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‘A cultivated leader and sensible spokesman for black African views’[1]: Britain’s Courting of KaNgwane Chief Minister Enos J. Mabuza

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Abstract
This article analyses British policymakers’ efforts to court Enos John Mabuza, Chief Minister of the self-governing South African homeland of KaNgwane, in the final years of apartheid. It contends that despite taking place nearly 30 years apart, there were striking similarities between British policy at the end of apartheid and in the era of decolonisation, particularly the efforts to build relations with moderate nationalists in an effort to maintain long-term influence. While KaNgwane was a small territory lacking in material resources, Mabuza, as a moderate Black leader working within the law to challenge apartheid, took on greater importance in the minds of British policymakers seeking a peaceful transfer of power in South Africa. This was helped by Mabuza’s ability to maintain relations with a diverse range of important political actors including the South African government, KwaZulu Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and the African National Congress in exile. Additionally, KaNgwane’s close proximity to Mozambique, which at the time was in the midst of a civil war, also gave the territory greater prominence. This article will highlight how Mabuza used these interconnecting factors to demonstrate his value as an important ‘interlocutor’ for Britain, which in turn saw him extract important resources for both the KaNgwane people and his own family, as well as a degree of protection from interference by the South African government.

I

Over the course of the 1980s and early 1990s, Enos John Mabuza, Chief Minister of the ‘self-governing’ KaNgwane homeland, was afforded three audiences with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, multiple meetings with Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) ministers, two sponsored visits to the United Kingdom (UK), and regular

[1]British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher cited in Charles Powell to Colin Budd, 25 November 1985, The National Archives, London [hereafter TNA], FCO/105/3073.

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contact with highly influential British Ambassador to South Africa, Sir Robin Renwick.[2] Considering he was a relatively marginal figure, and KaNgwane was viewed by some British officials as 'a Heath Robinson Territory, cobbled together' by the apartheid government, the fact he received such attention from the British government requires far greater analysis than it has been given thus far.[3] This article will highlight the unique set of circumstances which saw 'someone with few resources and such modest government facilities' feted to such an extent.[4] It will highlight that, at times, chains of events, as well as the personality and skill of fairly marginal political actors, can allow them to 'punch above their weight' in terms of international interest and influence.[5]

This article, therefore, adds to the small but established body of literature dedicated to examining the ways small states manage to achieve influence in international politics.[6] While KaNgwane was not an independent state, it did have a degree of autonomy as a self-governing territory within South Africa and should, therefore, be included within the scope of this literature. Indeed, as Shireen Ally contends, while Mabuza was forthright in his refusal to claim 'full' independence for KaNgwane, the territory possessed many of the trappings of statehood in terms of bureaucratic organisation and record keeping.[7] With a population of roughly 500,000 people, it was also larger than several recognised nations.[8] Nonetheless, as the territory was granted self-governing status as part of the National Party's (NP) 'grand apartheid' vision, it is, to an extent,

[2] KaNgwane is also used by Swazis as the name for the Kingdom of Swaziland – now officially called Eswatini. For the purpose of clarity, KaNgwane will be used to describe the homeland or 'Bantustan' which was within South Africa's borders, while Swaziland will be used for the independent nation as that was (and to some extent still is) the most common nomenclature used in the years being examined here.

[3] D.J. White to British Embassy, Cape Town, 23 May 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073. Heath Robinson was a cartoonist famous for producing unusual images featuring 'cobbled-together' contraptions. See Oliver Wainwright, 'Heath Robinson: A museum fit for the cobbled-together contraption King', *The Guardian*, 19 October 2016.

[4] D.J. White, Pretoria to British Embassy, Cape Town, 23 May 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.

[5] This relatively informal expression is used frequently in the literature on small states to describe how these territories meet their political, diplomatic, and economic objectives despite seemingly attempting to do this from a relatively weak position. See, for example, Richard Edis, 'Punching above their weight: How small states operate in the contemporary diplomatic world', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 5/2 (1991), pp. 45–53; Donna Lee, 'Bringing an elephant into the room: Small state diplomacy in the WTO' in Andrew F. Cooper and Timothy M. Shaw (eds), *The Diplomacies of Small States: Between Vulnerability and Resilience* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 195. Godfrey Baldacchino and Anders Wivel, 'Small states: Concepts and theories' in Godfrey Baldacchino and Anders Wivel (eds), *Handbook on the Politics of Small States* (Cheltenham, 2020), p. 13.

[6] See Cooper and Shaw (eds), *The Diplomacies of Small States*; Baldacchino and Wivel (eds), *Handbook on the Politics of Small States;* Godfrey Baldacchino (eds), *The Success of Small States in International Relations: Mice that Roar* (Oxon, 2023).

[7] See Shireen Ally, 'Material remains: Artifice versus artefact(s) in the archive of Bantustan rule', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41/5, (2016), pp. 969–89.

[8] While estimates differ, this figure, used to describe KaNgwane's population in 1990, appears to be the most widely used. See Melsome Nelson-Richards, 'Rural poverty and global capital: A sociology of an emerging democracy – South Africa (Kangwane)', *Journal of Third World Studies*, 18/1 (2001), pp. 161–88; South Africa's Homelands, January 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.

surprising that Mabuza was treated with such respect by a number of Western countries.

A key reason for the NP's election victory in 1948 was the fear many urban White South Africans had of being 'swamped' by Black people migrating from rural areas to seek employment. While segregation already existed in South Africa, the NP promised to strengthen it through the implementation of apartheid, the direct translation of which is apartness. Various policies were adopted over the course of the 1950s, but it was not until 1959 that the passing Promotion of Bantu Self-Government inaugurated the period known as grand apartheid.[9] This act sought to remove South African citizenship from all Black people replacing it with citizenship to a Black homeland based on their ethnicity. It was hoped that this would remove all permanent Black residents from 'white' South Africa, replaced instead with temporary migratory labour whose dependents would remain in the homelands. Eventually, ten homelands were created, four of which had full independence (though no other country recognised this) while another six were self-governing.

This article will demonstrate that there were four interconnecting factors which allowed Mabuza, as leader of the Swazi homeland of KaNgwane, to take on greater influence than one would expect. While he did work within the system of grand apartheid, in contrast to the likes of Kaiser Matanzima and Lucas Mangope, the chief ministers of Transkei and Bophuthatswana respectively, Mabuza was, like KwaZulu Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a vocal critic of the NP government and forthright in his refusal to accept full 'independence' for KaNgwane, as he viewed this as a divide and rule policy. Indeed, Mabuza and Buthelezi came into direct conflict with the apartheid regime when they successfully challenged Pretoria's attempt to cede KaNgwane, and substantial parts of KwaZulu, to neighbouring Swaziland in 1982 in what was known as the Swazi Land Deal.[10] This was part of efforts by Pretoria to create a 'constellation' of states including the homelands and South Africa's neighbours which would function as a regional alliance with South Africa as hegemon.[11] Additionally, as part of the deal, the Swaziland government would no longer allow the African National Congress (ANC) to operate in its territory.[12] In preparation for the ceding of land to Swaziland, the KaNgwane authority was dissolved by Pretoria in June 1982.[13] However, against the odds, Mabuza managed to block the land deal by taking a

[9] Steffen Jensen and Olaf Zenker, 'Homelands as frontiers: Apartheid's loose ends – An introduction', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41/5 (2015), p. 940.

[10] See Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, 'Sowing the seeds of political mobilisation in Bantustans: Resistance of the cession of the KaNgwane Bantustan to the Kingdom of Swaziland', *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*, 43/1 (2018), pp. 43–69; Shireen Ally, '"If you are hungry, and a man promises you Mealies, will you not follow him?" South African Swazi Ethnic Nationalism, 1931–1986', *South African Historical Journal*, 63/3 (2011), pp. 414–30.

[11] Ndlovu, 'Sowing the seeds', p. 51.

[12] Ibid., p. 52. The ANC was the main liberation movement fighting against apartheid.

[13] Ibid., p. 53.

case to the South African Supreme Court, mobilising internal opposition through the Inyandza National Movement (KaNgwane's main political party), and by utilising his influential contacts in Britain, Canada, and West Germany to generate an 'international outcry' against the proposals.[14] This also raised Mabuza's profile and helped facilitate greater contact with British officials in the subsequent years analysed in this article.

