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## **MASTER THESIS**

Letters and Foreign Languages  
English Studies  
**Literature and Civilization**

### **U.S. Foreign Policy towards Apartheid South Africa:**

#### **The Reagan Administration as a Case Study**

A thesis submitted as partial fulfillment for the Master degree  
Option: Literature and Civilization

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to:

My family,

Especially to

My mother

In every fall, you are always there to pull me up.

I can never imagine my life without you,

Thank you.

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First and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Allah for His guidance throughout the process of completing this thesis for without Him nothing could have been done. I am thankful for the gift of patience and strength He granted me, and for enabling me to take on a whole new research for the second time. Without Allah's grace and support, the completion of this thesis would have never been possible.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the United States' position towards Apartheid in South Africa during the Reagan administration (1981-1988). It investigates the reasons behind the Reagan administration's continued support for the Apartheid government despite human rights violations. By examining the historical context and tracing the evolution of the United States' stance on Apartheid from the Eisenhower to the Reagan administration this study reveals the factors that influenced Reagan's foreign policy change. Economic interests, political considerations and domestic as well as international pressures appeared to be the main drivers behind this complex and unstable approach. Despite international criticism, the United States pursued a policy of "constructive engagement" towards Apartheid maintaining a friendly and slow approach rather than taking a quick and strict stance. Economic interests were an important factor due to South Africa's valuable mineral resources while geopolitical considerations made South Africa a strategic ally in the fight against communism in the region. Furthermore, domestic pressure from businesses with interests in South Africa played a role in keeping ties with the latter. The United States' attitude towards Apartheid puts its moral principles under question as it seemed that liberal values were compromised in favor of personal interests.

**Keywords:** United States, Apartheid, South Africa, Foreign Policy, the Reagan Administration, Constructive Engagement.

## المخلص

يعالج هذا البحث موقف الولايات المتحدة تجاه نظام الفصل العنصري في جنوب أفريقيا خلال إدارة ريغان (1981-1988)، حيث يبحث في أسباب استمرار إدارة ريغان في دعم الحكومة الفصلية على الرغم من انتهاكات حقوق الإنسان. من خلال دراسة السياق التاريخي وتتبع تطور الموقف الأمريكي تجاه الفصل العنصري من إدارة أيزنهاور إلى إدارة ريغان، يكشف هذا البحث عن العوامل التي أثرت في تغيير سياسة ريغان الخارجية. الاهتمامات الاقتصادية والاعتبارات السياسية والضغوط المحلية والدولية ظهرت كالعوامل الرئيسية وراء هذا النهج المعقد وغير المستقر. على الرغم من الانتقادات الدولية، اتبعت الولايات المتحدة سياسة "التعامل البناء" تجاه الفصل العنصري، حيث حافظت على نهج ودية وبطيء بدلاً من اتخاذ موقف سريع وصارم. الاهتمامات الاقتصادية كانت عاملاً مهماً بسبب الموارد المعدنية القيمة في جنوب أفريقيا، بينما جعلت الاعتبارات الجيوسياسية جنوب أفريقيا حليفاً استراتيجياً في مكافحة الشيوعية في المنطقة. علاوة على ذلك، مارس الضغط المحلي من قبل الشركات ذات المصالح في جنوب أفريقيا دوراً في الحفاظ على العلاقات معها. موقف الولايات المتحدة تجاه الفصل العنصري يضع مبادئها الأخلاقية تحت الشك، حيث بدأ أن القيم الليبرالية تم التضحية بها لصالح المصالح الشخصية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الولايات المتحدة، الفصل العنصري، جنوب أفريقيا، السياسة الخارجية، إدارة ريغان، التعامل البناء.

## **List of Acronyms**

PRA	Population Registration Act
GAA	Group Areas Act
PBSGA	Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act
IA	Immorality Act
SC	Suppression of Communism
SCA	Suppression of Communism Act
ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
BAA	Bantu Authorities Act
WP	White Parliament
BAD	Bantu Administration and Development
SRVA	Separate Representation of Voters Act
NLAA	Native Law Amendment Act
BEA	Bantu Education Act
EUEA	Extension of University Education Act
SA	Sabotage Act
GLAA	General Law Amendment Act
PA	Programme of Action
DC	Defiance Campaign
AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
SU	Soweto Uprising
AAU	Anti-Apartheid Union
CAAA	Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act US: United States

NSSM	National Security Study Memorandum 39
CAAA	Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
WWII	World War II
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
UDF	United Democratic Front
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions

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## **General Introduction**

### *Research Background*

On the ground of international relations, United state's foreign policy, despite its main principles of protecting human rights, preaching peace and democratizing countries all over the world, in the case of Apartheid South Africa, it showed different position, especially the Reagan administration, which sided by the Apartheid regime in South Africa.

Throughout history US administrations had different positions towards the issue of Apartheid, for instance, Jimmy Carter's foreign policy prioritized human rights and stressed on the promotion of freedom and democracy, as he expressed his concern about the issue and imposed sanctions, though limited, on South Africa in response to its racist policies. However, the next administration of Reagan showed otherwise. He supported the South African government and even appeared to tolerate the racist system of Apartheid, as he refused to impose sanctions against human rights violations in South Africa, showing neglect to the moral principles of US foreign policy. This change of attitude throughout history and the contradiction in claims and actions questions the integrity and credibility of the principles of United States foreign policy and builds confusion towards them. And that leads us to investigate why the position of the United States' foreign policy was paradoxical when it came to Apartheid in South Africa during the Reagan administration.

### *Research Questions*

- 1- How did the United States react to Apartheid South Africa during Ronald Reagan's administration?
- 2- Why did the United States take contradicting positions towards Apartheid South Africa during that period?

### *Research Objectives*

Our aim from this research is to understand Ronald Reagan's foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa and expose the motives and reasons behind that position. We try to dig into history and study the 1980s circumstances and events that led the United States to ignore its foreign policy's principles of human rights and support the racist system imposed by the South African regime towards non-whites.

### *Rationale*

This research is conducted out of interest and curiosity towards the reasons that led the US to take such a contradicting position towards the issue of Apartheid, as to why would the United States support what it claimed to oppose and fight against. Apartheid was a system that creatively tortured nonwhites, and violated even the most basic human rights. Yet the United States turned a blind eye to the violations practiced by this system and maintained a close relationship with the South African government. This period in history seems crucial, as it questions the moral duty of promoting freedom and protecting human rights that the United States' Foreign Policy claims to have towards other countries of the world.

### *Significance of the study*

This research might be helpful to student researchers specialized in American civilization. It might be a ground or a motivator for other academic research related to the American Foreign policy or the case of Apartheid South Africa.

### *Methodology*

The research methodology used in this study is the historical- analytical method that involves studying and analyzing past events, policies, and actions in order to gain a better understanding on the subject matter and build strong arguments to uncover shared characteristics, motivations, and consequences.

In the context of this research on the United States' policy towards apartheid in South Africa during the Reagan Administration, the historical method involved examining secondary sources like books, political articles, works of scholars and historical analyses, in order to gain further insights and perspectives. Through using this method, we could build a detailed explanation of the events, policies, and decision-making processes that shaped the United States' policy towards Apartheid. This methodology allows for a deeper understanding of the historical context, motivations, and implications of the policy, forming a reliable base for the research findings and conclusions.

#### *Structure of the thesis*

This thesis is composed of two chapters, each one tries to serve the purpose of this research which is coming up with a clear answer to our research problem.

