

External Influences on Southern African Transformations: '1989' in Perspective¹

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ABSTRACTS

Die Veränderungen im südlichen Afrika, die im Laufe der 1980er Jahre einsetzten, waren dem Zusammenspiel von internen und externen Faktoren geschuldet. Dieses Zusammenspiel gilt es allerdings in historische Perspektive zu setzen, denn es führt zurück auf die frühen 1960er Jahre, als die Dekolonisierung weite Teile des Kontinents erfasste, aber auch einen koordinierten Widerstand der bislang Herrschenden im südlichen Afrika weckte, der in eine lange soziale und militärische Auseinandersetzung führte, die sich ebenso wie der Kalte Krieg zunächst abschwächte und dann beendet wurde. Der externe Schock der Revolutionen im östlichen Europa brachte die Revolution in Afrika, die 1960 begonnen hatte, zu einem erfolgreichen Ende. Der direkte Effekt ließ sich in Südafrika beobachten, wo die Regierung die Klerik ihre Furcht vor einer sowjetisch gestützten kommunistischen Machtübernahme aufgab, während der ANC sich der Perspektive einer gemischten und global vernetzten Wirtschaft öffnete. Die anderen Staaten des südlichen Afrika folgten dem allgemeinen Trend zu liberal-demokratischen Verfassungen und Wahlen in sehr unterschiedlichem Maße und der mit der Gründung der SADC eingeleitete regionale Integrationsprozess bleibt fragil. Trotzdem kann am Ende geschlussfolgert werden, dass für die Region der Umbruch von 1989 weit bedeutsamer war als die folgenden Zäsuren des Anschlags vom 11. September 2001 und die Finanzkrise von 2008–2010.

The changes in Southern Africa that began during the 1980s were due to a specific interaction of internal and external factors. However, this interplay must be placed in a historical perspective, because it goes back to the early 1960s, when decolonisation took hold of large parts of the continent, but also encountered coordinated resistance of the hitherto ruling powers in

1 I thank Matthias Middell and Ulf Engel for wonderful collegiality over many decades.

southern Africa, which led to a long social and military conflict that, like the Cold War in general, first weakened and then came to an end. The external shock of the revolutions in Eastern Europe brought the revolution in Africa, which had begun in 1960, to a successful end. The direct effect could be seen in South Africa, where the de Klerk government abandoned its fear of a Soviet-backed Communist takeover, while the ANC opened up to the prospect of a mixed and globally networked economy. The other states of southern Africa followed the general trend towards liberal democratic constitutions and elections to a very different degree, and the regional integration process initiated with the founding of SADC remains fragile. Nevertheless, in the end it can be concluded that the upheaval of 1989 was far more significant for the region than the subsequent caesura of 9/11 or the financial crisis of 2008–2010.

In the past three decades the Southern African region has undergone enormous changes. Many of these have been the result of endogenous factors, such as the great rise in population. The transformations in South Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to take one example, were driven at least as much by internal forces – most notably the mass resistance in the townships from 1984 – as by external ones. It is often virtually impossible to separate out the different influences, internal and external, on the process of change. The changes in South Africa in the decade from the mid-1980s were, as a recent writer puts it, the result of a 'perfect storm of domestic and international factors'.²

Important though internal causes of change were, there is no doubt of the impact of external influences. Difficult though it is to compare the impact of different influences, there is also no doubt that one of the greatest of these external influences was what happened in East Central Europe and the Soviet Union, associated with the year 1989. In this article I try to place the impact of '1989' on Southern Africa in historical context, relating it to earlier external influences and then offering some reflections on the '1989 moment' in the light of subsequent transformations in the Southern African region (here defined as the countries of the southern portion of the continent, south of what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Before the external shock associated with '1989', the greatest such shock for Southern Africa in the second half of the twentieth century was the '1960 moment'. This was the decolonization of tropical Africa, which began in 1957 with the independence of Ghana and reached a peak in 1960, often called 'the year of Africa', when a large number of African countries, including the Belgian Congo and Nigeria, became independent. This process, which was only in part the result of causes external to the continent, such as the decision by the Belgian government to withdraw abruptly from the Congo, had an immediate major impact on the states and people of Southern Africa then under colonial or apartheid rule. This was in two main ways. On the one hand, the decolonization of tropical Africa inspired both movements seeking non-violent change – the newly-formed Pan Africanist Congress in South Africa, for example, launched a non-violent anti-pass