Another key factor was that unlike many other homeland leaders, Mabuza was open about his support for the ANC, and a delegation of KaNgwane 'ministers' travelled to Lusaka to meet its leadership in exile in March 1986. In the minds of British policymakers, this made Mabuza a much more important political figure than the other homeland leaders. Mabuza's relationship with the ANC was also in stark contrast to Buthelezi, who, while greatly admired by Margaret Thatcher and other western leaders, had a difficult relationship with the main South African liberation organisation.[15] Nonetheless, as leader of the Inkatha movement, and with it the spokesperson for a large section of the Zulu people – the majority ethnic group in South Africa – Buthelezi was still viewed as a key figure in the country's post-apartheid future. The fact that Mabuza maintained a relationship with Buthelezi, the NP government, and the ANC made him an important 'interlocutor' as Britain attempted to promote progressive change in South Africa.[16]

Additionally, owing to the geographical positionality of KaNgwane, and the sizeable presence of the Tsonga ethnic group, this territory took on greater importance in the context of the civil war in Mozambique between the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) government and the South African-backed *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO) rebels. This resulted in an estimated 10,000 Mozambican refugees of mostly Tsonga descent settling in KaNgwane. In contrast to the rest of South Africa, KaNgwane and the Tsonga homeland of Gazankulu were the only parts of the country that did not immediately deport these Mozambicans upon discovery.[17]

The British government took a leading role in providing aid to the Mozambique refugee communities spread across the central and southern African regions.[18] London also provided support to the FRELIMO government including training for its army, and persuaded the US

[14] Ashley Sarimana, 'Trials and triumphs in public office: The life and work of E. J. N. Mabuza' (PhD Dissertation, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 2011), p. 252.
[15] See Robin Renwick, *A Journey with Margaret Thatcher: Foreign Policy under the Iron Lady* (London, 2013), p. 184; Robin Renwick, *The End of Apartheid*: *Diary of a Revolution* (London, 2015), p. 43; Robert Harvey, *The Fall of Apartheid: The Inside Story from Smuts to Mbeki* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 17.
[16] Parker to Powell, 3 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073; Graham Archer to Terry Curran, 25 October 1985 TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[17] Robin Renwick to FCO, 31 December 1987, TNA, FCO/105/2672. Gazankulu took in 20,000 Mozambican refugees.
[18] See Points to Make on Mozambican Refugees in Southern Africa to Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, October 1988, TNA, FCO/106/2540.

government not to provide covert support for RENAMO.[19] This was, in part, as thanks for Mozambique's role in helping facilitate the Lancaster House talks which brought about an end to the war in Rhodesia and the establishment of Zimbabwe as a democratic state in 1980.[20] The presence of this sizeable refugee community saw Britain providing greater aid to KaNgwane thus strengthening ties with Mabuza.

Finally, linked to the above, Mabuza fitted with the type of Black South African Britain wished to see take on prominent roles in the country in the future. He was educated, articulate, but, crucially was not a radical who would seek to nationalise British interests in the country if he had been part of the first democratic government. Additionally, like Buthelezi, he was also against the use of sanctions. As Mabuza managed to maintain contact with all key actors in the conflict throughout the years of violence and states of emergency in the mid-to-late 1980s, he was also considered an important source of information for the British embassy.

While the final years of apartheid were some 30 years after most imperial possessions had gained their independence, a number of scholars have positioned the transition to majority rule in South Africa as the last phase of decolonisation in Africa.[21] Adrian Guelke, in particular, has played down the 'exceptionalism' which has often been associated with South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 contending instead that there were significant parallels with the decolonisation process in other African states with sizeable White settler communities.[22] Similarly, Christopher Saunders states that the transition in South Africa did 'in some ways resemble decolonisation',[23] while Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni contends that '[t]he replacement of white colonial administrators at the state level in South Africa was celebrated as independence'.[24]

The courting of Mabuza, and his identification as a potentially important leader, demonstrates that parallels can be drawn between British policy towards South Africa at the end of apartheid, and the efforts of British officials to nurture ties with moderate leaders in the final years of colonial rule elsewhere. As William David McIntyre notes, 'Britain

[19] Peter Fry, 'Cultures of difference. The aftermath of Portuguese and British colonial policies in southern Africa', *Social Anthropology* 8/2 (2000), p. 117; Alex Vines, 'UK Policy toward Angola and Mozambique', *Instituto de Estudos Estratégicas e Internacionais* (Lisbon) at 'Diplomacy, Cooperation and Business: The Role of External Actors in Angola and Mozambique Conference (2006), Available at https://www.e-cultura.pt/ieei/wp-content/uploads/docs/SR7/PT_ADN_IEEI_007_0050_Anexo2_Relatorio_Africa_2007.pdf [Accessed 29 November 2023].

[20] Nyong'o, P. Anyang, 'Political instability and the prospects for democracy in Africa', *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement*, 13/1 (1988), p. 84.

[21] Christopher Saunders, 'Decolonization in Southern Africa: Reflections on the Namibian and South Africa Cases', *Journal for Contemporary History*, 42/1 (2017), pp. 104–7.

[22] Adrian Guelke, *South Africa in Transition: The Misunderstood Miracle* (London, 1999), pp. 188–98.

[23] Christopher Saunders, 'From apartheid to democracy in Namibia and South Africa: Some comparisons', *Nordiska Afrikainstitutet* (2001), p. 8. Available at https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/102626/10.pdf [Accessed 16 April 2024].

[24] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Fiftieth anniversary of decolonisation in Africa: A moment of celebration or critical reflection?' *Third World Quarterly*, 33/1 (2012), p. 76.

abandoned its traditional collaborators and tried to create democratic new ones' in the final years of colonial occupation.[25] A similar observation could be applied to aspects of British policy towards South Africa in the 1980s. While relatively cordial relations were maintained between the two governments at a ministerial level, lower ranking British officials in the FCO and embassy in Pretoria were prioritising contact with the 'successor generation' – Black South Africans it was believed would take up important positions of power in the country – over that of the 'authority generation'.[26] As with the decision to build close relations with relative moderates such as Jomo Kenyatta, Kenneth Kaunda, and Hastings Banda, it could be seen that Britain adopted the same policy towards South Africa in the 1980s by forging links with the likes of Enos Mabuza.

Nonetheless, the 'neo-colonial' interpretation that former imperial powers could still act as puppet masters over the new leaders of decolonised nations has largely grown out of fashion amongst historians. Ronald Robinson has even gone as far as to argue that owing to the competition between larger powers for allies in the developing world, the power dynamics have in fact given these smaller powers much more freedom in choosing their 'big brother'.[27] More recently, Poppy Cullen, whose work examines Britain's post-imperial relationship with Kenya, has contended that a 'major problem' with the concept of neo-colonialism is 'the removal of African agency'.[28] Cullen goes on to argue that 'the Kenyans involved in this relationship sought to gain the greatest possible benefit for themselves' and 'had substantial power to shape and direct their relations with Britain to their benefit'.[29]

This article will adopt a similar approach to these scholars, arguing that while Mabuza may well have been a useful contact for British officials, he utilised this relationship, as well as those with other Western nations, to protect his position of power and also gain important material support for the people of KaNgwane, and to some extent, for personal benefit for himself and his family. Additionally, Mabuza developed a network of business contacts both in South Africa and overseas; this was no doubt a great help when he swapped the world of politics for that of business at the end of apartheid.

[25] William David McIntyre, 'The unofficial commonwealth relations conferences, 1933–59: Precursors of the tri-sector Commonwealth', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 36/4 (2008), p. 595.
[26] See Daniel J. Feather, *British Cultural Diplomacy in South Africa, 1960–1994* (Basingstoke, 2024), p. 109.
[27] See Ronald Robinson, 'Imperial theory and the question of imperialism after empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12/2 (1984), pp. 52–3.
[28] Poppy Cullen, *Kenya and Britain after Independence: Beyond Neo-colonialism* (Basingstoke, 2017), p. 9.
[29] Ibid.

II

As British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd stated in 1991, Britain maintained a 'historic and persistent interest' in South Africa throughout the years of apartheid.[30] This stemmed from the enduring legacies of British colonialism, most notably a sizeable British diaspora, close trading relations, and high levels of British investment. Indeed, once the dust had settled after the near universal condemnation of South Africa following the murder of at least 69 peaceful protestors at Sharpeville in 1960, UK-South African economic and military links remained largely unaffected. Even South Africa's decision to become a republic and its de facto expulsion from the Commonwealth in 1961 did little to affect this special relationship, particularly during the period of 'high apartheid' when, from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, the predominance of the NP government remained largely unchallenged.

It was during this period that the NP government, under the leadership of the uncompromising and hard-line Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, sought to fully realise the separation of the races through a grand apartheid vision which would give each of the country's African ethnic groups their own homeland. Verwoerd built on the concept of 'native reserves' established under British rule but took it much further with the ambition being to create a constellation of states akin to the British Commonwealth.[31] Four of these territories achieved 'full' independence – while in theory this meant they were fully autonomous, they remained economically reliant on South Africa and had no choice but to accept citizens forcibly removed from elsewhere in South Africa. Six other territories became self-governing which in theory meant they had autonomy over their own internal affairs – however, as with the independent homelands, there were limits to this and an even greater reliance on South Africa to fund public sector spending and act as a source of employment through migratory labour.

