

Umkhonto Wesizwe as the Foundation of Post-Apartheid South Africa's Foreign Policy and International Relations.

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Abstract : The present paper cogently and systematically traces the history of Umkhonto Wesizwe (MK) and identifies its important role in shaping South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy and international relations under black leadership. It provides the political and historical contexts within which we can interpret and better understand South Africa's controversial 'Quiet Diplomacy' approach to Zimbabwe's endemic political and economic crises, which have dragged for too long. On 16 December 1961, the African National Congress (ANC) officially launched the MK as its military wing. The main aim was to train liberation fighters outside South Africa who would return into the country to topple the apartheid regime. Subsequently, the ANC established links with various countries across Africa and the globe in order to solicit arms, financial resources and military training for its recruits into the MK. Drawing from archival research and empirical data obtained through oral interviews that were conducted with some of the former MK cadres, this paper demonstrates how the ANC forged relations with a number of countries that were like-minded in order to ensure that its dream of removing the apartheid government became a reality. The findings reveal that South Africa's foreign policy posture and international relations after the demise of apartheid in 1994 built on these relations. As such, even former and current socialist countries that were frowned upon by the Western world became post-apartheid South Africa's international partners. These include countries such as Cuba and China, among others. Even countries that were not recognized by the Western world as independent states received good reception in post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy agenda. One of these countries is Palestine. Within Africa, countries with questionable human rights records such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe were accommodated in South Africa's foreign policy agenda after 1994. Drawing from this history, the paper concludes that it would be difficult to fully understand and appreciate South Africa's foreign policy direction and international relations after 1994 without bringing the history and the politics of the MK into the equation. Therefore, the paper proposes that the utilitarian role of history should never be undermined in the analysis of a country's foreign policy direction and international relations. Umkhonto Wesizwe and South Africa are used as examples to demonstrate how such a link could be drawn through archival and empirical evidence.

Keywords : African National Congress, apartheid, foreign policy, international relations

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