campaign – and those who now began armed struggles to try to win their freedom, in Angola and elsewhere in the region. But the ‘1960 moment’ also saw an immediate backlash by the colonial and settler regimes, who sought to make clear that they would not surrender power, so protestors were shot down, as at Sharpeville in March 1960, resistance organisations were banned, as was the African National Congress (ANC) in April that year, and military responses were intensified in all the countries of the region then under colonial or apartheid rule. After 1960 the rulers of what became known as the ‘White Redoubt’, those who tried to resist the process of decolonization – the Portuguese territories of Angola and Mozambique, white-ruled South Africa and Rhodesia – increased co-operation to resist the pressures to decolonize.³

This resistance lasted, in the case of the Portuguese territories, until the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon in April 1974, in Rhodesia until late 1979, and in the case of South Africa to February 1990, when the white minority regime in South Africa agreed, under massive pressure, to a negotiated settlement, one that was reached in 1993 and took effect in 1994. Until the late 1980s the apartheid regime had intervened militarily and economically elsewhere in the region to try to ensure its survival by preventing the ANC from establishing an effective presence in neighbouring countries. So ‘1960’ both had immediate consequences for Southern Africa, greatly increasing conflict across the region, and cast a long shadow through the Cold War decades of the 1970s and 1980s.

In those decades, 1975 was a major turning point, with the large-scale intervention of Cuban military forces in Angola, which helped enable the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) to come to power in November that year. After 1975 the region was swept up in the Cold War, with the United States for the first time taking a major interest, trying to bring moderate regimes to power in Rhodesia and South West Africa/Namibia, so as to limit Soviet influence, while, on the other side of the Cold War divide, the Soviet Union and some of its eastern European satellite states sent personnel to join the Cuban troops aiding the Angolan government to resist the incursions of the South African Defence Force into southern Angola.⁴

For much of the 1980s war in the region escalated, with numerous acts of ‘destabilisation’ by the apartheid regime and an increasingly bitter conflict in southern Angola. But then came another major external shock to southern Africa in the form of the winding down of the Cold War and the collapse of the so-called Eastern Bloc, the countries under communist rule in East Central Europe and the Soviet Union itself. The influence of these events was not confined to 1989. As I have argued elsewhere, a process of fundamental change was already underway in Southern Africa some years before 1989.⁵

3 F. R. de Meneses/R. McNamara, *White Redoubt. The Great Powers and the Struggle for Southern Africa*, London 2018.

4 See, e.g., C. Saunders/S. Onslow, *The Cold War and Southern Africa, 1976–1990*, in: *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 222–243.

5 C. Saunders, “1989” and Southern Africa, in: U. Engel et al. (eds.), *1989 in a Global Perspective*, Leipzig 2015, pp. 349–361. John Daniel argued this in his brief piece entitled *The Impact of the Cold War and the Fall of the Berlin Wall on Southern Africa*, in: W. Hofmeister (ed.), *A Long Walk to Democracy. 20 Years After the Fall of the Berlin*

Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 had left only Namibia and South Africa under white minority rule, and in the early 1980s the governments of Mozambique and Angola began to move away from the Marxism-Leninism that both countries had proclaimed as their national ideologies in 1977.⁶ Both countries now ceased attempting to introduce state socialist policies and accepted that their economies should be more market-orientated. They no longer saw the East European and other socialist countries as mentors whose example they should follow. Mozambique shifted policy in 1983, because of the failure of economic development under the socialist policies it had implemented and because it was not admitted as a full member of Comecon.⁷ Its experiment of sending hundreds of children to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) for their secondary education was not renewed in 1988. By then 17,000 Mozambicans had gone to the GDR to work, but that programme too came to an end that year, though some of the workers were not to be repatriated to Mozambique until German unification.⁸ Angola moved towards becoming a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which it joined in July 1989.⁹ Meanwhile, the financial sanctions imposed by foreign banks on South Africa in 1985, as a direct result of the township revolt of that year, began a new phase in relations between Western institutions and governments and the apartheid regime, with the former putting increasing pressure on the latter to undertake significant reform. By 1988 the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) had made clear that it would not follow the commitment to a 'scientific socialist' future in its political programme of 1976.¹⁰ In 1988 there was much evidence that the era of regional conflict and destabilisation was coming to an end, thanks to the winding down of the Cold War, for which the accession to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union was key, and to the military stalemate that had developed in southern Angola by early that year. In December a Namibian settlement was reached by the governments of Angola, Cuba and South Africa, meeting under United States mediation. In parallel with the process leading to Namibia's independence, the Cuban military forces were to be withdrawn from Angola. With the earlier withdrawal of South African forces from Angola in August 1988 there was no