The first chapter , entitled “US Foreign Policy” tried to explore different perspectives and ideas that influenced the United States' decision-making in their international relations. First it introduced the main principles that shaped United States foreign policy including promoting democracy, protecting US national security, defending human rights, and promoting economic development and prosperity as well as maintaining international peace and stability and other principles. And it attempted to understand the perspectives and views that influenced United States' foreign policy decision making, through studying some schools of thought, and emphasizing on liberalism and realism, as both views were claimed to heavily influence Ronald Reagan's foreign policy decision making. Second, the chapter analyzed the role of the Cold War in shaping US foreign policy, considering the tensions between the US and the Soviet Union and Reagan's decision making under such circumstances. And then it

focused on understanding Reagan's foreign policy in general, his objectives and how they shaped America's relationships with other nations.

The second chapter is entitled as: “Reagan’s Foreign Policy towards Apartheid in South Africa”

This chapter starts by giving an overview on Apartheid as an oppressive system, it explores the laws it made and the damage it caused to South African people. Then it showed how the response of the oppressed people was and the resistance they engaged in which took many forms till the end of this racist system. Next, the chapter examines United States foreign policy towards Apartheid in general, giving an idea about the positions US administration had taking, starting from Truman till Reagan’s administration, finally this part of the thesis, delves more into Ronald Reagan’s stance on Apartheid, which is the focus of this research, examining his decisions, his view on the issue and how it changed over time. Revealing in the end the reasons behind the contradiction and inconsistency of his foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa.

## **Chapter one**

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: US Foreign Policy**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter gives an overview on US foreign policy. First, it defines the term “foreign policy” and understands its importance, and then it delves more to explain specifically US foreign policy and its principles and ideals. This chapter also discusses schools of thought in American foreign policy, aiming to have an idea about the basic ideologies that influenced its decision making. We present two important theories Realism and Liberalism, providing definitions to both theories and relating them to US foreign policy actions during the Reagan administration, the period we are intending to study. The chapter also discusses US foreign policy during the cold war, showing how the United States acted on the international stage during the bipolar system. Then it goes into Ronald Reagan’s Foreign Policy, examining his beliefs, attitude and main focus and motive when dealing with other countries of the world. It also highlights US foreign policy’s actions towards human rights violations in both Latin America and more precisely in South Africa during the 1980s, which is the focus of this research, providing in the process a brief yet clear definition of the Apartheid system.

#### **1.2 US Foreign Policy: Principles and Schools of Thought**

International relations can be traced back to Antiquity, in ancient civilizations such as Egypt, China, and Greece. However, these relations back then did not have strict rules to be followed, they were based only on morality, and were only between neighboring states, in other words, they were no more than “regional relations”(Khan 3-4). It was not until the 17th century that states started building

relations with other states beyond their regions. And with the development of the means of communication as well as the spread of industrial revolution, states started to become more interconnected. The study of international relations back then was mainly focused on diplomacy, philosophy and law, however, now international relations is more about understanding the goals and issues of states and how they relate to the world. It teaches that world peace can be achieved only if actors work together to find solutions to problems such as nationalism, and narrow national interest (Khan 3-4). International relations is when two or more states interact with each other in political ways. There is a school called "international relations" that is a part of political science. It studies how states interact with each other, how they make foreign policies, and how they use groups and organizations to communicate with one another. It covers many topics such as security, peace, economic development, international groups, global trade, human rights, and nuclear weapons (Khan 1).

When defining the term "foreign policy" we find that it refers to the goals that a country has when engaging with other countries. These goals are influenced by many factors, for instance, the domestic situation in the country, actions taken by other countries, or the desired outcome on an international level... To realize its foreign policy goals, the United States employs strategies and tactics under the name of diplomacy, this involves forming alliances with other states, engaging in trade agreements, and resorting to military action in cases that are more extreme. It is important to note that each country has a unique foreign policy that is shaped by its circumstances and objectives in the world (Foreign policy).

The United States had a set of principles that guided its foreign policy and in order to be successful in this policy, the country believed it needed to first create its own

Constitution and institutions, it had to respect the territorial integrity of other countries and at the same time stand against imperialist expansion (Mead 9).

The main ideals and principles of the United States foreign policy have changed throughout history. The United States' foreign policy has been influenced by four main schools of thought, which are: the Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian, Jacksonian, and Wilsonian schools. Each school of these has its own set of principles and ideas that guide the US foreign policy. For instance, the Hamiltonian school focused on economic interests, while the Jeffersonian school preferred isolationism (Mead 9). Each of these schools of thought had a unique impact on shaping US foreign policy. For example The Hamiltonian school, which was named after Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury and a main figure in the Federalist Party, focused on trade and commerce, while the Wilsonian, which was named after Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States, centered its attention on promoting democracy (Mead 462).

Principles and thoughts like democracy, the rule of law, and free trade as well as the willingness to use military force if needed to protect national interests have guided the United States' foreign policy throughout history (Mead 462). Americans believe their country has a responsibility to promote democracy and liberty. This belief has been deeply ingrained in American culture since the country's founding (Brogan 5).

There are many schools of thought that have influenced United States foreign policy over the years. The most significant ones are Realism, Idealism, Neo-conservatism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Isolationism, and Multilateralism. (Jentleson 19). The two most influential schools that we need to know about in this research are Realism and liberalism

Realism is defined as a school of thought in the United States' foreign policy. It focuses on the pursuit of national interests, especially in terms of security and power. Realists view the international system as anarchic, where states must rely on their own abilities to survive. They believe that states behave out of self-interest and that power is the most important means in international relations. To ensure national security, Realists place great importance on strategic alliances, military strength, and deterrence. They also preferred to be careful when deciding to get involved in foreign affairs, and only doing so if it directly benefits the states' own interests (Jentleson 19).

Political Realism is a way of thinking about international relations. Realists believe that politics is actually about power and security. For realists, protecting a country's own interests is the most important goal, and power is the best means to achieve that. They support the idea that countries should act rationally to gain and keep power, and they believe that controlling other countries is crucial to survive. Many thinkers, such as Max Weber, E.H. Carr, Frederick Schuman, and Henry Kissinger, are associated with Realism (Khan 6).

In international relations, this theory assumes that states are the main actors in the world stage and that they act in their own self-interest to ensure their survival and security. In a world without a global authority or hierarchy, referred to as anarchy, states must rely on their own power and capabilities to protect themselves and advance their interests. This means that the pursuit of power and security is the primary concern of states, and their actions are driven by the need to maximize their own strength and minimize the threat posed by other states. Therefore, Realists argue that international relations are a struggle for power, with states engaging in competition and conflict to achieve their objectives (Wohlforth 37).



For Realists, the world is a dangerous and unpredictable place where every country needs to rely on itself to survive. They view that states' actions are driven by the desire to protect their own interests and think that the international system lacks a central authority, which means there is no one to enforce rules or prevent conflicts between countries. So the best way for countries is to rely on their own military strength and alliances to face potential aggression. In realists' view, the balance of power among states is the most important factor in determining whether there is war or peace in the world (Wohlforth 39).

During the 1980s, the Reagan administration wanted to keep the United States and its allies safe from the Soviet Union. They believed that having a strong military was the best way to prevent attacks from the Soviet Union. This approach was called "peace through strength." The country spent more money on the military and put more soldiers in Europe to stop the expansion of the Soviet Union (Nuechterlein 47). All of the United States' efforts were to ensure its safety as well as the safety of its allies. The Reagan administration worked to keep the country and its allies secure, seeing that as the most important goal in international relations (Nuechterlein 47).

The Reagan administration also applied a realist approach to Latin America. They supported governments that had strong ties with the US, like those in Honduras and El Salvador by providing economic and military aid in order to stop the spread of communism in the region. They believed that if communism was allowed to take hold in Latin America, it would threaten the United States security. So, they used power to prevent this from happening (Nuechterlein 117).

During the 1980s, the realist approach was also taken by the United States when dealing with the Middle East, the Reagan administration prioritized the US national

interest and security. It provided military and economic assistance to regimes that it had good relations with in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel. The United States wanted to fight the Soviet Union's influence in the region in order to protect its access to oil, which was necessary to its economy (Nuechterlein 159).