Many scholars have contended that this policy was, in part, a reaction by Pretoria to the growing number of African states achieving their independence, and was an attempt to present apartheid as a form of decolonisation.[32] As Jamie Miller argues, NP policymakers were 'very much aware of the new reality' presented by the decolonisation process in Africa, and sought to 'reframe' South Africa's 'ideological foundations' from one of 'white empire' to 'postcolonial nation-state'.[33] Some British policymakers were even taken in by Pretoria's narrative when it came close to fruition in the early 1970s. When writing about Mangope, Matanzima,

[30] Hurd cited in James Barber, '"An historical and persistent interest": Britain and South Africa', *International Affairs*, 67/4 (1991), p. 723.
[31] Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948–1994* (Oxford, 2014), p. 106.
[32] Laura Evans, 'Contextualising apartheid at the end of empire: Repression, "development" and the bantustans', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 47/2 (2019), pp. 372–411.
[33] Jamie Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and Its Search for Survival* (Oxford, 2019), p. 22.

and Buthelezi in 1971, British Ambassador Sir Arthur Snelling wrote, with what reads as something of pride that one of these three men would be the leader of the first homeland to 'achieve full independence'.[34] He went on to make the absurd claim that this could be viewed positively and was evidence that former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's wind of change was 'at last blowing in South Africa'.[35]

Despite Snelling's belief that the development of the homelands was something which should be supported by Britain, not a single country recognised any of the four homelands which became independent over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, most scholars writing at the time saw it as a policy of divide and rule designed to remove the citizenship of all Black South Africans while ensuring they could still be used as a pool of migratory labour. Black Consciousness activist Steve Biko famously went as far as to argue that this policy was the 'greatest fraud' ever carried out by the apartheid regime.

Nonetheless, more recent scholarship has begun to reassess the homelands and highlight that, for some, they did provide a degree of political space to challenge the apartheid regime. This surge in scholarly interest is in no small part down to the University of Witwatersrand's History Workshop event in 2012 entitled 'Let's Talk About the Bantustans' which culminated in a special issue of the *South African History Journal* and the publication of an edited collection.[36] This article adds to this existing body of work by looking specifically at the relations that developed between Britain and the KaNgwane homeland. Indeed, the history and politics of KaNgwane has drawn particular scholarly interest due to Mabuza's successes and the development of a relationship with the ANC highlighted above.[37] This article will highlight that Mabuza also utilised his autonomy as KaNgwane Chief Minister to develop diplomatic relations with Western powers in an effort to gain material resources for his people and provide a layer of protection against interference by the South African government in KaNgwane's domestic affairs.

British policy towards South Africa also began to change from the late 1970s as policymakers began to consider the prospect that apartheid would come to an end, at least in the medium term. In the aftermath of the state's violent response to the Soweto Uprising in 1976, and the brutal

[34] Arthur Snelling to FCO, 30 August 1971, TNA, FCO/105/160.

[35] Ibid. It should be noted that Snelling was particularly sympathetic to Pretoria, and following his tour of the country, he was appointed Vice-President of the United Kingdom South Africa Trade Association which was vehemently against sanctions. He also acted in an advisory capacity for the Ciskei 'government', was close to Mangope, and regularly wrote to British officials calling on the government to recognise homelands' 'independence'. See, Freeland to Brian Barder, 23 July 1979, TNA, FCO/105/657.

[36] Shireen Ally and Arianna Lissoni (eds), 'Let's talk about the Bantustans', *South African Historical Journal*, 64/1 (2012); Shireen Ally and Arianna Lissoni (eds), *New Histories of South Africa's Apartheid-Era Bantustans* (London, 2017). See also Shireen Ally and Arianna Lissoni (eds), 'Bantustan states', *African Historical Review*, 50/1–2 (2018).

[37] See Ndlovu, 'Sowing the Seeds'; Ally, "'If you are hungry'".

murder of Steve Biko while in police custody in 1977, the British Labour government began to make moderate efforts to highlight the disdain to which they viewed apartheid. British Foreign Secretary David Owen was instrumental in encouraging the European Economic Community to adopt a code of conduct for businesses with subsidiaries in South Africa which stipulated the way Black workers should be treated.[38] While there was no specific punishment for not following these guidelines, it would lead to bad publicity as the Trade Union Congress had committed to naming and shaming companies that did not adhere to the codes.[39]

Other 'positive measures' were implemented which included efforts to develop far greater contact with the emerging internal Black opposition. This was facilitated by significantly increasing the British Council's budget for work in South Africa, and the decision to involve the Ministry for Overseas Development (ODM) in the country.[40] The ODM had previously ruled out aid to South Africa, contending that based on Gross Domestic Product, it should be considered a developed country and should, therefore, provide the necessary educational facilities for its own population.[41] However, the ODM eventually accepted the argument that apartheid essentially meant South Africa existed as two states – one that was wealthy, developed, and provided considerable state-sponsored support for its White citizens, while the other was for the Black communities and was underdeveloped and economically deprived.

The homelands occupied a difficult position for Britain within this new policy framework. There was a tension between a desire to help those most in need – many of whom lived in the homelands – while also wanting to ensure that a policy of non-recognition was maintained. While this was difficult to achieve with those that had been granted 'independence', it was much easier to do so with the self-governing homelands which the British government stated it viewed the same as any other part of South Africa for the purpose of aid and educational provision.[42]

As the situation continued to deteriorate in South Africa over the course of the 1980s, it became even more important for Britain to promote the peaceful dismantling of apartheid. It was estimated that 10 per cent of all British overseas investments were in South Africa and that this counted for 16 per cent of returns,[43] while Britain was reliant on South Africa as a supplier of key strategic minerals such as chromium, manganese, vanadium, gold, and the platinum-group metals, many of which were

[38] Martin Holland, *The European Community and South Africa: European Political Co-Operation under Strain* (London, 1988), pp. 32–3.
[39] Author interview with Michael Walsh, former Head of the TUC International Department, 28 July 2022.
[40] Aid for Black South Africans, Paper by FCO and ODM, December 1978, TNA, OD/52/14.
[41] Robert Cecil to Foreign Office Cultural Relations Department, 18 May 1965, TNA, FO/371/182168; Burr, ODM to Fowells, 8 December 1976, TNA, BW/107/15.
[42] See Malcolm Rifkind to David Winnick, 29 February 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1697.
[43] James Barber, *The Uneasy Relationship: Britain and South Africa* (London, 1983), pp. 32–3.

considered vital for British industry.[44] These important economic interests would be jeopardised should South Africa fall into a violent civil war or a radically left-wing government come to power. Similarly, policymakers sought to guard against the potential exodus of the estimated 1.5 million South Africans who were eligible for a British passport and thus a new life in Britain – which at the time had its own economic woes and high levels of unemployment.[45] In this context, British government officials began to more openly engage with the ANC in exile but also other key Black political leaders in South Africa like Buthelezi and Mabuza.

The main source base for this article is material from the UK National Archives, predominantly FCO records. Nonetheless, to guard against a Eurocentric approach, five archives in South Africa were consulted though with varying degrees of success. Research at the South African National Archives (SANA) did not garner any significant discoveries – this is mainly because of the very slow progress in transferring relevant material from individual government departments to the SANA relating to the years after 1960 in part due to 'space constraints'.[46] Similarly, the Department of Foreign Affairs Archive (DFAA) also proved fruitless. This could, in part, stem from the strict rules around access to this material. Indeed, researchers are unable to access the archive and view the material themselves. Instead, they must make an application through the Promotion of Access to Information Act, which, if successful, sees staff at the DFAA undertake searches of the material on the researcher's behalf and send them copies of any material deemed relevant.[47] The KaNgwane 'government' records, housed at the Mpumalanga Provincial Archive, proved to be a richer source base. Nonetheless, there were issues here too. While Shireen Ally has successfully managed to lobby for the preservation of these files, which were previously housed in very poor conditions in a warehouse in Louisville – KaNgwane's former 'capital' – they remain largely uncatalogued and stored mainly in piles in a room adjacent to a garage in the archives' basement.[48] Additional research was also undertaken at the South African History Archive and the Historical Papers Research Archive, which are both located on the University of Witwatersrand campus in Johannesburg. These archives provided transcripts of some of Mabuza's speeches which were analysed as part of this research. In addition to these archival sources, published oral history transcripts and memoirs were also consulted.