Wall, Johannesburg 2009, pp. 137–146. In *A Response to Guelke: The Cold War Factor in South Africa's Transition*, in: *Journal of Contemporary African Politics* 14 (1996) 1, pp. 101–102, Daniel argued that the Bush administration in the United States and the security establishment in South Africa had both recognised that the Cold War was winding down and that was "the decisive factor in the South African transition".

6 They had adopted those policies "hedged with contradictions, eclecticism and compromises": A. Hughes, *The Appeal of Marxism to Africans*, in: A. Hughes (ed.), *Marxism's Retreat from Africa*, London 1992, p. 9.

7 P. Chabal et al., *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, London 2002, p. 213.

8 T. R. Müller, *Legacies of Socialist Solidarity: East Germany in Mozambique*, Lanham, Md. 2014; M. C. Schenck, *Between Hammer, Machete, and Kalashnikov: Contract Labor Migration from Angola and Mozambique to East Germany, 1979–1990*, in: *Europe now* 15 (March 2018), <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2018/02/28/between-hammer-machete-and-kalashnikov-contract-labor-migration-from-angola-and-mozambique-to-east-germany-1979-1990/>; M. C. Schenck, *Socialist Solidarities and Their Afterlives: Histories and Memories of Angolan and Mozambican Migrants in the German Democratic Republic, 1975–2015*, Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 2017; M. C. Schenck, *A Chronology of Nostalgia: Memories of former Angolan and Mozambican Worker Trainees to East Germany*, in: *Labor History* 59 (2018) 3, pp. 352–374.

9 M. Webber, *Angola Continuity and Change*, in: Hughes, *Marxism's Retreat*, p. 137.

10 L. Dobell, *Swapo's Struggle for Namibia 1960–1991*, Basel 1998.

more 'destabilisation' by South Africa of its neighbours.¹¹ In Mozambique and Angola, too, 1988 saw steps being taken towards peace: in Mozambique the government's negotiations with the rebel movement Renamo led to a peace agreement that ended the civil war there,¹² while in Angola the process to bring about peace with the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita) was more uneven but did lead to the first democratic election, held in 1992.¹³ The changes set in motion before 1989 were already taking the region into a new era of relative peace, in which such developments as the creation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1992 would almost certainly have taken place whether or not the Eastern Bloc had collapsed as it did in 1989.

As 1989 began, however, the new era remained fragile.¹⁴ In the course of 1989 further steps towards the ending of conflict and the promotion of negotiated settlements set Southern Africa firmly on a new path. Some of these took place before the implications of the unravelling of the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe impinged on Southern Africa, and were not influenced by that unravelling.¹⁵ Soon after he took over as President, F.W. de Klerk allowed a major march in Cape Town in September, and then authorised the release from prison in early October of the remaining ANC leadership, with the exception of Nelson Mandela. It can convincingly be argued that South Africa was on a path towards a negotiated settlement before the Berlin Wall was breached on 9 November, in part, as we have already noticed, because of the increased pressures on the regime internally, above all from violence in the townships, in part because of the winding down of the Cold War and the changed situation in southern Angola as a result of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale and the movement of Cuban troops to close to the Namibian border.¹⁶ The dramatic opening of the Wall on 9 November brought home to people in Southern Africa the broader process of change in Eastern Europe that year. The opening of the Wall, followed by the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime in Romania, the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, and the very end of that state in 1991, constitute the

11 P. Johnson/D. Martin, *Frontline Southern Africa: Destructive Engagement*, New York 1988.

12 E.g., D. A. Robinson, *Curse on the Land: A History of the Mozambican Civil War*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The University of Western Australia, 2006, chapters 9, 10.

13 See, e.g., Webber, *Angola*, pp. 132–133. After another Angolan government offensive against UNITA in late 1989, negotiations took place between the two under Portuguese mediation, leading to the Estoril Accords signed in May 1991.