The realist view allowed the United States to maintain its strategic interests in the region and ensure its access to vital resources, at the same time counter the Soviet power (Nuechterlein 159).

Liberalism is another political school that puts emphasis on promoting free trade, protecting individual rights, and establishing democratic institutions as the basic principles of a country's internal affairs. It also holds other principles that encourage international cooperation, collective security, and multilateralism, believing that they are essential for the wellbeing of all countries in the world. This school sees the world as a place where countries can work together for mutual benefit. It values freedom of speech and the press, thinking that these principles should be promoted worldwide. Additionally, liberalism supports the principle of free trade and opening markets that aim for economic growth and prosperity (Moravcsik 2). Liberals tend to subscribe to certain beliefs. For instance, they assume that individuals act rationally and make decisions based on their own interests. They also maintain that politics can be a positive-sum game where all parties involved can benefit. Furthermore, they believe that cooperation and collaboration are not only possible, but also necessary in the international system. Liberals consider the spread of liberal values, such as freedom and democracy, to be an important objective (Moravcsik 4).

Liberalism and Idealism seem to be similar, however Idealism stresses more on the significance of ethical principles and values in shaping the world, while liberalism

concentrates more on achieving political and economic freedom. The Liberal values were a basic root in the shaping of the United states' foreign policy. This can be seen through various actions, such as the Marshall Plan implemented after the Second World War which aimed to reconstruct Europe, establish the United Nations, and promote human rights worldwide (Moravcsik 20).

Europe was left in massive chaos and damage after the end of WWII , and there was a plan to help reconstruct Europe and improve its condition. The plan was called the "Reconstruction of Europe". In addition to that, after the war the United Nations was created as a peace organization that seeks to help countries work together to promote peace and solve problems. There was also a focus on promoting human rights all over the world by making sure that people, wherever they are from, are treated fairly and equally.

The United States used international institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization to spread liberal economic policies, such as market liberalization and promotion of free trade (Moravcsik 26).

Liberal values and principles seemed to play an important role in shaping the United States' foreign policy, by not only supporting human rights and democracy worldwide but also through spreading liberal economic policies that try to serve its own interests.

### **1.3 US foreign policy during the Cold War**

The United States emerged as a superpower alongside the United Socialist Soviet Republic, known as "USSR", after winning the Second World War (1939-1945). During the Cold War (1947-1991), the United States actively spread its

ideology, political system model, and value system, competing with the Soviet Union for global influence. The foreign policy of the United States during this period was shaped by internal factors, including economic and military capabilities, beliefs, values, and perceptions of the United States' role in the world. (Czornik abstract)

The war in Vietnam (1955-1975) and internal opposition influenced the United States' foreign policy decisions and Shifts in focus from Europe to other regions like the Middle East and Asia also impacted United States foreign policy priorities. (Czornik abstract)

Henry Kissinger, a prominent figure in United States foreign policy, described the nature of United States foreign policy during the Cold War era in terms of the country's power, will, intellectual and moral drive, and its influence on the international system, as he noted that the United States had a significant impact on international relations in the 20th century, but with ambivalence. On one hand, the United States emphasized non-intervention in other countries' domestic affairs and affirmed the globality of its own values. On the other hand, it also displayed pragmatism in daily diplomacy and followed its historical and moral principles with ideological intensity. The years during the Cold War era (1947-1991) were marked by complex dynamics in the United States' foreign policy, reflecting a balance between principles and real world factors (Czornik 124).

Kissinger's view appeared to uncover the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of the United States foreign policy during the Cold War era. the way the United States dealt with other countries was influenced by its strength, ideas, and competition with the Soviet Union. It tried to find a balance between not getting involved too much and being practical in its relationships with other countries. It also had strong moral

principles that it stuck to, which made its approach to global issues complicated and adaptable (Czornik 124).

The decision of the United States to abandon its traditional doctrine of isolationism, as encouraged by former United States' President James Monroe (1817-1825), and its afterward joining the second War following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, were important events that impacted the development of United States' foreign policy during the Cold War era. Despite facing strong competition from the Soviet Union, these events marked a turning point in the United States' engagement with the international community and set the stage for the country's rise to global dominance, establishing what came to be known as Pax Americana. (Czornik 124-125) which means "American peace" and refers to a period of relative calm and stability in parts of the world where the United States has been influential, starting from around 1945 and continuing until today (Pax Americana).

The United States' emergence as a global power during the Cold War was driven by a combination of factors, including its powerful economic and military growth, as well as its belief in promoting and sometimes imposing its values on the world stage. This belief that the United States served as a vehicle for promoting its values was necessary in shaping its foreign policy throughout the Cold War. As a result, by the end of the twentieth century, the United States had mounted to the position of a superpower, applying unparalleled influence in global affairs and introducing a new era of supremacy, where the US occupied the role of the one single dominant power. (Czornik 124-125)

During the Cold War, foreign policy referred to a country's approach to interacting with other countries in order to pursue personal interests. This involved

creating and implementing policies that reflected the country's internal policies, national interests, and interests of different social groups. Foreign policy was influenced by various factors, including geographical location, resources, economy, military strength, demographics, and history, beliefs, values, ideologies, and perceptions of the international environment and other internal factors such as domestic politics, public opinion, interest groups, leadership styles, and economic and social situation, and external factors like the behavior of other countries, international organizations, norms and rules, global and regional power dynamics, conflicts, and changing international trends. (Czornik 125-126)

These factors were interconnected and could affect each other, with the internal ones often taking precedence. Understanding these factors was important for comprehending a country's foreign policy decisions and actions within the bipolar system or any international system. (Czornik 125-126)

After World War II, which lasted from 1939 to 1945, the United States emerged as a powerful global economy, particularly in the years following the war. It topped other countries like the UK and France in terms of economic influence in many markets. This period, known as the post-war world economy, was shaped by the United States' strong economic growth. The country implemented various programs like the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the Marshall Plan from 1948 to 1951, and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948 to provide support to European countries and make them reliant on its help. (Czornik129) In 1944, the Bretton Woods conference took place, which resulted in the United States dollar becoming the primary world currency, and American banks holding important gold stocks. Additionally, the United States created organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1944,

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) in 1944, and (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1947, where it had significant influence due to its financial contributions. American investors also had many investments in other countries, and the US dominated industries such as steel, electricity, oil, and automobiles, which made up an important part of global production and exports after the war. (Czornik129)

The United States sought to establish itself as the dominant and technologically advanced superpower in the world. For this, the government invested heavily in its military and weaponry, with a particular focus on enhancing its air force and naval capabilities. The possession of nuclear weapons also enabled the US to rapidly mobilize troops and equipment, a strategy known as "atomic diplomacy," which allowed it to stay ahead in the global arms race. (Czornik 129-130)

The US built many military bases around the world in strategic locations for military, political, and economic purposes. The bases enabled the United States to have a strong military presence in other countries, to support anti-communist governments, and to encourage economic collaboration. By doing so, they created a strong reliance on the United States and its resources. Before this time, the United States only had military bases in the Americas, in places like Cuba (Guantanamo base), and the Panama Canal zone, but during the Cold War, they started building bases all over the world. (Czornik 129-130)

The United States focused on strengthening its military capabilities and employing new technologies to shape its foreign policy. This involved sending soldiers to other countries and using advancements in rockets, computers, and communication to achieve their goals. Domestic factors such as politics and media were also taken into

consideration in the country's decision-making process. Building military bases in different regions of the world was a way for the country to display its strength and importance on the international level. ( Czornik 131) The US approach to international relations during this era seems to be heavily influenced by these efforts.

