

# SA making new foreign friends

By **Anthoni van Nieuwkerk**

**ISOLATED STATES - A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**, Deon Geldenhuys, Jonathan Ball, 1990. 764 pages including index. R90.

**SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY - THE SEARCH FOR STATUS AND SECURITY 1945-1988**, James Barber and John Barratt, Southern, 1990. 398 pages including index. R40.

**TWO** academic contributions, currently available in most bookshops in South Africa, look at South Africa's foreign relations under apartheid. The authors describe the South African state's elusive search for status and security (Barber and Barratt) and its international isolation (Geldenhuys), offering useful perspectives and contributing towards a broad understanding of South Africa's position in the world.

Neither work, however, attempts to give a perspective on how a democratic South Africa will, or indeed can, conduct future foreign policy. Obviously, for South Africa to regain international acceptance (to be "rehabilitated", as Geldenhuys puts it), white minority rule needs to be replaced by a popularly elected and democratically accountable government.

For Barber and Barratt, the search for international status and security cannot succeed through shifting policy and social engineering. "Success will come," they argue, "only if the government abandons its principal aim of ensuring the preservation of a white-controlled state". Many observers would argue (not without strong disagreement) that since De Klerk is following precisely this strategy, his government is bound to be successful.

*South Africa's Foreign Policy* is very readable, well researched and gives an informative account of South Africa's foreign policy between the years 1945 and 1988. Its mode of analysis, using a chronological framework and written from a liberal perspective, places the work among contemporary history rather than political science or international relations proper.

The lack of a properly developed theoretical framework seems to be the book's most glaring omission. Altogether three paragraphs were set aside for this purpose. Except for a reference to foreign policy-making in South Africa as an "oligarchic-bureaucratic" process, there is no discussion of any of the well-known theories of foreign policy-making.

When an academic refrains from properly explaining her particular choice of analytical tools, doubt is easily cast on the validity of the sub-

fitting into a mainstream conceptual "episodic", an approach in which little analytical frameworks. Work in this area is on practical foreign policy outcomes for a policy analyst. Consequently, newly emerging analysis with potentially rich applications, what Vale calls "comfortable assumptions about relations".

How else can one interpret Barber's assertion that "respect for sovereign statehood and non-interference in internal affairs had been the government's policies over forty years"? True, but in the case of Southern Africa, the government's behaviour made a mockery of these principles.

Uncritical assumptions like these are a disservice to the authors clearly do not take into account the brutal nature of South Africa's regional

years: the nature of meddling in the region, the support of Mozambique, some of our

Geldenhuys deals with a number of international relations in Africa, together with some of the ostracised, or

The book's work for an enforced isolation (isolation) is by contrast against an international community which a group of offenders. Geldenhuys

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John Barratt

isolation of states. This he does in chapters on diplomatic, economic, military and, surprisingly, the study finds that this country is the most isolated of the four, and China

The study also shows that isolation has not been total. For example, Taiwan is still a state, and South Africa trades extensively, economic sanctions, and even manages