[44] Geoffrey Berridge, *Economic Power in Anglo-South African Diplomacy: Simonstown, Sharpeville and after* (Basingstoke, 1981), p. 177.
[45] Geoffrey Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty* (London, 1994), p. 479.
[46] Sue Onslow, 'Research notes special collection: The Cold War in Southern Africa', *Cold War History*, 22/3 (2022), p. 343.
[47] Ibid., p. 345.
[48] See Ally, 'Material remains'.

III

Historically, the Swazi ethnic group has resided in parts of northeast South Africa and into neighbouring Mozambique. Legislation passed in the 1950s and 1960s, which included largescale removals of people from urban areas or 'white' land, paved the way for the creation of a Swazi homeland which combined thirteen tribal authorities in two different areas. In April 1976, the Swazi Territorial Assembly was created before being replaced by a Legislative Assembly in 1977 with the area being referred to as the KaNgwane homeland.[49] In a move which ran counter to the actions of most homelands' elites, the traditional leaders in the area chose Enos Mabuza to be the Chief Executive Officer despite the fact he was not from a chieftaincy background. While the most senior Swazi Chief – Mkolishi Dlamini – had been the Chief Executive Officer of the Swazi Territorial Assembly, he was viewed as politically inept and ill equipped to negotiate with the South African government, particularly over the issue of White-owned farms in the territory.[50] Instead, the other traditional chiefs on the executive council put their faith in Mabuza as they felt a man of his education was better suited for the politics of homeland governance.[51] Despite being born in relative poverty, Mabuza had worked his way up to be a leading educational inspector in the area achieving two degrees in the process.

Initially, there was little interest from the British government in KaNgwane or Mabuza. While his name was listed in files entitled 'Leading Personalities in South Africa and Namibia' in 1978 and 1979, he was not honoured with the full write up that accompanied many others who were mentioned.[52] Additionally, while Mabuza tried to organise a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Lord Peter Carrington when he visited London in 1981, this did not materialise, indicating that Mabuza was not particularly high on the FCO's radar at this point.[53]

Later that year, Martin Reid, the Minister at the British Embassy, and Brian Baldwin, the British Consulate-General in Johannesburg, visited KaNgwane. This was the first visit of its kind by any foreign diplomats since the formation of the KaNgwane Legislative Assembly. Reid indicated that he felt there was a degree of nervousness on the part of Mabuza and his fellow counsellors, and he and Baldwin were 'received more formerly than' they 'would have wished'.[54] This meant there was 'little opportunity for private conversations' as several White South African officials employed as advisors to the KaNgwane Assembly

[49] South Africa's Homelands, January 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.; Ndlovu, 'Sowing the Seeds', p. 48.
[50] Ndlovu, 'Sowing the seeds', p. 47.
[51] Sarimana, 'Trials and triumphs', pp. 15–6.
[52] Leading Personalities in South Africa and Namibia, 1978, TNA, FCO/45/2356; Leading personalities in South Africa and Namibia, 1979, TNA, FCO/105/151.
[53] Martin Reid to John Leahy, 25 June 1981, TNA, FCO/105/657.
[54] Ibid.

were present at all times.[55] Nonetheless, Reid was impressed by Mabuza, emphasising his immaculate appearance, perfect command of English (as well as several other languages), and the fact he possessed two degrees.

Mabuza was quite candid, emphasising that he wanted a unitary South African state with one person, one vote. However, he sought to achieve this through negotiation rather than force, as the latter would have 'landed him in Robben Island or in a pointless exile'.[56] He therefore chose to make the best of what was available to him and pushed towards internal self-government – although he was adamantly against full 'independence'. Reid tried to ascertain his views on the potential incorporation of KaNgwane into Swaziland but 'he did not rise to the bait on this occasion'.[57] Reid also thought that at one stage, Mabuza attempted to bring the 'conversation round to a request for British aid' before deciding against it. This demonstrates that Mabuza clearly sought material benefit from Britain for the people of KaNgwane but did not yet feel comfortable enough in his relations with British officials to make such a direct request in person. Indeed, he had previously made tentative contact with the British Council, which had ultimately come to nothing. Mabuza did, however, indicate a desire to maintain contact with the British Embassy.[58] This was something Reid thought was a good idea as he felt owing to its close proximity to Mozambique and Swaziland, KaNgwane was 'a part of the world which is worth keeping an eye on'.[59]

In the following months, Mabuza's dispute with the South African government over KaNgwane's possible incorporation into Swaziland led to far greater international interest in the homeland leader. This was, in part, driven by Mabuza himself who wrote to the British Embassy in December 1981 appealing to the British government 'to exert all possible influence on Pretoria to stop their negotiations with Swaziland about the political future of the Swazi people in the Republic of South Africa'.[60] It should be noted that Mabuza sent similar letters to the United States and Australian embassies so this was not necessarily down to any particular attachment to Britain or belief that London had any greater influence over Pretoria than other Western powers, but simply to help his aim to safeguard KaNgwane's future.

British Ambassador to South Africa Sir John Leahy reported Mabuza's request, along with a lengthy explanation of the situation regarding KaNgwane and Swaziland to the FCO's Southern Africa Department. While Leahy did not feel it was appropriate for the British government to intervene as it could damage its relations with both South Africa and Swaziland, he stated that 'it is difficult not to sympathise with Mr Mabuza' whom he described as 'an able and articulate man' who had

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] John Leahy to Brian Barder, 24 December 1981, TNA, FCO/105/1698.

'impressed both [British Embassy Minister] Martin Reid and myself when we met him on separate occasions'. Leahy went on to state that Mabuza's assessment of Pretoria's 'motives in its policy towards the homelands seems to accord with our own'. Finally, and most poignantly Leahy stated that Mabuza was 'the sort of moderate black leader we should be seeking to cultivate'.[61]

While Leahy was unsure about offering direct support, and there is little direct evidence that they lobbied Pretoria over the issues, in 1984 Derek Tonkin, Minister at the British Embassy in Pretoria, stated that both the British and United States embassies had 'done so much to support his cause by intervening with the SAG [South African Government]'.[62] In the subsequent years, relations had become much closer with Mabuza, and he made a number of visits to the British Embassy in Pretoria, establishing himself as a 'very useful source of information'.[63] British officials were impressed by how this 'mild mannered, quiet, courteous but determined political leader' had 'stood firm against the efforts of the South African government to incorporate KaNgwane into Swaziland'.[64] Leahy maintained contact with Mabuza after his tour of South Africa had finished, and he returned to the UK to take up the post of FCO Deputy Under-Secretary for Africa and the Middle East. When Mabuza and a KaNgwane delegation visited the UK in April 1984, Leahy and Jeremy Varcoe, Head of the FCO Southern Africa Department, had meetings with them.[65] This was in contrast to his previous visit to the UK which had passed by without any direct contact with British government officials, emphasising that Mabuza was now viewed as a more important political actor in the region. The possibility of a future visit was also discussed, and it was suggested that this could involve a meeting with FCO Minister Malcolm Rifkind.

The level of contact between Mabuza and the embassy increased considerably from this point. In September 1984, Graham Archer, Counsellor and Head of Chancery, paid a visit to KaNgwane. Archer's visit was scheduled to take place just before the territory's celebrations for achieving 'self-government' with Archer leaving KaNgwane the day before these started. There were concerns, therefore, that Mabuza and the other 'ministers' might be too busy to meet Archer; however, he was persuaded by Mabuza to continue with the visit and assured there would be adequate time for discussions. In fact, once he arrived in KaNgwane, Archer was 'pressed to stay on for the celebrations'. While this would not have been appropriate in most other homelands, it was deemed acceptable owing to Mabuza's 'attitude to self-government'.[66] It is possible that

[61] Ibid.
[62] Derek Tonkin to John R. Johnson, 6 September 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1698.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Graham Archer to David Carter, 4 September 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1698.
[65] Enos Mabuza to John Leahy, 19 April 1984, Mpumalanga Provincial Archives, South Africa [hereafter MPA] KNG, Different Letters II.
[66] Graham Archer to David Carter, 7 September 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1698.

Mabuza encouraged Archer's visit to coincide with the celebration with the aim of persuading him to attend. The presence of such a figure was useful for Mabuza in emphasising the international attention his leadership had garnered, and this provided a layer of protection against interference from Pretoria.