14 At the start of 1989, argues J. A. Engel, American leaders "sceptical of the sincerity of recent calls for change throughout the Communist world, prepared for a reinvigorated Cold War of unknown duration and ferocity"; see 1989: An Introduction to an International History, in: J. A. Engel, *The Fall of the Berlin Wall. The Revolutionary Legacy of 1989*, Oxford 2009, p. 1.

15 Other external events influenced Southern Africa. One was the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, a clear sign of the diminished position of the Soviet Union.

16 Cf., say, L. Scholtz, *The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, Cold War Angolan Finale*, Solihull, West Midlands, England 2016 and *The SADF in the Border War 1966–1989*, Cape Town 2013, chapters 14 and 15; I. Saney, *From Soweto to Cuito Cuanavale: Cuba, the War in Angola and the End of Apartheid*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 2013; and *The Cuban Revolution and the End of Apartheid*, in: *Latin American Perspectives*, 33 (2006) 5, pp. 81–117; E. Dosman, *Countdown to Cuito Cuanavale: Cuba's Angolan Campaign*, in: G. Baines/P. Vale (eds.), *Beyond the Border War*, Pretoria 2008, chapter 12.

second major external shock of the late twentieth century for the region. These European events, which probably had a greater impact on Southern Africa than anywhere else in the world outside Europe, helped to conclude the 'revolution' that had begun for the Southern African region in '1960', bringing an end to white rule in South Africa, and influencing the advent of democracy there and elsewhere in the region. The '1989 moment' meant the end of the Cold War intervention in Southern Africa that had begun significantly in 1975. The last clash between South African state forces and those of a liberation movement occurred in April 1989, when South African security forces attacked SWAPO fighters in northern Namibia, over three hundred of whom were killed. Many have said that 'the war for Southern Africa' ended in 1989.¹⁷ A perceptive member of the South African Communist Party saw that the events of 1989 meant that 'the international balance of power shifted radically against us just as the viability of the domestic political forces ranged against us was recognised as untenable by capitalist powers in the West'.¹⁸

As with '1960', the '1989 moment' had both immediate consequences and longer-term ones. The most striking immediate impact was on South Africa itself, where President De Klerk explicitly drew upon the events in Eastern Europe in November 1989 to help justify his break-through speech of February 1990 announcing that the government was ready to negotiate with those who were then unbanned, and that Mandela would be released unconditionally. De Klerk was quick to realise that what his government had long feared – that a successor regime would be under the influence of the Soviet Union and would introduce socialist policies – was now rendered unlikely by the events in Eastern Europe, as well as by the Soviet Union withdrawing its support for the ANC's armed struggle.¹⁹ With the 'fall' of the Berlin Wall, removing the fear of a 'communist onslaught' on South Africa, De Klerk, in the words of one commentator, 'read the writing on his own wall of apartheid'.²⁰ Today the only piece of the Berlin Wall in Africa

17 E.g., A. Wessels, *The War for Southern Africa (1966–1989) that continues to fascinate and haunt us*, in: *Historia* 62 (2017) 1, pp. 73–91. Other examples of books with titles that conclude in 1989 include R. Dale, *The Namibian War of Independence, 1966–1989: Diplomatic, Economic and Military Campaigns*, Jefferson NC, 2014 and I. Liebenberg / J. Risquet / V. Shubin (eds.), *A Far-away War: Angola, 1975–1989*, Stellenbosch 2015. On events of April 1989, when SWAPO forces were attacked in northern Namibia, see, inter alia, P. Stiff, *Nine Days of War. Namibia – Before, During and After*, Albertyn 1999.

