

BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

Deon J. Geldenhuys

The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making

Macmillan, Johannesburg/St. Martin's Press New York, 1984, 295 pp.

South Africa's domestic racial policy of apartheid has been an international issue for some decades now. In recent years, the Republic's regional policy has likewise become the object of international censure. At issue is South Africa's treatment of neighbouring black states, most recently labelled »destabilisation« by Pretoria's critics. But then, virtually overnight and to the surprise of foreign observers, South Africa appeared to be adopting a new conciliatory approach to its neighbours. The Nkomati Accord between the Republic and Mozambique is presented as evidence of Pretoria's new stance. Not long afterwards, Prime Minister P. W. Botha visited several West European capitals, a visit no doubt related to South Africa's »peace« moves in Southern Africa.

Over the years, a great deal has been written, by South Africans and foreigners alike, on the country's foreign policy. The recent controversy over destabilisation has similarly produced a wave of shorter publications on Pretoria's regional policy. But while there has been an abundance of studies – of varying quality, needless to say – on South Africa's articulated foreign policy, precious little has been written on the making or formation of its foreign policy. It is indeed a remarkable feature that this important aspect has for so long been so gravely neglected by both South African and foreign scholars.

Now a book has been published that goes a long way towards filling this serious gap in the literature. *The Diplomacy of Isolation* is written by Deon Geldenhuys, associate professor of Political Science at the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg. The book is published simultaneously by South African and American publishers.

The author addresses four basic questions: *Who* makes South Africa's foreign policy? *How*, *where* and *why* is it made? It is thus a study of the structures, processes and people involved in the making of the Republic's foreign policy. The book focuses on the years 1966 to 1981, i. e. the full period of Mr. B. J. Vorster's premiership and the first three year's of Mr. P. W. Botha's. The first chapter goes further back, though, providing a useful historical backdrop by examining South Africa's foreign policy system 1910–1966.

The arrangement of material is fairly conventional for a study of foreign policy formation. Thus there is a chapter dealing with the roles of the head of state and legislature in South Africa's foreign policy making; two subsequent chapters examine the roles of the cabinet, government departments and subsidiary executive bodies. The role of the public – both in its »organised« and »unorganised« forms, as well as the mass media – is the

subject of a further chapter. Under the heading, »The external milieu«, the role of foreign pressure in South African policy making is analysed.

Geldenhuis provides a wealth of new and fascinating information, a good deal of it obtained through personal interviews with South African politicians and officials. Dealing with such a contemporary subject and given the South African government's obsession with secrecy on so many features of policy making, the book inevitably contains many conjectural, tentative and speculative elements. The last word on the formation of South African foreign policy has certainly not been written. Geldenhuis nonetheless provides a rare glimpse behind the well-hidden corridors of power in South Africa. He handles his subject matter in a generally detached scholarly fashion, thus avoiding the ideological and political pitfalls resulting from any »committed« perspective.

Foreign readers will be particularly interested in the sections dealing with the activities abroad of South Africa's former Department of Information, the Republic's involvement in the Angolan war in 1975-76, the influence of foreign pressure on the country's foreign and domestic policies, and also in the role of the much heard State Security Council in policy making. As regards South Africa's intervention in Angola, for example, the author provides us with a good deal of hitherto unknown information on how and why the Republic got embroiled in the war.

For those taking a more academic interest in the making of foreign policy, Geldenhuis' book has a concluding chapter providing some theoretical perspectives on foreign policy formation and also proposing the outlines of a model of South African foreign policy making.

Finally, the book contains a number of tables and charts, detailed footnotes and a comprehensive index.

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Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung (Hrsg.)

South-Africa – a Chance for Liberalism?

Papers presented during a Seminar of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in December 1983, Sankt Augustin, Liberal Verlag, 1985, 416 S., DM 38,—

Verfahren, hoffnungslos, einer unaufhaltsamen Polarisierung zustrebend – so wollen viele Beobachter die Lage in Südafrika bezeichnet wissen. Zu differenzierenderen Betrachtungen werden weder die weißen noch die schwarzen Südafrikaner von vielen für fähig gehalten, die Gegensätze scheinen deterministisch einer Eskalation entgegenzustreben. Dieses Negativszenario, von den westlichen Medien genüßlich aufbereitet, vermittelt in seiner Ausweglosigkeit weder einen Ansatz zu einer friedlichen Veränderung, noch wird es der tatsächlichen Lage im Innern Südafrikas gerecht.