrument for stabilizing and pacifying Africa, multilateralism also continues to be important in the economic dimension. Similarly to the Zuma administration, this finding can be found in the objective of making the Free Trade Area resulting from the Tripartite Agreement (TFTA) between the Common Market of East Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and SADC come into force. To this end, Pretoria is looking for other countries to sign and ratify the agreement, since it takes 14 ratifications for the TFTA to enter into force (Pandor 2019).

In addition to the TFTA, another economic initiative that remains important is the African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), created in 2018 by most African countries and expected to come into force in 2020. The expectation about AfCFTA is related to increased continental integration, as it will seek to expand intra-African trade, which currently stands at around 16% (Fabricius 2020)⁷. As expressed by Pandor (2019, n.p) "The coming into operation of the AfCFTA is a clear demonstration that there is political will amongst Africa's leaders to integrate the economy of our continent, thereby creating new opportunities for greater volumes of trade among African countries".

In general, the multilateral choice in resolving conflicts and intensifying economic integration is related to the continuity of the African Agenda, an initiative developed during the Mbeki administration and maintained throughout the Zuma administration. In this case, in addition to acting on the main multilateral initiatives developed on the continent, the Ramaphosa administration has sought to maintain South Africa as a defender of African interests on the international stage. This is confirmed in his 2019 speech in Biarritz, France, when he highlighted the importance of G7 member countries investing in the African continent (Ramaphosa 2019). This highlight reflects one of the main objectives set by the country in the post-*apartheid* period, the search not only to strengthen its regional insertion, but also to remain as a relevant actor in solving existing challenges in Africa.

Another feature found in the African Agenda that is also present in the current administration concerns the intensification of interaction between South Africa and other African countries. An example refers to the relationship with Angola, a country that since the Zuma administration has remained strategic for Pretoria. In this case, it is worth highlighting the intention and interest of Ramaphosa and João Lourenço, current Angolan president, in cooperating in the areas of extractivism, trade, infrastructure, agriculture,

7 For comparison, intra-European trade amounts to 68% and intra-Asian trade, 60% (Fabricius 2020).

tourism, among others considered relevant for both (Africa News 2018). In parallel with the interaction with Angola, another example of a bilateral relationship involves Ghana, a country with which South Africa already had more than twenty cooperation or intention agreements. In 2018, Accra and Pretoria created the Binational Commission (BNC), which proposes to meet every two years (Ramaphosa 2018e).

Although there is an interest in prioritizing the African continent, both the advancement in multilateral and bilateral relations can be impacted by a challenge that since the Mandela administration has been growing in South Africa, in this case, xenophobic violence. An example of this can be found in 2008, when a wave of violence against immigrants, mainly Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and Malawians, resulted in about 62 people killed, 670 injured, and thousands of establishments looted or destroyed. In addition to 2008, it is worth mentioning 2009, when around 3 thousand foreigners who lived near Cape Town were expelled from their homes, and 2015, when the death of 15 was accompanied by the expulsion of 2,000 immigrants who lived in KwaZulu Natal (Misago, Landau and Monson 2009; Mililo and Misago 2019). In response to the treatment of African immigrants, Pretoria came under criticism, as seen by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Olugbenga Ashiru (2011-2013), who in 2012 accused the deportation of 125 Nigerians who were in Africa as xenophobia of the South (Landsberg 2012c).

Of course, blaming the African immigrant for internal challenges to South Africa is a prejudiced view that South African administrations are constantly trying to combat. It is also worth mentioning the ratification in the 1990s of the Geneva Conventions and African Unity on refugee law. In the current administration, the fight against xenophobia converges with the development of the National Action Plan to combat Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (NAP). Created in 2019, the NAP has as its goals the protection of human rights, the adoption of anti-racist and anti-discrimination initiatives, especially in the field of education. However, in the same year that the Plan was created, several Nigerians were killed or expelled from areas close to Johannesburg and, in response, what was seen were some Nigerians attacking South African traders residing in Abuja. To a certain extent, this type of violence ends up exposing one of the challenges that the Ramaphosa administration will face, since the defense of regional integration and xenophobia tend not to go in the same direction.

Conclusion

The quest to be a protagonist on the international stage and an important player in the African continent can be considered two of the main objectives of South Africa in the post-*apartheid* era. In general terms, when the Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma administrations are compared, the successes, as well as the challenges in achieving these objectives, went hand in hand with the adoption of strategies based on the valorization of multilateralism and universality in foreign policy. As analyzed in this article, this finding could be noticed, initially, in the Mandela administration, since the success in the international scenario contrasted with the challenges in the regional insertion, this characterized by the distrust about the interests of Pretoria for the continent.