18 S. Kemp, *My Life. The Making of an Afrikaner Revolutionary in the South African Liberation Struggle*, Cape Town, South African History Online, n.d. [2018?], p. 180. Cf. S. Ellis, *The South African Communist Party and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, in: Hughes, *Marxism's Retreat*, pp. 145–159; C. Saunders, *The Ending of the Cold War and Southern Africa*, in: A. Kalinkovsky / S. Radchenko (eds.), *The End of the Cold War and the Cold War New Perspectives on Regional Conflict*, London 2011, pp. 264–276. I shall not here repeat what is said in Saunders, "1989" about, say, J. Slovo, *Has Socialism Failed?*, in: *South African Labour Bulletin* 14 (1990) 6, pp. 11–28, or about the way in which the so-called "Leipzig Option" was picked up in South African discourse in 1992. One of the few South African attempts to grapple intellectually with the consequences of "1989" was the special issue of *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 76 (1990) on "The Meaning of 1989", which included H. Adam, *Eastern Europe and South African Socialism. Engaging Joe Slovo*, pp. 33–43. For a polemical response to "1989", see D. Kunert, *Glasnost. New Thinking and the ANC-SACP Alliance. A Parting of Ways*, Bryanston 1991.

19 Cf. M. Light, *Moscow's Retreat from Africa*, in: Hughes, *Marxism's Retreat*, pp. 21–40. In March 1990, Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, met De Klerk in Windhoek: *ibid.*, p. 34.

20 P. Gundani, *Church-State Relations in South Africa, Zambia and Malawi in light of the fall of the Berlin Wall*, in:

stands, appropriately, in a pedestrian mall in Cape Town's centre, outside the building of the Mandela-Rhodes Foundation.²¹

The ANC, for its part, like the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO before it, now began to drop its support for socialist policies and to accept the idea of a mixed economy. When he attended a World Economic Forum meeting at Davos in 1992, Mandela was persuaded to drop any idea of nationalisation, while the radical economic ideas of the ANC's own economic research group were largely abandoned. When the ANC came into office, it adopted a set of neo-liberal policies, in the context of the apparent triumph, post '1989', of neo-liberalism and the ideas propagated by the World Bank and the IMF, including privatisation, deregulation and tariff reductions. Though neither of the main parties to the negotiated settlement, the National Party and the ANC, had shown much, if any, commitment to democracy in their organisations in the years of struggle, they both came round to supporting the interim liberal democratic constitution drawn up in the multi-party talks in 1993. That constitution was then in broad outline confirmed as the country's final constitution in 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly elected in South Africa's first democratic election of 1994.

For South Africa, '1989' and the transition from apartheid to democracy, meant both political and economic transformation. Unlike the countries of Eastern Europe South Africa had a mixed economy before 1989, but like them, it had been isolated from the global economy, not because of communism and state socialism but because of the sanctions imposed on it because of its apartheid policies. Its transition was, like theirs, a double one: in the aftermath of '1989' South Africa not only transformed politically but also began to enter the world economy in new ways, meaning liberalisation of the economy and intensified globalisation. Similarly, in Namibia, where, as the Berlin Wall was breached, the country's first democratic election was being concluded²² The collapse of socialist regimes in the GDR and elsewhere in Eastern Europe helped create the climate in which Namibia's Constituent Assembly, chosen in the election of November 1989, approved a liberal democratic constitution in February 1990. The new SWAPO government abandoned the idea of nationalising the mines and instead opened its economy much as South Africa did.

It was in the context of the '1989 moment' that Southern Africans who had been taken during the struggle decades to the GDR and Cuba for education or to work were now repatriated, some on special flights to Southern Africa in 1990.²³ Both the so-called 'GDR kids' of Namibian parents and the labourers from Mozambique who had been put to work in GDR factories and paid minimal wages on the grounds that they were helping pay off their country's debt to the GDR, retained a separate identity once back in south-

Hervormde Teologiese Studies 74 (2018) 1, p. 5, quoting T. Leon, *The Accidental Ambassador*, Cape Town 2013, p. 13.

21 It was presented as a gift to Mandela in 1996, when he was in Germany on a state visit.

22 Leading foreign correspondents, in Windhoek for the election, left immediately for Berlin when they heard the news.

23 H. G. Schleicher / I. Schleicher, *Special Flights to Southern Africa*, Harare 1998.

ern Africa. While the GDR kids kept a relatively low profile in Namibia, however, the so-called 'Madgermanes' in Mozambique continued to campaign actively for decades for the government to pay them for the work they did in Germany, so far without result.²⁴ While the immediate influence of '1989' on the way apartheid came to an end in South Africa and Namibia is clear, the longer-term impact of '1989' on the rest of the Southern African region in the 1990s is much more difficult to measure, for the consequences of '1989' were often ambiguous. Southern Africa only to some extent participated in Samuel Huntington's third wave of democratisation in the early 1990s as an outcome of the '1989' moment, interpreted to mean the collapse of communism in the Eastern Bloc and the disappearance of the Soviet Union itself in 1991.²⁵ Both direct connections and more subtle influences need to be considered. While the grisly death of Ceausescu in Romania in December 1989 encouraged some rulers to bow to popular demands for democratization and market reforms, other autocrats, including Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire and Mugabe in Zimbabwe, sought new ways to hold on to power.