The United States Constitution does not clearly state who has control over foreign policy, but it is divided between the president and Congress to ensure a balance of power. This includes making decisions about military operations, treaties, and appointments. In the past, presidents such as John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon had significant roles in foreign affairs, sometimes acting like kings. However, Congress began to play a more active role in foreign policy decisions during the 1970s. During the Cold War and beyond, lobby and pressure groups also had a major impact on United States foreign policy. These groups represent various interests and use financial influence to pressure politicians. Some groups, such as the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian lobbies, are well-organized and effective. (Czornik 131-132) It appears that these factors contribute to the complex nature of United States foreign policy making and implementation.

#### **1.4 Ronald Reagan's Foreign Policy**

Ronald Reagan held strong beliefs about foreign policy from the beginning of his political career. He believed that the United States should actively maintain power against threats that pose a risk to freedom and national interests. He regularly criticized appeasement, a policy of giving in to the demands of an aggressive power in order to avoid conflict (appeasement), comparing it to the suicidal belief of giving in to Hitler's aggressive demands in order to avoid conflict in WWII (Kaufman 7).



He admired Winston Churchill for his position against appeasement and believed that Churchill had played an important role in protecting civilization during the Second World War. Reagan viewed Soviet totalitarianism after WWII as a threat to freedom that was just as dangerous as Nazi Germany under Hitler. He saw the struggle against this new form of totalitarianism as the responsibility of the liberal democratic forces, just like the fight against Hitler's totalitarianism, with no difference except for the sides involved. (Kaufman 7)

Ronald Reagan disagreed with the policies of former presidents, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, and Jimmy Carter towards the Soviet Union. Reagan thought that Soviet Communism was dangerous and needed to be defeated. He knew that the Soviet system had weaknesses that could be used against it. He strongly believed in political and economic freedom and helped to make America a prosperous, dominant leader in the world. (Kaufman 7)

Ronald Reagan's moral beliefs and optimistic view were influenced by his religious background as well as his childhood experiences in the Disciples of Christ church. Reagan clarified the need for serious focus on protecting and spreading freedom, stressing on the idea that freedom is something that must be defended and shared with future generations to maintain a free country. (Kaufman 7)

Unlike Nixon and Kissinger who saw the Soviet government as a traditional great power, and Carter who saw it as being defensive to American power, president Reagan saw the Soviet government as a totalitarian state with unlimited aims. Just like Harry Truman, Reagan believed that the root cause of Soviet aggression was its internal structure and its ideology. He saw that the Soviet Union would always be a dangerous threat to freedom if it remained a totalitarian state with no public opinion or checks and

balances to limit the actions of its leaders. (Kaufman 7-8) He was very confident in the idea that democratic capitalism was the best system. He believed that America's future was bright and its economy could compete with any other economy, as long as the government was smaller and there were fewer rules and restrictions. His strategy was based on a combination of power and principle, with a commitment to promoting democracy and opposing communism. He disagreed with other politicians who did not value ideals or ignored the importance of the political system. Reagan saw American strategy as not just resisting oppression, but also promoting freedom, prosperity, and democracy. He believed that the US should support human rights and encourage government change in the Soviet Union; however, he criticized the Carter Administration for not being consistent in imposing sanctions on countries accused of human rights violations. Reagan wanted countries to have stable, democratic governments, but at the same time, he was willing to accept dictatorship sometimes to prevent complete oppression. (Kaufman 7-8)

Ever since he became president in January 1981, Ronald Reagan was determined to defeat the Soviet Union instead of keeping it under control or trying to make peace with it. He had courage, vision, and political skills as he stated that the Soviet Union was driven by its ideology to lie, cheat, and steal to achieve world domination. He predicted that communism was destined to fail and be remembered as a sad chapter in human history (Kaufman 8-9).

Throughout his presidency, Reagan followed the aim of limiting the spread of communism and engaging in an ideological struggle against it. He modernized the American military, doubled the defense budget, and burdened the Soviet economy. He also convinced NATO allies to place missiles in Europe to confront Soviet missiles.

(Kaufman 8-9) Reagan used a variety of tactics to put pressure on the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Even though he faced opposition from his own advisors and the Soviet Union, he continued with his plans as he proposed the “Zero Option” that led to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty in 1987, which eliminated a type of nuclear weapons. Reagan also started the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) which caused the Soviet Union to make compromises to eliminate it. He also intensified economic pressure on the USSR through several actions like suspending trade and loan agreements, lowering oil prices with the help of Saudi Arabia, and supporting opposition groups in different regions. (Kaufman 9-10)

From this, we understand that Ronald Reagan aimed to change the Soviet regime through various means like political, economic, ideological, and military pressure. His economic policies, known as “Reaganomics” played an important role in America’s success in the Cold War. Instead of traditional economic approaches, Reagan adopted supply-side economics, which focused on individuals investing in the market. This involved cutting taxes, reducing domestic spending, as well as reducing government regulations on the economy. Despite resulting in higher debts, Reagan’s policies produced significant income and resulted in a flourishing economy. The American economy grew by one-third between 1983 and 1988, with manufacturing experiencing a 12 percent growth. The US created 18.5 million new jobs during the 1980s. (Kaufman 13)

Based on these efforts, we can say that Reagan’s policies revived America’s economic power and strengthened its position in the Cold War. Even though Ronald Reagan was a successful president, he did face challenges. One of the biggest challenges was the Iran-Contra scandal, which involved selling weapons to Iran and

using the financial gain to support anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua. This scandal damaged President Reagan's reputation and raised questions about his ability to manage his administration effectively. The scandal also made Reagan's strong position against terrorism less credible. (Kaufman 13)

Reagan faced another challenge during his presidency when American soldiers were sent to Lebanon (1982-1984) as the mission ended tragically when a terrorist attack on their dormitory in Beirut caused the deaths of 267 Marines. This made it difficult for the US to continue their presence in Lebanon, and it impacted Reagan's efforts to fight terrorism and build trust and reliability in the region, this and other incidents such as Mogadishu 1993 and embassy bombings in Kenya 1998, they all created a perception that the US was a weak nation. (Kaufman 13)

Despite Reagan's strong efforts to promote American interests in the Middle East, his policies faced obstacles, particularly in fighting terrorism. The Iran-Contra scandal and the tragedy in Lebanon were huge mistakes during his presidency, showing that no president is immune to mistakes or challenges. The commitment of Reagan to a strong military and the fight against any threat to freedom, together with his economic policies, led to development and prosperity in the United States. However, his approach to the Middle East faced challenges and his response to terrorism was not always seen as strong enough. But even with these mistakes, many people view Reagan as a champion of freedom and an important figure in American history. (Kaufman 13)

The US approaches its relationships according to the view that human rights should always be taken into consideration in dealing with other nations. This has been a main aspect of the United States' foreign policy since the country's foundation, it can be traced back to the Declaration of Independence in 1776, which focused on the

importance of individual rights. Basically, the United States believes that promoting human rights and respecting them is not only morally right, but also builds good international relations and a more stable world. (Forsythe 438)

It is true that human rights have always been important to the United States, but it was not until the 1970s that it became a central focus of the US foreign policy. During this period, policymakers started to pay more attention to human rights when dealing with other countries. For instance, the Helsinki Accords of 1975 was a huge turning point in this regard, as it established human rights as a key principle in international relations. Additionally, in 1977 the United States department established the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, which demonstrated the importance of human rights in the United States foreign policy. These developments explained how the United States evolved and how its approach to relationships with other nations was shaped. (Forsythe 438) However, human rights as a guiding principle for United States foreign policy put the country in certain challenges and limitations. When dealing with other countries, the United States found other interests and values sometimes conflicted with the promotion of human rights. For example, in order to advance other important priorities, the United States had to maintain relationships with countries that abuse human rights, which puts its human rights' policy under question and criticism. It was accused of being selective and hypocritical because it overlooked human rights' abuses in some of its allies' countries and at the same time called out similar abuses in countries that it considered its adversaries. The United States' human rights policy was seen as a tool of political manipulation, rather than a sincere commitment to human rights promotion. Despite these criticisms, many still believe the promotion of human rights to be a main principle in United States' foreign policy. (Forsythe 442)