Indeed, during Archer's visit, Mabuza conveyed the pressure he and other homeland leaders were under to resettle those who had been forcibly removed by the apartheid government from other parts of the country.[67] In doing so, Mabuza also ingratiated himself yet again as a useful source of information on South African government policy and the internal situation within the homelands. Archer stated that in contrast to the slightly nervous portrait that Reid had painted of Mabuza after his visit in 1981, he was far more confident in his position. Indeed, at one stage of the meeting, Mabuza dismissed his White South African officials as he did not wish them to hear him relay to Archer that the South African government retained control of sites in KaNgwane which were used for the resettlement of Swazis from elsewhere in South Africa.[68] This may have been due to concerns over these staff's allegiances as two years later a member of the United States embassy staff told a British official that Mabuza believed some of them 'had been placed there to inform on him'.[69]

Mabuza also organised a 'full programme of visits' for Archer to highlight the situation in KaNgwane. In particular, Archer was struck by the high levels of poverty and poor provision of healthcare and education facilities, which was squarely blamed on the South African authorities who had, until recently, been responsible for these. There were some positives however, as the KaNgwane authorities had plans to build a new teacher training college with some provision for degrees to be accredited by a South African university. While there had been some limited support from the British Council, representatives from the KaNgwane Education Department 'made it clear' to Archer that 'they hoped' it 'could in future provide more assistance'.[70]

While this visit was clearly useful for the British government to learn more of the situation in KaNgwane and develop contacts there, Archer came under fire for attending the celebration to mark the granting of self-government to the territory. *The Guardian* reported that Archer, as well as the US Consul-General Ken Brown attended the celebrations.[71] While the report did quote Mabuza's speech in which he stated that 'he would never accept full independence', it failed to convey the complexity of Mabuza's position as a genuine critic of apartheid. Indeed, it quoted Dr Nthato Motlana, Chairman of the Soweto Anti-Apartheid Committee,

[67] Graham Archer to Nigel Thorpe, 4 September 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1698.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Jeffrey James to Patrick Moberly, 15 October 1986, TNA, FCO/105/2278.
[70] Graham Archer to David Carter, 7 September 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1698.
[71] 'British envoy at Homeland Ceremony', *The Guardian*, 1 September 1984, p. 4.

who stated that for the US to send a representative was a 'feather in the cap of the divide-and-rule apostles'. This level of criticism is somewhat surprising as Archer was under the impression Mabuza was 'viewed more favourably' than other homeland leaders by Motlana.[72]

In response to *The Guardian* article, an embassy official defended Archer's presence, emphasising that the visit 'was within the bounds of government policy' and that it was important that they kept 'in touch as far as we are able with developments all over the country'.[73] The FCO, however, stressed that the timing of the visit was 'completely coincidental'.[74] While there was an element of truth to this claim, Archer had considered cancelling his visit but had been persuaded not to by Mabuza. Indeed, questions also remain over how coincidental the timing of the celebration was from KaNgwane's perspective; in the aftermath of the celebrations, KaNgwane officials announced that the US and UK representatives were sent as 'official observers', which was not strictly true.[75] This could, therefore, be seen as an attempt by the KaNgwane authorities to exploit the presence of these officials for political capital in an effort to provide another layer of protection against possible interference by Pretoria.

Tonkin apologised to the FCO for the embassy's decision to grant Archer permission to attend the celebrations. However, he also emphasised the 'somewhat unusual circumstances' of Mabuza's leadership and his impressive success in 'wrestling regional autonomy from a reluctant Pretoria'.[76] Indeed, as recently as 1981, the South African government had refused KaNgwane's application for self-governing status as they hoped to cede most of the territory to Swaziland.[77] Mabuza had successfully challenged this and survived Pretoria's attempt to disband the territory by generating both domestic and international opposition and by taking the case to the South African Supreme Court.[78] Tonkin also pointed to the meeting Leahy recently had with Mabuza where he congratulated him 'on the persevering approach of the KaNgwane people and their leader'. Tonkin emphasised that, unlike the other homelands Mabuza had to fight to achieve self-government for KaNgwane, and this was part of a 'strategy to achieve protection' from interference from Pretoria. In fact, Tonkin went as far as to frame the celebrations of the granting of self-government as a moment of 'triumph' which it was only natural those who had helped him would want to witness. Tonkin also forwarded a number of extracts from

[72] Graham Archer to Anthony Reeve, 29 September 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1698.
[73] 'British envoy at Homeland Ceremony', *The Guardian*, 1 September 1984, p. 4.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Nigel Thorpe to John R. Johnson, 31 August 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1697; Derek Tonkin to FCO, 31 August 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1697.
[76] Derek Tonkin to FCO, 6 September 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1698.
[77] Ndlovu, 'Sowing the seeds', p. 48.
[78] Ibid., p. 53; Sarimana, 'Trials and triumphs', p. 252.

Mabuza's speech to the FCO which emphasised 'non-racialism, equality, and democracy'.[79]

Despite this controversy, embassy staff continued to emphasise Mabuza's exceptionalism compared to most other homeland leaders. Indeed, he quoted Nelson Mandela in speeches[80] and stated his intention to visit the ANC in Lusaka.[81] Archer even visited Mabuza at his modest home in the black township of Mgwenya. Over lunch, served by Mabuza's wife Esther, he emphasised to Archer how thankful he was for the opportunities he had previously had to visit the FCO. He also indicated that he hoped to travel to Europe again soon and would be 'very appreciative of anything that the Embassy could do to assist him to put over his views to responsible people in London'.[82] Archer contended that the Embassy should 'certainly support' Mabuza in his efforts to meet leading FCO officials as he is an 'impressive interlocutor whom we always find worthwhile talking to'.

Shortly after this meeting, Mabuza was given the opportunity to visit the UK again as a delegate at the Ditchley Park Conference from 22 to 24 November.[83] At the same time, Downing Street had received a recommendation to grant Mabuza an audience with the Prime Minister next time he visited the UK.[84] To ascertain if this would be worthwhile, Charles Powell, Thatcher's private secretary, contacted the FCO for advice.[85] The FCO contacted British Ambassador to South Africa Sir Patrick Moberly for his views. Moberly, in contrast to his diplomatic colleagues in Pretoria, was not supportive of such contact, believing that while Mabuza was 'good value as a moderate leader and worth some attention' he 'might find himself a little out of his depth if he were to be invited to call at No. 10'.[86] In particular, Moberly questioned Mabuza's ability to operate on the international stage and emphasised the much smaller constituency he had in KaNgwane in comparison to Buthelezi's in KwaZulu. He also said that he lacked the charisma of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and was also proving to be a controversial figure in South Africa owing to his indication he would like to meet the ANC in Lusaka. While Moberly did not feel Mabuza was worthy of a meeting with the Prime Minister, he did contend that 'if Rifkind were available am sure a call on him would be appreciated'.[87]

It should be noted that Moberly was not rated particularly highly by some in the FCO or Downing Street. Foreign Secretary Geoffrey

[79] Derek Tonkin to John R. Johnson, 6 September 1984, TNA, FCO/105/1698.
[80] Graham Archer to Terry Curran, 25 October 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[81] Patrick Moberly to FCO Southern Africa Department, 4 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[82] Archer to Curran, FCO Southern Africa Department, 25 October 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[83] Programme of Arrangements Made by the Central Office of Information for the FCO: The Hon. Enos Mabuza, Chief Minister of KaNgwane, 21 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[84] Powell to Budd, FCO, 28 October 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Moberly to FCO Southern Africa Department, 4 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[87] Ibid.

Howe dismissed Moberly's 'negative and detached' views, while Thatcher personally intervened to replace him with Robin Renwick as she sought a more activist British representative who would move away from the damage limitation approach which had become a hallmark of Moberly's time in Pretoria.[88] In the first instance, FCO Assistant Under-Secretary for State (Africa) John R. Johnson wrote on the initial draft stating that although a meeting with Rifkind might be 'the right course', it was important to give Downing Street the option as Thatcher was 'interested to see black leaders from within South Africa who are working constructively for progress'.[89] Although it was conveyed to Powell that a meeting with the Prime Minister was not really necessary, Thatcher chose to overrule her FCO advisors and meet him anyway, albeit without any publicity.[90] In addition to the factors listed by Moberly which made this meeting potentially controversial, this decision was also taken for fear of angering the Swaziland government, a Commonwealth member and former British protectorate, owing to the ongoing tension which existed between the country and KaNgwane stemming from the aborted land deal.[91]

The main motivation on the part of Downing Street for meeting Mabuza was to emphasise the 'sincerity of the British Government's opposition to apartheid' and its desire to promote dialogue and peaceful change in the country.[92] Linked to this, it was also hoped that Mabuza could be persuaded of the merits of Britain's hostility to economic sanctions. Downing Street also sought Mabuza's insight into the prospects for peaceful change and ways that this could be promoted, and also to ascertain, in advance of Mabuza's visit to Lusaka, what role he saw for the ANC and what chances there were that it would cease violence.