In Zaire over 5,000 petitions were received for a multi-party system, and in March 1990 civil servants, calling for Mobutu's resignation, said that he might otherwise experience the same fate as Ceausescu.²⁶ Though opposition parties were now legalised, Mobutu clung to power.²⁷ In Mozambique, partly under the influence of the developments in Eastern Europe, President Chissano did now accept the need to hold what was his country's first democratic election, under United Nations supervision. In Zambia the government had had to accept IMF and World Bank loans given on conditions that included the removal of state subsidies for education, health care and food. Food riots and growing political dissent, in the context of the '1989 moment', led to the emergence of multi-party democracy. Kaunda at first tried to resist change but came under such pressure that he had to allow the introduction of a multi-party system, which swept him from power in 1991.²⁸ What happened in Zambia had repercussions in next-door Malawi, where in 1992 the Catholic Church played a leading role in facilitating the transition from the authoritarian dictatorship of Hastings Banda to the birth of multi-party democracy in

24 A conference was held in Germany in February 2019 on the issue of the German government paying some of the money the Madgermanes sought: <https://www.deutschlandfunknova.de/beitrag/mosambikaner-in-der-ddr-die-madgermanes-warten-bis-heute-auf-ihr-geld>.

25 Books that use 1991 as the end of an era in southern Africa include P. Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*. Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–1991, Chapel Hill 2013.

26 *Presence Africaine* 157 (1998), p. 76.

27 J. Mark et al., 1989: Eastern Europe and the Making of the Modern World, Cambridge University Press 2019 (forthcoming). I thank James Mark for sending me an extract from this.

28 For details see P. Nordlund, *Organising the Political Agora*, Uppsala 1996; J. Ihonvbere, *Economic Crisis, Civil Society and Democratization: The Case of Zambia*, Africa World Press 2000, esp. p. 105. Kaunda said in March 1990 that "economically and politically perestroika and glasnost are moving [...] to the very position where we in Zambia stand today" (*Daily News*, 16 March 1990) and, with respect to human rights, "How can any sane person compare the Zambian experience with that of the Soviet Union or with that of other Eastern European countries?" (*Times of Zambia*, Lusaka, 15 March 1990), quoted D. G. Anglin, *Southern African Responses to Eastern European Developments*, in: *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 28 (1990) 3, pp. 431–455, at p. 433, n. 6.

1994.²⁹ As in Zambia, Malawi's new constitution provided for respect for human rights, public accountability and human dignity.

But while '1989' helped lead to democratisation in several Southern African countries, it had relatively little impact on Angola and Zimbabwe, let alone on the small countries of Lesotho and Swaziland, whose absolute monarchy remained unaffected. Despite ongoing violence in South Africa between 1990 and 1994, much of Southern Africa moved into a new era of relative stability in the early 1990s, an outcome, as we have seen, of developments in 1988 as well as in 1989, but the new wave of democratisation in Southern Africa, seen in the emergence of multi-party systems in Namibia in 1990, Zambia in 1991, and Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa in 1994, was not then carried further in the region.

While the period of relative peace in Angola at the end of the 1980s was not sustained – in the aftermath of the 1992 election the country again fell into a civil war that did not end until 2002 – '1989' did mean the end of direct foreign military intervention in the region.³⁰ After the United Nations (UN) mission to Namibia succeeded in taking that country to independence in March 1990, other UN missions were sent to Mozambique and Angola to promote peace and allow for multi-party elections, but though competitive elections have been held in all the countries of the region except Swaziland/eSwatini, which remains an absolute monarchy, democracy remains elusive in most. In none of the countries where liberation movements that fought armed struggles came to power – Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa – has there been a change of government since independence, and only in South Africa is there a prospect of a change of government at the next election. Since a thinly disguised military coup ousted Robert Mugabe in November 2017, Zimbabwe has remained under the effective dictatorship of its ruling party, ZANU-PF.³¹ The popular support shown for Mugabe's ouster has not continued in massive street protests for a more democratic and civilian-led order, as seen in North Africa in 2011 and in 2019 in Algeria and Sudan. Though the political scene in both Botswana and Malawi is, in mid-2019, relatively fluid, Zambia, which had become a vibrant multi-party democracy following '1989', has lapsed into a form of authoritarianism under Edgar Lungu. Though Joseph Kabila was eventually persuaded in 2018 not to run for a third term in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the largest UN peacekeeping force remains in place, the election that brought Felix Tshisekedi to power in January 2019 was severely flawed.