Although losing the status of a country with a strong moral dimension, the Mbeki and Zuma administrations, to a greater or lesser extent, have also been successful in the international stage, given that universality in foreign policy has led such governments to strengthen ties with emerging powers, which gained increasing prominence in the international system. However, in the continental scenario, what was seen was the disparity between the success achieved by the first, when South Africa was successful in initiatives such as the transformation of the OAU into the AU, and in the creation of NEPAD and the African Agenda; and the failure of the second, since both in the Côte d'Ivoire and in the Libyan case, Pretoria did not achieve the expected results.

Although multilateralism and universality in foreign policy are perennial to successes and challenges for the realization of South African goals, it is a fact that both have become increasingly strategic means for the country, since they have expanded South Africa's international relations. This importance could even be found in the Ramaphosa administration, whose government has been directing the country's international and continental insertion to the adoption of such means. In this sense, taking into account the initial years of his administration, it is possible to highlight three characteristics that, roughly, will tend to gain more and more prominence.

The first refers to one of the main characteristics of the Mandela administration, that is, South Africa as a country with a strong moral dimension. In this case, even aiming at such status and considering it as important for the return of South African protagonism, it is possible to indicate the tendency of Pretoria not to distance itself from universality in foreign policy. Foremost, because the country understands the trend towards multipolarity

that is characteristic of the current international scenario. Secondly, because universality symbolizes the rupture with *apartheid*, since during the lifetime of the racist regime the focus was exclusion, in post-*apartheid* South Africa what predominates is the maintenance of ties with the most diverse types of countries. In this sense, it is possible to find the tendency to balance between points characteristic of previous administrations, since the search for a status with a strong moral dimension will go hand in hand with the construction or strengthening of ties with countries that are constantly criticized by Western powers, as seen in the Cuban case. In addition, the moral dimension is seen as fundamental to legitimize South African action on issues seen as challenging in the international system, this symbolized by criticism of Israel regarding the invasion in Palestinian territories.

The second characteristic, on the other hand, refers to economic diplomacy, which is gaining more and more prominence in the South African agenda. In fact, along with the continued interest in initiatives such as NEPAD, PIDA, TFTA and AfCFTA, the tendency to value economic relations with the African continent converges with the creation of South African Investment Conferences and the strengthening or development of strategic partnerships, as found in the cases of Angola and Ghana. On the one hand, the strategic character of this diplomacy is related to the quest to improve the performance of the South African economy, since it may increase trade with the African continent and, consequently, raise the rates related to South Africa's economic growth. On the other hand, such diplomacy is seen as important in the fight against unemployment, since the expectation is the largest inflow of foreign direct investment in the country.

Converging with previous compliance relationships, a third characteristic concerns the continual appreciation of the African continent. In addition to economic and political ties, this reflected by the defense of Western Sahara's self-determination and the appreciation of SADC and the African Union, it is worth highlighting the scope of security, whose peace process continues to be relevant for Pretoria. Even if this dimension presents itself as challenging, the emphasis given to the quest to silence weapons on the continent, a factor that demonstrates the relevance of Agenda 2063 for the Ramaphosa administration, as well as the performance in the Libyan, Somali cases and in the conflict in South Sudan, are examples that demonstrate how relevant Africa's pacification continues to be for the country. However, the greater interest in being active on the continent, as well as maintaining itself as the African voice on the international stage, contrasts with one of the challenges that the Ramaphosa administration will have to overcome, such

as xenophobia, since the attacks against African immigrants contrast with the desire for an increasingly integrated Africa.

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares the Ramaphosa's foreign policy with that adopted by the Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma governments. Based on primary and secondary sources and taking into account that the Ramaphosa administration is in progress, it seeks to demonstrate that the international and regional insertion processes that are being carried out bring as a main characteristic the attempt to strengthen the interaction between foreign policy and development economic, in the same way as the Mbeki and Zuma governments. Having done so, it seeks to demonstrate that the current

foreign policy maintains universality in foreign policy, multilateralism and economic diplomacy as characteristics, which were already present in previous administrations.

KEYWORDS

South Africa. Foreign Policy. Ramaphosa Administration.

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