Despite the increased focus on human rights in US foreign policy, there were still gaps in the approach to addressing human rights abuses in other countries. An example of this is the Reagan administration's policy towards South Africa during the 1980s, where it was criticized for not doing enough to pressure the apartheid government to end its policies of discrimination. (Forsythe 446) the apartheid system that was imposed by the white minority rulers over the majority of nonwhites in South Africa from 1948 till 1994, was a system of institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination. Various discriminatory laws and policies characterized this racist system that was named "Apartheid" meaning "separateness". ("Apartheid")

the oppressed people suffered restrictions on education, employment, and political participation. These policies had a devastating impact on many South Africans' lives, resulting in poverty, violence, and political oppression. (Ellis 63)

During the 1980s, the United States neglected human rights violations at first in South Africa, however, eventually imposed sanctions against the South African government . But still, the United States was seen as slow to act and not taking the issue of human rights in South Africa seriously enough. This shows how other factors can impact the United States' response to human rights abuses, despite human rights being a stated priority in foreign policy. (Forsythe 446)

Another example was in the 1980s, the United States foreign policy towards Latin America was marked by a selective approach to human rights abuses. While being vocal in condemning human rights abuses in countries like El Salvador and Nicaragua, the United States was less critical and less defensive of similar abuses in other countries, such as Argentina and Chile. This inconsistency was because of the United

States' interests in the region and also because of its Cold War policies that prioritized anti-communism over human rights. (Forsythe 448)

The United States saw acts and movements in Latin America as a threat to its own national security, and therefore it supported governments that were aligned with its anti-communist agenda, even if those governments were guilty of human rights abuses. In the case of Chile in the 1970s and Argentina in the 1980s, for example, the United States supported military regimes that engaged in widespread human rights abuses. (Forsythe 448) This policy seemed to be hypocritical and the United States' action of prioritizing its own interests over human rights was inhumane.

### **1.5 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the main concepts that we need to conduct this research, starting by explaining the meaning of international relations, discovering the principles of the United States foreign policy, and exploring the driven thoughts and theories that shaped its decision making process throughout history. In this chapter, we introduced only two schools of thought which can help us achieve this research's objective. This part of the research also discussed United States' foreign policy during the cold war in general then it focused on Reagan's Foreign Policy in particular. The chapter gave an idea about Reagan's beliefs and actions on the international stage. It also gave examples of the United States' foreign policy's inconsistent position towards human rights particularly on its neglect to human rights abuses in South Africa Which is our focus in this research and will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## **Chapter two**

### **Ronald Reagan's Foreign Policy towards Apartheid in South Africa**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the issue of apartheid in South Africa and the United States' foreign policy towards it. It tries to explore the very definition of apartheid, the violence this system had practiced, and the resistance that arose against it in South Africa. Additionally, it examines the United States' position towards this system and the reasons behind that position. Analyzing the historical and political context of apartheid in South Africa helps us to reveal the contradictions that existed in the United States' foreign policy towards apartheid, and how it shifted over time. In this chapter, we also try to explore the factors that influenced the United States' decision making process regarding apartheid, revealing the complex nature of the United States' foreign policy and the challenges it faced to take a moral stance in the face of its own interests.

#### **2.2 Apartheid in South Africa**

Apartheid was a system that enforced separation and inequality among racial groups in South Africa. It created barriers between people of different colors, making it so difficult for them to interact. Nonwhites under that system were treated unfairly and had no access to the same opportunities and rights as white people.

Believing in the superiority of the white race, the South African government established the most racist policy of apartheid and creatively tortured nonwhites in every way possible in order to belittle them and make them feel marginalized and inferior, and this was through applying a number of laws, (A history of Apartheid in South Africa) such as the Population Registration Act of 1950, which categorized



people based on their racial identity as “White”, “Black”, “Colored”, or “Indian”, and The Group Areas Act in 1950 that separated races in different residential areas in urban zones, another law was the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in 1959, this act established separate self-governing territories called “Bantustans” or homelands, for different African ethnic groups. It aimed to give a limited form of self-government to territories of black Africans, at the same time strip them of their South African citizenship and political rights (A history of Apartheid in South Africa).

The Apartheid system categorized people into four races: white, black, coloreds, and Indians. Black South Africans were largely excluded from the political process and they were denied basic human rights. In the 1980s, the tri-cameral system, a parliamentary system with three legislative chambers representing distinct racial groups in South Africa (1984-1994) (tricameral), gave Indians and coloreds a higher degree of citizenship, while blacks remained marginalized and suffered the worst kinds of discrimination. Apartheid was an undemocratic system in which the majority of South Africa's population was harshly discriminated, black South Africans in particular were denied even the simplest equal rights and opportunities, and despite attempts at reform, blacks under that system, never enjoyed the same rights as whites (Ojewale 29).

The laws of the apartheid system started with the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949, which banned people of different races from marrying or having children. The families who were already of mixed race before the law was passed, were the ones who suffered more from this law. For example, siblings who have the same parents could be categorized as different races, which caused them a very hard time with discrimination. As a result, many families went through emotional and mental suffering because of the separation and division (Ojewale 30-31). The Population

Registration Act of 1950 required labeling individuals based on their race and categorized them as white, black, or mixed, determining their race by their physical appearance. The cruelty of the racist regime did not stop with that, as the government made a test to categorize people. This test was named “pencil in the air” test, it involved placing a pencil in the hair of a person and make him bend over, if the pencil did not fall out and remained in the person’s curly hair, that person was classified as colored, and if it fell out then the person is white. Many other factors such as color, facial features, and complexion were also considered in the racial classification process. However, the results were not always correct as mistakes were often made in determining a person's race, causing confusion and a lot of pain to the oppressed people. Some Families were separated, with colored children classified as white and black ones labeled as colored. As a result, many children found themselves rejected in their own society (Ojewale 30-31).

Under the illusion of the white superiority the South African regime committed the ugliest crimes that triggered the human dignity, as it tried by all means to devalue nonwhites and make them feel inferior and detached in their own country, their own neighborhoods and even in their own families.

To maintain its dominance and suppress opposition, the South African government also applied another law, which was the Immorality Act in 1950, this law made interracial relationships illegal. And although this law was enforced strictly, many South Africans chose to ignore it and even break it to rebel against the oppressive policies of the government. The act’s aim was to reinforce the racial segregation and maintain control over the whole population, however it was met with defiance by the once who believed in their right to marry whomever they choose, regardless of race

(Ojewale 32). The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 was also a law that had a significant impact on people's lives during apartheid. The government implemented this law to suppress any opposition, especially from groups or individuals who were known as communism supporters or change seekers in any area in the country. The apartheid government saw communism as a threat to their power and they used this law to paralyze any form of opposition or protest that challenged their authority (Ojewale 32). Anyone who was accused of being a communist was given a two-week period to submit a petition, they were often prevented from participating in politics and public affairs and sometimes they face imprisonment. This law targeted individuals and groups that the government viewed as a threat, including members of anti-apartheid movements like the African National Congress (ANC) and Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), that were fighting for the rights of black South Africans against apartheid. Many were labeled as communists by the government because they received aid from countries like the Soviet Union, which was seen as the main promoter of communism during the Cold War (Ojewale 32-33).

The fact is that these movements were struggling and fighting for their own rights in South Africa, and their relation with communism was often a result of strategic alliances and not an ideological commitment. However, the apartheid government used the Cold War to divert attention and hide its own actions of discrimination and racism. The dirty game of the government is not hard to be figured out as they wanted to damage the image of the fighters against apartheid by labeling them as communists and justify their suppression as part of the international fight against communism (Ojewale 32-33).