29 Gundani, *Church-State Relations*, pp. 6–7.

30 In the 2000s, Russian influence in the region revived somewhat, with South Africa becoming a member of what then became BRICS in 2009, but Russian influence was much less than Chinese. Western influence continued to decline.

31 E.g., M. Abey, *Southern African Arrested Development Community? Enduring Challenges to Peace and Security in Southern Africa*, Nordic Africa Institute Policy Dialogue Report, Uppsala 2019. Kaunda's successor, Frederick Chiluba, soon moved in an authoritarian direction: K. Somerville, *Africa After the Cold War Frozen Out or Frozen in Time?*, in: L. Fawcett / Y. Sayigh (eds.), *The Third World Beyond the Cold War Continuity and Change*, Oxford 1999, p. 157.

How can the impact of the '1989 moment' – the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War – be related to subsequent transformations in the region? How does that external influence compare with the other many and very varied such influences that followed? To take one example, the European Economic Community was to some extent a model for the members of the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference when they decided in 1992 to create a treaty-based organisation, SADC, and subsequent European Union models helped influence the way SADC proceeded to work, though implementation lagged far behind the stated goals of the organisation.

The past three decades have seen a great increase in population in the region, despite the spread of HIV which caused more deaths per head of population in South Africa and Botswana than anywhere else in the world. By 2019 an estimated two million people had left Zimbabwe for South Africa, helping to boost that country's population to 58 million. During these three decades Southern Africa has become tied much more closely to the world economy, thanks in particular to the internet and World Wide Web, with the social media revolution it has brought with it. Moreover, Southern Africa has experienced many of the same trends as elsewhere in the world, from the growth of consumerism to, say, the decline of manufacturing jobs because of competition from China, in, for example, the textile industry in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. Twenty-five years after the advent of democracy in South Africa, socio-economic inequalities remain as great as ever, even if, say, there have been significant advances in the roles played by women, who now constitute half the cabinet.³²

Any generalisations about the region as a whole must of course be treated with great caution. In South Africa democratisation in political terms meant not only the extension of the vote from minority racial categories of people to the entire population, but also a great spread in the provision of welfare (18 million social grants were paid out in 2019) and in state-supplied schemes such as electrification and the provision of potable water. By 2019 these state initiatives, coupled with the failure of the state-owned enterprises, had helped produce a grave fiscal crisis and the country's rapidly rising debt burden was rapidly becoming unsustainable. Elsewhere in the region, in countries much poorer than South Africa, the provision of social services and social protection has declined in recent decades and they have often had to look to the World Food Programme and other global initiatives for support and aid. In mid-2019 Zimbabwe looked to the international community to provide food for a third of the country's population.

Turning to specific external influences, neither of the two most important shocks originating in the global North this century was, I believe, as important as '1989'. The first of these twenty-first century external shocks to consider is 9/11. Though this opened a new era of conflict globally, it had relatively little direct impact on southern Africa. The war

32 The number unemployed, estimated at 3.7 million when the ANC came to power, is now estimated at almost ten million: R.W. Johnson, *South Africa's Fragile Democracy*, 30 May 2019: <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/south-africas-fragile-democracy>.

on terror' that followed the terrorist attacks on the United States led to a great increase in the activities of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in many African countries,³³ but while the American over-reach affected much of the northern half of the continent, as well as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there were few incidents of 'terrorism' in the other SADC countries in the decades after 2001.³⁴ Much more difficult to assess is the psychological and other consequences of 9/11 on the Southern African region. There is little doubt that it increased concerns about security and aided the growth of ideas related to Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilisations', with Muslims and other minorities regarded as separate and often inferior.