At the meeting, Mabuza presented a memorandum to Thatcher setting out his position and what help the UK could offer. He supported the British government's stance against the homeland policy and stated that although he was a Chief Minister, he was 'not a willing participant in the system' and rejected the policy entirely.[93] Mabuza also stated that he sympathised with those who were rising up violently against apartheid owing to the 'appalling conditions which prevail in some black townships', the poor educational provision for Black South Africans, and the 'statutory discrimination' they suffer in all aspects of life. Mabuza contended that the only way to stop the violence was to dismantle all of

[88] Patrick Salmon and Martin Jewitt, *The Unwinding of Apartheid: UK-South African Relations, 1986–1990* (Oxon, 2019) p. xvii; James Barber, 'Britain, South Africa and the fall of Margaret Thatcher', The South African Institute of International Affairs, (1991), pp. 2–3, Available at https://africaportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Britian__South_Africa_And_The_Fall_Of_Margaret_Thatcher.pdf [Accessed 21 September 2023].

[89] John R. Johnson to Geoffrey Howe, 5 November 1985 – Handwritten notes on original draft from Anthony Reeve to John R. Johnson, 4 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.

[90] The Prime Minister's Meeting with Enos Mabuza, 25 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.

[91] Colin Budd to Charles Powell, 22 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Enos Mabuza to Margaret Thatcher, 25 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.

the apartheid laws. While he believed that a peaceful solution was possible, he feared that the longer Pretoria held out against dismantling apartheid, releasing Nelson Mandela, and entering into negotiations with the ANC, the more likely it was that the country would descend into violence.

Mabuza emphasised that Black South Africans believed that Britain, as the former colonial power in South Africa, 'could play a greater and important role in the normalisation' of the situation in the country. In this regard, he called on Britain to put 'diplomatic pressure' on Pretoria but also contended that:

> assistance by your Government for the educational and social advancement of black South Africans, can be an indirect but invaluable contribution towards the acceleration of reform in our country.[94]

These suggestions were strikingly similar to the policy adopted by the Thatcher government of pursuing 'constructive engagement' with Pretoria while implementing 'positive measures' designed to help improve the position of the country's Black majority. Constructive engagement was the 'brainchild' of US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker and advocated that rather than ostracising South Africa, the West should work closely with it to promote gradual change in the country.[95]

Thatcher used the apparent benefits Black South Africans derived from continued contact between Britain and South Africa as a key argument against the use of sanctions. Indeed, while Thatcher was lambasted for her attitude towards more restrictive measures against South Africa at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Nassau in 1985, member states supported the British proposal to place greater emphasis on positive measure such as scholarships and aid aimed at Black South Africans.[96] Mabuza may well have been aware that this was Britain's policy and may have been looking to flatter Thatcher and also take advantage of the potential for more material support for KaNgwane in this context.

In the meeting itself, Mabuza also answered Thatcher's questions regarding the ANC. He correctly predicted that the ANC would be prepared to forego violence as they 'would not want to fight if negotiation were really an alternative'. Nonetheless, Mabuza felt that any future dispensation for South Africa should be decided through consensus by a number of key political actors including the leaders of both the independent and self-governing homelands, Bishop Tutu, and Reverend Allan Boesak. After the meeting, Powell reported to the FCO that

[94] Ibid.

[95] See Joanne E. Davies, *Constructive Engagement? Chester Crocker and the American Policy in South Africa, Namibia, and Angola 1901–8* (Oxford, 2007).

[96] Commonwealth programmes of assistance for victims of apartheid', International Conference on the Educational Needs of the Victims of Apartheid in South Africa, UNESCO House, Paris, 25–27 June 1991, Available at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000151901 [Accessed 21 September 2023].

Thatcher was 'impressed by Mr Mabuza' and stated that he was 'a cultivated and sensible spokesman for black African views'.[97]

Thatcher's positive impression might, however, stem from the fact that much of what he said resonated with her policy of constructive engagement, although it is interesting that he provided a far more positive perspective on the ANC than she was most likely used to hearing. Indeed, Powell did not refer to the fact that Mabuza viewed the ANC as 'part of the solution' to the problems in South Africa in his write up to the FCO, instead contending that he 'did not appear to think ANC participation was vital in the first stage'.[98] This inconsistency was noted by Craig Murray in the FCO Southern Africa Department in a letter to the Embassy in Pretoria.[99] Indeed, in light of Mabuza's forthcoming visit to Lusaka, Murray recommended that the embassy maintain contact with him to ascertain if he still felt there was a realistic opportunity of a truce after meeting the ANC in exile.

It is worth noting that during Mabuza's visit, he also held meetings with two high-ranking FCO officials – the Deputy Under Secretary and former British Ambassador in South Africa Ewan Fergusson, and Anthony Reeve, Head of the Southern Africa Department. In contrast to Powell's remarks about Mabuza's attitude to the ANC, Fergusson's account of their meeting suggested Mabuza's stance was much closer to that presented in the memorandum handed to Thatcher.[100] There are two possible explanations for the diverging narratives presented. One is that Mabuza did, in fact state similar views in his meeting with Thatcher as were present in his memorandum, but she, or possibly Powell, chose to ignore the importance he placed on the ANC owing to the disdain they felt for the organisation. Another possibility, however, is that Mabuza, with Thatcher's attitude in mind, chose not to emphasise the importance of the ANC in their meeting fearing it might lead to her adopting a negative view of him and affect their relationship going forward. In contrast to the more '*verkrampte*' Downing Street, the FCO was far more attuned to the importance of the ANC in any future dispensation, so Mabuza may have felt more confident sharing these views with officials from this ministry.[101] He did, however, indicate that he did not support the use of sanctions as he felt that ordinary Black South Africans would suffer most.

Mabuza's rising significance to the international community was demonstrated in his identification by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons groups as an important individual who it was worth meeting as part of their visit to South Africa in March 1986. At a luncheon at the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg, Mabuza again emphasised that 'the first priority must be the dismantling of apartheid' if violence in the

[97] Powell to Budd, 25 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Murray to Graham Archer, 28 November 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[100] Terry Curran to Graham Archer, 12 December 1985, TNA, FCO/105/2113.
[101] *Verkrampte* is an Afrikaans term which was used to describe the more reactionary right-wing elements in the ruling National Party.

country was to be brought to an end.[102] That July, Mabuza met British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe and was much more forthright in his emphasis on the importance of the ANC's involvement and the need to release Mandela than on his visit to Downing Street the previous year. This most likely stemmed from him having had positive talks with the ANC leadership in Lusaka in March 1986.[103] He also dismissed the commonly held notion which was perpetuated by Pretoria and its sympathisers that the ANC was a communist-dominated organisation. However, he warned that the longer the South African government took to enter into negotiations with the ANC, the more likely that it's younger more militant generation would be 'thrown into the arms of the SACP [South African Communist Party]'.[104] By this point, Howe himself appears to have become equally convinced of the importance of the ANC in any future negotiated settlement to bring apartheid to an end. Only ten days earlier he had made contact with Oliver Tambo, who replied in generally positive terms suggesting a continuation of contact between British officials and ANC exiles in Lusaka.[105] Mabuza was most likely well aware of this, so knew he could speak more frankly to Howe as he would be more receptive to such views than Thatcher.

Mabuza was more ambiguous about his views on sanctions in his meeting with Howe – perhaps as a result of his closer dealings with the ANC that advocated such measures as a means of fighting apartheid. While he did feel that certain sanctions should be deployed, care needed to be taken to ensure these hurt the South African government most rather than the Black majority. Indeed, this may well have stemmed from self-interest as he was concerned that KaNgwane was particularly vulnerable to the effect of sanctions owing to its dependence on mining and agriculture. He also claimed that he was concerned that if he advocated sanctions, it would be seen as a 'breach of faith' towards British firm Alfred McAlpine which had invested heavily in KaNgwane.