However, despite the efforts to suppress opposition, these movements stood still and continued to resist apartheid fighting for their rights. The support that these movements received from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was not only based on ideology as both sides shared interest in opposing apartheid and seeking for justice and human rights protection in South Africa (Ojewale 32-33). The Suppression of Communism Act to maintain its control and prevent challenges to its authority, displayed the government's sly motives and highlighted the racist and repressive nature of the apartheid system in South Africa.

Limiting non-whites voting was also another oppressive action the south African government had done through the Bantu Authorities Act. They created "homelands" where coloreds and blacks were permitted to vote but lost their citizenship as south Africans so they were not allowed to participate in the White Parliament (Ojewale 33-34).

Non white people were further divided, by the regime, into four homelands: Transkei, Venda, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana, causing large displacement and loss of citizenship. Dr. P. Mulder, The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, said that the government's goal was to have no blacks with South African citizenship and to keep all black people in separate independent states. This law aimed to further intensify ethnic differences and divisions among nonwhite people (Ojewale 33-34).

In addition to these laws, the Apartheid regime made other discriminatory laws to enforce racial segregation and white control such as The Separate Representation of Voters Act 1951 which removed nonwhites from the common voters roll, making it difficult for them to vote. Followed by the Native Law Amendment Act of 1952 which redefined people who were considered natives and required blacks to carry

identification papers at all times, putting them under constant surveillance and discrimination. There were other laws that restricted even the movement of blacks, including the places they could go to and the things they could do, such as entering certain doors or walking on certain beaches (Ojewale 35-38). Moreover, education was limited for blacks under the apartheid policies. The Bantu Education Act in 1953, and the Extension of University Education Act in 1959 were two laws that provided an inferior education system that focused on teaching blacks only skills that would be useful in serving the whites, further reinforcing discrimination and racial inequality (Ojewale 35-38). To keep hold on its power, the Apartheid government enforced the Sabotage Act in 1962 to criminalize any actions viewed as sabotage against the regime. It also enforced the General Law Amendment Act in 1963 which gave the police greater powers to arrest individuals who were seen as threats to the government (Ojewale 35-38). These laws were used to silence protests and suppress any opposition to the system.

### **2.3 Resistance against Apartheid**

To face Apartheid, numbers of organizations and groups emerged to challenge the racist laws and demand equal rights and treatment for all including, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the African National Congress (ANC), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), and the United Democratic Front (UDF). These groups were composed of people from various racial backgrounds who were united under one common purpose of ending apartheid and establishing a more just society in South Africa (A history of Apartheid in South Africa).

The African National Congress (ANC) played an important role in the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa. It used various kinds of resistance such as peaceful dialogue and petition, direct opposition, and armed struggle. In 1944, the ANC Youth

League appeared as a more radical faction in the ANC. It called for a militant approach to further their cause and adopted the Programme of Action in 1949, which called for nonviolent resistance using strikes and protests to challenge Apartheid. The Defiance Campaign was introduced in 1952, asking people to fight Apartheid laws openly and willingly face arrests in order to gain international support for their cause. However, in 1959, members from the ANC split to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), this group advocated for a more militant and confrontational approach to combat the aggression with aggression, and despite the separation, the common goal of ending Apartheid and achieving freedom and equality for all South Africans was shared by both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) (A history of Apartheid in South Africa).

The fight against Apartheid was not limited to national efforts alone; the international community also played an important role in the support of the anti-Apartheid cause. Many countries worldwide called for the abolition of Apartheid. For instance, The United Nations imposed economic sanctions on South Africa, and several countries implemented diplomatic, cultural, and economic boycotts to pressure the South African government to end this racist system. Furthermore, international solidarity movements, such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement, emerged worldwide, calling for sanctions against South Africa and supporting the cause of anti-Apartheid activists within the country (A history of Apartheid in South Africa). In addition to domestic and international efforts, the Soviet Union, along with other socialist and communist countries, provided support to the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa. They extended financial and political assistance to anti-Apartheid organizations, including the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). (A history of Apartheid in South Africa) the ANC, in particular, had

strong ties with the Soviet Union and received support in the form of military training, weapons, and diplomatic assistance. However, not all anti-apartheid organizations had the same ideology or received support from the Soviet Union (A history of Apartheid in South Africa).

The Apartheid system in South Africa gave power and privileges to white people, resulting in a culture of racism and segregation. Its laws were enforced through organized violence, leading to widespread malnutrition, poor health as well as inferior and unjust education system, overcrowded schools, insufficient social security, and high levels of unemployment (Abrahams 496-498). Violence was often common in the mines of Johannesburg. However, “The Soweto Uprising” a protest that involved thousands of students demanding better education and the right to be taught in their own language echoed all over the world, as this peaceful march on June 16, 1976 in Soweto, a town near Johannesburg, turned into violence when police responded to it with force, using tear gas, batons, and firearms to stop the protesters resulting in clashes, robbing, and widespread tension, and sadly, many students were killed or injured during the protest. This incident quickly spread to other parts of the country and eventually to different parts of the world. (Abrahams 496-498) “The Soweto Uprising” challenged the idea that Africans were powerless, in the other hand, it showed the world the savage nature of Apartheid.

The African National Congress (ANC) emerged as a prominent political organization that fought against Apartheid and advocated for equal rights for all South Africans. In the early 1940s, the ANC Youth League and influential leaders such as Albert Luthuli, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and Nelson Mandela revitalized the ANC. They organized campaigns against discriminatory laws, including the “Defiance

Campaign” in 1952, where volunteers intentionally got themselves arrested to protest the Apartheid system (History of South Africa).

In 1955, the Congress of the People brought together various groups, including the ANC and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), to adopt the Freedom Charter that called for a South Africa that belonged to all its inhabitants, regardless of race. However, the government’s response was harsh, breaking up the meeting and arresting over 150 people on charges of rebellion. (History of South Africa)

In 1959, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) was formed by Robert Sobukwe and other Black activists who believed that the ANC's alliance with non-Black groups was delaying progress towards liberation. In 1960, the PAC began a rebellion against Apartheid laws, which resulted in the tragic events in Sharpeville. In Sharpeville, a town located in the northeastern part of South Africa, police opened fire on a peaceful protest against apartheid laws, resulting in the deaths of 67 Black people and injuring over 180. This event ignited widespread anger and rebellion in South Africa, with many people going on strikes and protesting against the oppressive laws of the government (History of South Africa).

During the 1980s, the anti-Apartheid movement gained further power both domestically and internationally. In South Africa, protests, strikes, and boycotts continued despite the government's harsh suppression. The United Democratic Front (UDF), an Anti-Apartheid Union, was formed in 1983 playing an important role in organizing protests and demonstrations. This union along with other organizations such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), organized the people to fight against apartheid and called for the release of political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela (History of South Africa).



Internationally, the movement gained widespread support. Many countries imposed economic sanctions on South Africa, including withdrawal from companies doing business in the country. Cultural and sports boycotts were also widespread with many artists, musicians, and athletes refusing to perform in South Africa or participate in events that were seen as supportive of the Apartheid regime (History of South Africa).