The second major external influence in the early twenty-first century was the global financial crisis of 2008. This crisis, 'orth Atlantic in its genesis',³⁵ had a greater impact on Southern Africa than 9/11, though its impact was, like that of 9/11, more indirect than direct. South Africa's financial sector had been little affected by previous crises in other emerging markets, such as that in Argentina in 2001, and was better regulated than that of most countries in the global North. The impact of the 2008 crisis was not as severe initially as elsewhere in the developed world, though the mining sectors in Botswana, Mozambique, and Namibia were negatively affected, as investment declined, while Lesotho and Swaziland, both of which were dependent on the export of clothing and textiles, suffered from reduced export returns and shrinking employment.³⁶ Though there was a significant decline in economic growth in South Africa following 2008, there is debate as to how much of that was a result of the global financial crisis, or was instead a consequence of the disastrous presidency of Jacob Zuma, who took over as president in 2009. There followed nine years of looting, corruption, policy paralysis and state capture, which some have estimated cost the country over R100 billion. Foreign investment declined severely, and unemployment rose to extremely high levels. In his masterly book *Crashed. How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World*, Adam Tooze traces the long-term effects of the 2008 crash. When the head of the United States Federal Reserve announced in 2013 that the bond-buying programme it had initiated after the crash would end soon, the exchange rates of what were called 'The Fragile Five' – South Africa, along with Turkey, Brazil, India and Indonesia – suffered severely. What Tooze calls the two countries that had been economic success stories of the new millennium, Brazil and South Africa, now in his words, 'crash-landed'.³⁷

33 See generally <https://www.africom.mil/>.

34 Cf. Abey, Southern African. In April 2019, ISIS announced that for the first time it had been involved in actions in the DRC (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Media Review, 19 April 2019) and in June it was reported that the South African National Defence Force had clashed with a group supported by ISIS in the northern DRC (Week-end Argus, 1 June 2019).

35 A. Tooze, *Crashed. How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World*, London 2018, p. 6.

36 Vision 2050. SADC Ponders Future, in: Southern Africa Today 14 (2012) 4, p. 1. Namibia's economy, heavily dependent on mining for export revenues, was contracting by 2016 and entering a recession that lasted for years: see, e.g., <https://www.namibian.com.na/159400/archive-read/Namibia-goes-into-technical-recession>.

37 Tooze, *Crashed*, pp. 477, 601.

Since then the country's economic decline has continued, despite Cyril Ramaphosa becoming President in February 2018. He made efforts to reign in corruption and mismanagement, especially in the state-owned enterprises, but they were half-hearted and were often hamstrung by opposition from those who, for one reason or another, did not want them to succeed. A report in April 2019 found that South Africa's performance, on a range of social, economic and governance measures, had deteriorated more in the past twelve years than any other country not involved in some form of conflict, slumping from 31st place in 2006 to 88th place out of 178 in 2018.³⁸ As the country commemorated twenty-five years of democracy in April 2019, its weak economy and major structural problems suggested to some that it was on the way to becoming a failed state.³⁹ If that proved to be the case, South Africa's failure would almost certainly drag down the rest of the region with it. Some held out hopes that the discovery of vast gas fields off the coast of Mozambique and of oil off the coast of South Africa, the latter announced in February 2019, would help turn the fortunes of the region around eventually, but both were at best long-term prospects.

In the long sweep of history, we may conclude, the '1989 moment' is likely to remain among the most important external influences on the region of the past half-century. As we have seen, the end of the Cold War in Southern Africa had major consequences for South Africa and significant, if lesser, ones for other countries of the region. The diffuse impacts of subsequent external shocks, such as 9/11 and the global financial crisis, remain difficult to assess.⁴⁰

38 <https://www.fin24.com/Economy/sas-decline-worst-of-nations-not-at-war-model-shows-20190417>.

39 Cf. R. W. Johnson, *Fighting for the Dream*, Johannesburg 2019.

40 No historian of Southern Africa has yet tackled these impacts. They are not dealt with in, say, R. Skinner, *Modern South Africa in World History. Beyond Imperialism*, London 2017 or A. S. Mlambo/N. Parsons, *A History of Southern Africa*, London 2018. When the South African Minister of Trade and Industry was asked about the impact of the financial crisis, he admitted that it had not been researched: Rob Davies to the author, email, 27 March 2019.