In October 1986, Jeffrey James, Counsellor and Head of Chancery at the British Embassy, attended the eighth annual Inyandza National Movement (INM) conference in KaNgwane. In addition to being the governing party in KaNgwane, the INM was also a cultural movement which sought to represent the interests of the entire Swazi community in South Africa, which was estimated to be 800,000 people. Karl Beck, a representative from the US Embassy who was said to have met Mabuza six times in the last year, was also present, while the French embassy was invited to send an official but declined. While Mabuza did tell James

[102] Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons: Contact with South African Government and Parliamentary Parties, March 1986, Commonwealth Secretariat Archives, London, 2017/042.
[103] D.J. White to British Embassy, Cape Town, 23 May 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[104] Summary of Meeting Between Secretary of State and Mr Enos Mabuza, British Embassy, Pretoria, 28 July 1986, TNA, FCO/105/2278.
[105] Tambo to Howe, 21 July 1986, Available at https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/letter-oliver-tambo-sir-geoffrey-howe-united-kingdom-secretary-state-foreign-and [Accessed 21 September 2023].

how much he had enjoyed his recent visit to London, this does show that Britain was not the only country courting Mabuza, or, it could be argued, being courted by him. Indeed, in 1984, Mabuza met Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and architect of the 'constructive engagement' policy, Dr Chester Crocker when he visited South Africa,[106] while United States Ambassador Edward J. Perkins had visited Mabuza in KaNgwane in early 1986.[107] Timothy Carney, US Counsellor for Political Affairs in Pretoria from 1983 to 1986, stated that Mabuza was a 'regular visitor' at 'both the ambassador's table and at various political officers' tables'.[108] Mabuza also maintained contact with Canadian officials and visited a number of Western European countries during his time 'in office' as well as making a trip to the Soviet Union in 1989.[109] These examples highlight Mabuza's skill in developing a network of influential contacts outside South Africa and shows that he was willing to engage with multiple 'big brothers' in an effort to gain material support for himself and his people.

As with British officials who had met him previously, James was impressed by Mabuza both for his oratory skills and style of leadership – in particular the fact that, despite being Inyandza's president he did not dominate proceedings. Mabuza also used his speech to thank James and Beck for the support KaNgwane had received from the US and UK embassies.[110] The issue of contact with the ANC was again brought up by Mabuza and 'was given by far the greatest weight' in his speech.[111] He reiterated, to the 'loudest applause' of the conference, that he was prepared to meet ANC representatives but gave no indication of what, if any, planning had been undertaken. James was surprised to learn of the level of violence in KaNgwane, which was usually one of the quieter homelands. In the recent unrest, 15 people had been killed by the security forces. The situation was now much quieter, something which James felt was down to 'the key conciliatory role' played by Mabuza. This highlights Mabuza's ability to walk the careful tightrope of appeasing both the South African authorities and those engaged in anti-apartheid activism in an effort to chart a peaceful path forward.

Mabuza was personally affected by the state's recent repressive measures as his daughter, who was studying at the University of the North in Lebowa, was detained for engaging in anti-apartheid protests.[112] While

[106] Mabuza to George Arthur Trail, Consul General of the USA, 6 February 1984, MPA, KNG, Different Letters II.
[107] Edward J. Perkins and Connie Cronley, *Mr Ambassador: Warrior for Peace* (Norman, 2012), p. 325.
[108] Daniel Whitman (eds), *Outsmarting Apartheid: An Oral History of South Africa's Cultural and Educational Exchange with the United States, 1960–1999* (Albany, 2014), p. 370.
[109] Speech by Mabuza to the KaNgwane Legislative Assembly, 9 May 1989, South African History Archive, Johannesburg, United Democratic Front Papers, AL 2431.
[110] Speech by Mabuza to the Eighth Annual Congress of the INM, 11 October 1986, Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, K. Jochelson Papers, A 2269.
[111] James to Moberly, 15 October 1986, TNA, FCO/105/2278.
[112] Ibid.

she was released from detention after three weeks, the university refused to allow her to undertake her final year exams for the BSc in Computer Science and Maths for which she was studying. Mabuza was able to, with the financial support of Standard Bank, arrange for her to take her exams in Stanford University in the United States.[113] Clearly, the business community in South Africa was also, to some degree, courting him.

While Mabuza may well have been cultivating relations with a number of Western officials, it is clear that contact with Britain was still important both for himself and the British embassy. In 1987, Sir Robin Renwick replaced Moberly as ambassador after personal intervention from Thatcher. Renwick had played an important role in the negotiations which brought the Rhodesia Crisis to an end in 1980, and it was hoped that he would take an equally proactive approach in South Africa. Because of this, Renwick was given considerable autonomy and is said to have been able to act like a nineteenth-century ambassador making decisions himself 'on the spot'.[114] Mabuza's importance to Britain is emphasised by the fact that Renwick invited him for lunch very early on in his ambassadorship and found him to be 'one of the two or three most impressive black leaders I have met so far in South Africa'.[115] Mabuza made a considerable impression on Renwick who would later state that he was a 'remarkable Chief Minister' who was 'trying to do something positive for his people'.[116]

The meeting took the usual format with Renwick enquiring about Mabuza's views on the ANC and the chances for a peaceful transfer of power in the country. However, the situation in KaNgwane had deteriorated owing to the number of Mozambican refugees escaping the civil war there. In light of this influx, Mabuza stated that he 'would welcome any help' from Britain.[117] Renwick proposed, therefore, to visit KaNgwane to ascertain what help could be provided through the embassy's small projects scheme. Two months later, Renwick urged the FCO to provide R100,000 (roughly £27,000) to Operation Hunger which was leading the aid efforts for Mozambican refugees in South Africa.[118] This proposal was received positively, and the aid was donated in January 1988.[119]

Mabuza visited the UK again in 1988 for a conference in Cambridge. He contacted Renwick and requested a meeting with Thatcher and FCO Secretary of State Lynda Chalker.[120] Mabuza had written to Thatcher the previous year to congratulate her on her election victory,[121] and in

[113] Colin Brant, Security Situation in South Africa, 15 January 1987, TNA, FCO/105/2672.
[114] Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, the Authorized Biography, Volume Three: Herself Alone* (London, 2019), p. 433.
[115] Renwick to Head of Chancery, Pretoria, 28 October 1987, TNA, FCO/105/2672.
[116] Renwick to Howe, 16 February 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3085.
[117] Renwick to Head of Chancery, 28 October 1987, TNA, FCO/105/2672.
[118] Renwick to FCO, December 1987, TNA, FCO/105/2672.
[119] Mabuza's Call on Secretary of State and Mrs Chalker, 1 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[120] Prendergast to Fairweather, 27 January 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[121] Mabuza to Thatcher, 17 June 1987, TNA, FCO/105/3073.

response she indicated that she would be happy to meet Mabuza again next time he was in the UK,[122] so there was an onus on Downing Street to make time for Mabuza. Kieran Prendergast, Head of the FCO Southern African Department, emphasised that Mabuza was an important contact, particularly as he had 'managed to keep onside' with both the South African government and the ANC. However, both he and Renwick felt that Mabuza would be satisfied with a meeting with Chalker alone, but Downing Street made time for him nonetheless.

The Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe and Chalker were pleased with their meeting with Mabuza, contending that he was 'a quietly impressive interlocutor'.[123] Mabuza provided useful insight into how British policy was perceived by most Black South Africans. While he was aware that London was against sanctions but also opposed apartheid, most South Africans, he argued, were more aware of the former than the latter. When asked what could be done to rectify this, Mabuza recommended to continue to press Pretoria to make concessions, possibly as part of a 'reciprocal gesture' for British opposition to sanctions. He also contended that more 'aid for self-help projects in black communities would help' Britain 'get the message through'.[124] Mabuza also told Howe that 'refugees were streaming in' from Mozambique and claimed that Pretoria was still providing assistance to RENAMO despite signing the Nkomati Accords in 1984 which had committed Mozambique to expel ANC exiles in return for South Africa withdrawing their support for the rebels. He even asked if it would be possible for Britain to establish monitoring at the border, but Howe argued that it was not possible for outsiders to be involved. Mabuza also praised Renwick who he saw as 'an effective and valued Ambassador' who the South African government 'listened to'.[125]

Thatcher had a similarly positive meeting with Mabuza to their previous encounter, during which she emphasised that she agreed on many of the things he said and could understand his unwillingness to enter into negotiations with the NP until Mandela was released. Mabuza again re-emphasised the issue over how British policy was perceived in South Africa – but blamed the connivance of the NP government for the focus being more on the UK's opposition to sanctions rather than its condemnation of apartheid.[126] Thatcher mentioned the possibility of giving an interview to a South African newspaper in an effort to get their true position across and Mabuza agreed that this would be a good step. He also suggested making a press release to publicise their meeting, and Downing Street duly obliged.[127] Whilst this could be used to reiterate Britain's opposition to sanctions, Mabuza also 'put it to good use' to

[122] Thatcher to Mabuza, 24 June 1987, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[123] Parker to Powell, 3 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[124] Call on the Secretary of State by Mabuza, 1 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Powell to Parker, 4 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[127] Meeting between the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Chief Enos Mabuza, TNA, FCO/105/3073.