As the pressure of sanctions increased, The United States passed a law in 1986 called the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which banned new investments and loans, stopped airline service, and prohibited imports of certain goods from South Africa. Other countries also took similar actions. Some Commonwealth countries tried to convince South Africa to stop military actions, and release political prisoners, but these efforts did not succeed (History of South Africa). However, the resistance and determination of activists, combined with the international pressure, eventually led to significant changes in South Africa. In the late 1980s, President F.W. de Klerk took office and started a process of negotiation with anti-Apartheid leaders, which led to the decision of releasing Nelson Mandela in 1990 after 27 years of imprisonment. (History of South Africa)

In addition to the release of political prisoners, Negotiations between the government and anti-Apartheid leaders led to the lifting of bans on political organizations, and the establishment of a multiracial progressive government and in 1994, South Africa held its first democratic election, which was open to all races, resulting in Nelson Mandela being elected as the country's first Black president. Apartheid was officially abolished, and South Africa began a process of reconstruction (History of South Africa). Despite the progress made, the legacy of Apartheid still

affects South Africa today. The effects of racism, economic and social inequalities are still evident, and the country continues to face challenges in addressing these issues and building a more unified and just society. However, the Anti-Apartheid Movement stands as a proof of the power of activism and international solidarity in the fight against injustice and oppression (History of South Africa).

## **2.4 United States position towards Apartheid**

Throughout the era of Apartheid in South Africa, different U.S. administrations struggled to find a balance between their interests and human rights considerations in dealing with this issue (Thomson 2).

First, Presidents Truman and Eisenhower chose to cooperate with the apartheid government in South Africa as part of their Cold War strategy, aiming to protect their interests in the region. However, when the world started to be more vocal about the importance of human rights and began a serious fight against Apartheid, next administrations distanced themselves from South Africa (Thomson 3).

In fact, the decision made in 1964 that aimed to stop selling weapons to South Africa was a clear way to show that the United States strongly disagreed with the laws of Apartheid. Despite that, no administration was able to find a lasting solution that effectively balanced United States' interests with its human rights policy. Presidents such as, Nixon, Ford, and Reagan attempted to influence South Africa through positive sanctions, they believed they could encourage the latter to change its policies. On the other hand, President Carter pursued a more confrontational approach, as he tried to apply pressure to end Apartheid (Thomson 3).

However, none of these presidents' strategies worked and reform in South Africa could never be achieved as each administration faced limitations, the United States found itself incapable of fully committing to comprehensive economic sanctions that aimed to promote human rights because of its interests in South Africa, and at the same time, it was incapable of expanding strategic and economic ties through positive sanctions due to concerns over human rights violations (Thomson 3). The Eisenhower administration made a mistake by releasing a press statement expressing regret over the loss of life during the Sharpeville incident without clearance. Despite the embarrassment of criticizing what they seemed to support, this incident led to a shift in their language towards Apartheid. But still, criticizing human rights abuses in South Africa publicly did not change their strong relation with the oppressive government of apartheid, and this was a way of protecting United States strategic and economic interests (Thomson 28-29).

After that, the Kennedy administration did not differ much, as it had a mixed approach to Apartheid in South Africa. Although they spoke out against the inhuman practices of the system, however, their actions were saying otherwise, as they kept a strong cooperation with the South African government. And even though they tried to balance their actions by providing assistance to South Africa only in areas that were not linked to apartheid, they did not take strong concrete actions against the apartheid system, as the priority was always given to their interests (Thomson 44-45).

The Johnson administration's policy towards South Africa was believed to be a continuation of Kennedy's approach, as both administrations expressed opposition to Apartheid, however, their focus was on addressing domestic civil rights issues and the

Vietnam War. Apartheid with its human rights abuses did not seem to matter much in front of those interests (Thomson 47).

We keep on seeing the same attitude towards apartheid through time, the next administrations of Nixon and Ford were also criticized because of their foreign policy towards Apartheid which was characterized by the neglect of human rights violations. While these two presidents did not openly support Apartheid, their actions seemed to favor the white minority rule in South Africa. A report from the National Security Council was unintentionally exposed to the public and it suggested that the white minority rule would continue. This resulted in people thinking that the administrations did not do enough to solve human rights issues because they supported the system of Apartheid. The report had also another suggestion which proposed using both positive and negative ways to encourage change in Apartheid, however it was never put into practice. The administrations of Nixon and Ford did not do much to protect human rights in southern Africa, and their lack of leadership which led official documents to be unintentionally revealed to the public caused their foreign policy to be criticized of being supportive to Apartheid (Thomson 63-64).

During Richard Nixon's presidency (1969-1974), a review of United States policy towards Southern Africa was conducted, known as National Security Study Memorandum 39. It was a review that found that the existing United States' policy was not working and suggested trying a different approach to solve the region's problems. And under Jimmy Carter's administration (1977-1981), the United States took a tougher stance towards Pretoria, viewing African nationalism as a driving force in the region that matched United States interests (Hipp 6).

Jimmy Carter's administration took a strong stand against Apartheid in South Africa. They were vocal about their disapproval of the racial system, as they warned the South African government, and worked to support an international ban on selling weapons to them.

However, these efforts did not bring change as the South African government faced their calls for change with total ignorance (Thomson 89).

Diplomats of South Africa avoided the pressure from the United States, and the Carter administration was left with no other choice than giving up, because they did not want to intensify the situation further. The Carter administration like other former administrations, did not impose sanctions on the Apartheid regime, instead, they focused on making progress in other different parts in the region. For instance, they supported Zimbabwe in gaining independence, and also helped in negotiating the future of Namibia (Thomson 89). United States foreign policy under the Carter administration could not make any changes concerning the Apartheid issue.

The next administration of Ronald Reagan developed a detailed foreign policy towards South Africa. At first, there was a clear and consistent response from the U.S. government regarding apartheid from 1981 until the summer of 1984. Reagan followed a strategy called "Constructive Engagement" which involved offering positive sanctions to the South African government in order to encourage change in the country, this strategy was created by the Africa Bureau of the State Department, led by Chester Crocker, Reagan's Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and it preferred peaceful dialogue over direct confrontation (Thomson 111). The cold war was Reagan's main concern at that time, as he prioritized stopping the spread of communism over defending human rights issues related to Apartheid and in addition to the importance of

South Africa to the US economy, it was also supporting the fight against communism in its land, what Ronald Reagan couldn't give up on (Hipp 1-2).

When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, the relationship between the United States and South Africa changed. In the 1980s, the anti-Apartheid movements in the United States and Europe increased, calling for boycotts against South Africa and the withdrawal of United States' companies from the country. And despite this growing movement, President Reagan maintained a close alliance with the South African government under his so called strategy of "constructive engagement", showing no serious signs of reform (Hipp 6-7).

United States' foreign policy had never given full attention to human rights violations practiced by the Apartheid government in South Africa, as its interests seem to always get in the way, driving it to take decisions that go against its own moral principles.

## **2.5 Reagan's foreign policy towards Apartheid in South Africa**

During his presidency (1981-1989), Ronald Reagan publicly supported the South African government addressing it as a close partner, he described the South African Prime Minister Botha as a reasonable leader who was willing to make political reforms and fight the Soviet Union's influence in Southern Africa. However South Africa continued to deny basic civil rights to its majority population mainly blacks, imprisoning those who fought against Apartheid and restricting their voting rights (Hipp 7). But it took six years into Reagan's presidency for him to formally abandon this government, (Hipp 7) even the increasing pressure from the US congress and business corporations to limit interactions with Apartheid could not change Reagan's position.

Instead of imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions, the Reagan administration adopted a policy of “constructive engagement” with the Pretoria government; this policy raised many questions and was criticized by anti-Apartheid activists and human rights groups (Hipp 8).

The policy of constructive engagement, stated by Chester Crocker, the architect of the policy, was mainly based on the belief that a “window of opportunity” had emerged in South Africa, and a less confrontational approach would create a suitable environment for the country to end Apartheid gradually. Reagan believed that threats of economic sanctions would only push the South African government to further strengthen Apartheid, he saw that a more diplomatic and cooperative approach would be more effective to change this racial system. However the South African government was a little skeptical about Reagan’s attitude and strategies and even with that, the latter remained committed to his “constructive engagement” policy (Hipp 9).

As part of this policy, the Reagan administration criticized the African National Congress (ANC), the oldest and most popular opposition group against Apartheid, labeling them as "terrorists" and "thugs" who engaged in rebel and sabotage activities. This position was highly controversial and it faced criticism from anti-Apartheid activists and human rights groups, who saw the ANC as a legal organization that fought for a human cause against the most racist system ever existed (Hipp 8).

Reagan’s support to the South African government publicly, is an action that seems to be screaming “carelessness” about human rights violations and calling the Apartheid regime a “close partner” appears to explain one huge reality, United States interests were bound to South Africa at that time and this support was driven by the need to protect its own interests in the region. The policy of constructive engagement

may not be totally neglecting human rights, however, it seems that the latter was clearly not a priority to Reagan's foreign policy as United States' interest had always come first.

The complex relationship between the United States and South Africa during this era was influenced by various factors. The US prioritized stopping the spread of communism over addressing human rights issues related to Apartheid, and this was due to South Africa's strategic importance and its support in the fight against communism in the region (Hipp 1-2). In addition to the Cold War, trade relations were also a main concern of Reagan's administration. Even when other countries imposed sanctions, the United States maintained diplomatic ties and became South Africa's largest trading partner. (Hipp 1-2)

Ronald Reagan chose to support the South African government, as he was afraid of the spread of communism in the region. The Apartheid regime used the excuse of fighting communism to impose its inhuman laws against nonwhites, and Reagan saw that this works for United States interests so he turned a blind eye on the human rights abuses and preferred pursuing the goal of winning the Cold War. United States' interests seemed to stand as barrier and prevent President Reagan from considering the human rights foreign policy (Ojewale 43).

Trade relations and the anti-communist goals led to United States' hesitation to criticize Apartheid. Despite criticism from other countries and human rights groups, the United States under the Reagan administration maintained diplomatic ties with South Africa and became its second largest trading partner and foreign investor. And by 1985, the United States provided one-third of South Africa's international financing. On the



other hand, South Africa also played a role in helping the United States in resisting communism in Southern Africa (Ojewale 40).

Throughout different United States administrations, there was hesitation when it came to imposing sanctions on Apartheid in South Africa. However, during the Reagan administration there was widespread global opposition to that racial system as many countries imposed economic and cultural sanctions as a way to protest against human rights violations. These sanctions, along with international boycotts and the burden of occupying Namibia had a significant impact on South Africa's economy by the late 1980s. Several companies withdrew from the country, leading to job losses and economic challenges (South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid).

In response to the Anti-Apartheid Movement's demands, the decision to impose sanctions on South Africa was carefully considered and debated within the Reagan administration. Some officials were concerned that sanctions could harm the South African people and trigger a civil war, while others believed they were necessary to pressure the government to change. This debate ended with Reagan signing the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986, imposing economic sanctions and prohibiting new investments in South Africa. Many other countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, also imposed similar sanctions. These sanctions had a significant impact on South Africa's economy and played a role in pressuring the government to start breaking down Apartheid. In 1990, the South African President F.W. de Klerk announced the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and the initiation of negotiations to end Apartheid (Ojewale 41-42).

The United States' partnership with the Apartheid regime was due to its role as a loyal supporter in the fight against communism. However, over time, with the increase

of international pressure, the spread of protests by human rights organizations, and the engagement of many countries to impose sanctions on the Apartheid regime, the United States could not continue its denial to the seriousness of this issue because rejecting the demands for imposing sanctions started to harm its reputation and made its moral principles and human rights foreign policy questionable. The change of priorities also caused the Reagan administration to rethink its position towards Apartheid. Its interests in South Africa ended with the end of the cold war, and the deterioration of South Africa's economy because of sanctions left the latter of no use to them (South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid). In response to the Anti-Apartheid Movement's demands for imposing sanctions on South Africa, a debate started within the Reagan administration. Some officials saw that sanctions could harm the South African people and cause a civil war, while others believed they were necessary to pressure the government to change. This debate ended with Reagan signing the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986, imposing economic sanctions and prohibiting new investments in South Africa. Many other countries imposed similar sanctions including the UK, Canada, and Australia. These sanctions had a huge impact on South Africa's economy especially when the US joined the fight to end Apartheid (Ojewale 41-42).

United States abandonment to South Africa caused a huge damage within the government and intensified the pressure on its system which started breaking down Apartheid. Changes like the resignation of Prime Minister P.W. Botha and the appointment of F.W. de Klerk as his successor set the end of Apartheid. In February 1990, the new president of South Africa De Klerk lifted the ban on the African National Congress (ANC), allowed freedom of the press, and he also released political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, who was imprisoned for 27 years (South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid).

Mandela's release had a huge effect on South Africa and the world, as his message of peaceful change and restoration affected people worldwide. Following Mandela's release, President De Klerk announced democratic elections for South Africa, leading to the lifting of sanctions by the United States and resulting in gaining more support from foreign countries. In April 1994, South Africa held its first democratic elections, and Mandela was elected as the country's first black president, marking a significant turning point in the South African history. The end of Apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela as the country's first black president marked an important achievement in the struggle against racial oppression and inequality in South Africa (South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid).

United States' foreign policy seemed to be controlled by the country's own interests. Its decision making process seemed to be guided by what benefited it and contributed to its progress and studying the issue of Apartheid showed us that, pursuing world domination for the United States was an aim that sometimes cost it the abandonment of its moral principles.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter we tried to give an overview on Apartheid in South Africa then we discussed the United States' foreign policy towards it, exploring the positions that had been taking by US presidents from the beginning of this issue to its end. After that we focused on Ronald Reagan's foreign policy towards Apartheid, his attitude, decisions, and strategies in order to understand his motives. By analyzing the historical and political context of Apartheid in South Africa and examining the United States attitude and specifically Reagan's towards it, we were able to uncover the reasons

behind the inconsistent position of Reagan's foreign policy and how it changed over time with the change of circumstances and interests.

## General Conclusion

Throughout this research, our main aim was to explore the United States' foreign policy towards Apartheid in South Africa during the Reagan Administration and understand the reason why it could not maintain a stable position when it came to this particular issue. What we came to grasp from our study is that the United States stance, through many administrations, was complicated and unstable as they never gave Apartheid full attention even though it violates human rights which happens to be one of the main principles in the US foreign policy.

The Reagan administration's foreign policy towards Apartheid in South Africa was characterized by "constructive engagement" rather than sanctions. It aimed to influence the Apartheid government through dialogue to change its oppressive policies, keeping strong ties with it. Reagan was hesitant to impose sanctions which put him under harsh criticism. However, when apartheid gained international disapproval the pressure on the United States' neglect to human rights abuses caused Reagan to shift his stance on the issue, and then he signed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which imposed economic sanctions on South Africa in 1986.

Through studying the historical context of Apartheid, United States' foreign policy towards it, and the change of attitude through time and change of circumstances, we were able to uncover the reasons behind Reagan's position.

One of the reasons was that he thought if the United States stayed connected to South Africa, they would have more influence and could convince them to change their policies. He was also worried about the influence of communist forces in southern Africa. Reagan thought that if he pushed South Africa too hard on apartheid, they might

turn to the Soviet Union for support, which would not be good for the United States interests. Another reason was that Reagan's main concern at that time was the country's economy. South Africa was an important trading partner for the US for its natural resources and minerals, and Reagan did not want to harm the US economy by imposing sanctions or cutting off business ties with South Africa.

We can understand from this study that The Reagan administration's foreign policy specifically the constructive engagement policy claimed to rely on two approaches when it comes to the decision making process, the liberal and the realistic approach, the first that aimed to promote freedom and protect human rights, and the second which aimed to protect united states' interests and seek for prosperous economy, However it appeared that the liberal approach was just a cover-up for the realistic approach, which focused on United states' interests. Simply, it seemed that the liberal approach did not matter much unless it served United States interests.

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