publicise his meeting with such a high profile Western leader in an effort to safeguard his position against any efforts by Pretoria who 'would like to see him overturned'.[128] Mabuza thanked Thatcher for the aid that had already been provided to KaNgwane but, as with his meeting with Howe emphasised that due to the 'serious refugee problem', he 'would welcome any more assistance which could be provided'. He also re-iterated his belief that the South African government continued to provide support to RENAMO. Mabuza later claimed that this information had come from his brother who worked for the KaNgwane police.[129]

The FCO Southern Africa Department liked 'the idea of an interview' which Mabuza and Thatcher had discussed and sought advice from British officials in South Africa on this and other aspects of the meeting.[130] Renwick was 'strongly in favour' of the interview and had highlighted the connections he had with the Black press in South Africa, having recently 'inspired' articles in the *Sowetan* and the *Weekly Mail*.[131] The following year Thatcher gave an interview to the *Sowetan* in which she attempted to justify Britain's opposition to sanctions as it did 'not want to see a future South African Government which really does represent the majority of South Africa inheriting a wasteland'.[132]

In response to Mabuza's request for more aid, Renwick highlighted the work that was already been done in KaNgwane to help Mozambican refugees but stated that 'one other small project' was due to start there next year in the form of help to a rural clinic.[133] He did, however, state that if 'you can extract an extra 50,000 pounds from the ODA [Overseas Development Administration, FCO], we could put it to good use there'. Renwick also commented on Mabuza's claim that Pretoria continued to provide aid to RENAMO. While Mabuza 'can produce no hard and fast evidence', Renwick believed that 'some assistance' was continuing but at 'much lower levels' that existed before the signing of the Nkompti Accords.

Later that month, Mabuza and Renwick lunched together in Pretoria. Mabuza was said to be 'delighted with his reception in London' and was impressed by how well informed the Prime Minister was on the situation in South Africa. Mabuza also told Renwick that he had also met leading ANC member Thabo Mbeki while in London with whom he had shared his fears that the South African government might intervene in the upcoming elections in KaNgwane in an effort to oust him and find a more malleable leader. In this context, Renwick agreed to visit KaNgwane in July to show 'solidarity and support'.[134]

[128] Renwick to FCO, 23 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Howe to British Embassy, Cape Town, 8 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[131] Renwick to FCO, 9 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[132] John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher Volume Two: Iron Lady* (London, 2003), p. 323.
[133] Renwick to FCO, 9 March 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[134] Ibid. While Renwick agreed to travel to KaNgwane in July, it did not take place until September. See Robin Renwick to Kieran Prendergast, 9 September 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.

Later that year, Mabuza re-iterated to Renwick that he would greatly appreciate a show 'of practical support' from Britain as he was 'concerned about his relations with the SAG [South African government] and their intentions towards him'.[135] Mabuza may well have been referring to information the ANC claimed to have uncovered regarding a plot by the South African government to support opposition groups to undertake a spate of ministerial assassinations in KaNgwane and replace Mabuza's administration with a 'puppet government'.[136]

This information was passed on to Renwick via the British High Commission in Lusaka, where the British Secret Intelligence Service had a number of operatives working in cover posts who maintained close contact with the ANC in exile.[137] Indeed, years later, Renwick revealed that he received messages of thanks for the support he offered Mabuza via the 'chief spook' in Lusaka who maintained close contact with the ANC in exile there.[138] After the visit, Mabuza thanked Renwick and claimed that his presence had 'given an indirect boost' to his re-election campaign.[139] There were positive write ups in the *Weekly Mail* and *City Press* which no doubt helped publicise Mabuza's links with Britain and solidified his position against potential interference by Pretoria.[140] Shaun Johnson's article in the *Weekly Mail* offered some particularly useful 'interpretations' of Renwick's motives in visiting KaNgwane and was circulated around the FCO,[141] suggesting that the Ambassador had again used his contacts in the media to disseminate British policy to the South African public. Johnson emphasised the 'highest regard' Britain viewed Mabuza and suggested that the visit 'went beyond fact finding' and was a demonstration of 'solidarity' from the British government.[142]

The British government continued to maintain contact with Mabuza, and he was invited to the Wilton Park Conference organised by the FCO in March 1989.[143] This meeting saw influential South Africans as well as British and Soviet representatives meet to discuss how to bring about a peaceful change in South Africa.[144] Mabuza also met privately with Chalker and yet again demonstrated his value as a useful

[135] Renwick to Prendergast, 9 September 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[136] John Wilson to Renwick, 13 September 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Michael Kandiah (eds), South Africa witness seminar: The role and functions of the British Embassy/High Commission in Pretoria: 1987–2013, Map Room, FCO, 26 November 2013, Available at https://issuu.com/fcohistorians/docs/fco736_witness_seminars_pretoria_v2/6 [Accessed 29 November 2023].
[139] Mabuza to Renwick, 20 September 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3073.
[140] Ibid.
[141] See handwritten notes on Shaun Johnson, 'Case study: KaNgwane: Inside the Belly of the Beast', *Weekly Mail*, September 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3017.
[142] Shaun Johnson, 'Case study: KaNgwane: Inside the Belly of the Beast', *Weekly Mail*, September 1988, TNA, FCO/105/3017.
[143] Prendergast to Chalker's Private Secretary, 6 March 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434; Mabuza to Renwick, 23 March 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.
[144] Mark Swilling and Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, 'Politics: Waiting for a negotiated settlement: South African in a changing world', *African Insight*, 19/3 (1989), p. 143.

source of information by preparing a note in advance to 'deal with a few current developments and trends in the South African political arena'.[145] In this briefing note, he emphasised how pleasing it was that the Namibian crisis appeared to be coming to an end and that it showed the South African government could 'sit down and talk' with people they previously considered to be 'Marxists' and 'terrorists'. He also recognised the important role the superpowers had played in providing pressure to both sides and felt that 'a similar exercise' could be 'extended to South Africa'. Mabuza also made reference to conversations between himself and Renwick contending that the two agreed that in the context of the ongoing state of emergency, and the apparent decline of hardliner President P.W. Botha, the time was right for 'the international community' and 'especially' the British government, 'to exert influence to promote meaningful change'. He went on to highlight that he felt the *verligte* wing of the NP was coming to the forefront of government and, while cautious, indicated that the party's new leader F.W. de Klerk was moving away 'from his normal conservatism to a more flexible and reasonable approach'.[146] In contrast to the fissures in the NP, Mabuza re-iterated his belief that the ANC was 'the vanguard liberation movement with which the South African government will have to come to terms'.

In the meeting itself, Mabuza offered more tacit approval for British policy of utilising positive measures in South Africa and maintaining lines of communication with the NP government. He reiterated, however, that as this gave Britain influence it needed to use it to put pressure on Pretoria to bring about change.[147] He also emphasised the need to bring the Mozambique civil war to an end as, despite the help Britain was offering, the influx of refugees into KaNgwane was costly for the territory. Linked to this, he alluded to his long-held suspicion that 'some elements' of the South African government still had 'influence with RENAMO', highlighting an alleged recent meeting between South African Foreign Secretary Pik Botha and RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama. On his return to South Africa, he wrote to Renwick to express his thanks for the opportunity to meet Chalker, who he stated was 'soothing to listen to' when analysing Southern Africa's problems and was 'very popular' there.[148]

In June 1989, Mabuza had another chance to assess the new NP leader when he was granted a meeting with de Klerk in June 1989, an account of which he subsequently shared with James Poston, Head of Mission at the British Embassy.[149] While Mabuza described de Klerk as 'at pains to explain in great length' and 'tied to the concepts of ''own'' and ''group

[145] Mabuza, Topical briefing of the current situation in South Africa, 2 March 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.
[146] Ibid. *Verligte* is an Afrikaans term which was used to describe the more liberal elements of the NP literally meaning 'enlightened'.
[147] Prendergast to Renwick, 8 March 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.
[148] Mabuza to Renwick, 23 March 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.
[149] James Poston to FCO, 13 June 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.

affairs" he conceded that black aspirations had to be accommodated'.[150] Mabuza stated that de Klerk 'agreed in principle' to the repeal of key apartheid legislation including the population registration, group areas, and the separate amenities acts but that he feared it would 'lead to chaos'. While de Klerk 'evaded' questions relating to external facilitators and brokers he asked Mabuza, having noticed a photograph of him with Margaret Thatcher, what the Prime Minister was like, to which Mabuza stated that she was 'well informed, was amicable and charming'.[151] This is a view de Klerk would go on to share as he regularly defended Thatcher's policy towards South Africa claiming that she was a 'friend' of the country but a critic of apartheid.[152]

As has been mentioned previously British officials were not the only foreign power taking an interest in Mabuza. However, Britain does appear to have been one of his most important external allies, and prior to a visit to Washington in October 1989, Mabuza contacted Renwick to inform him that he intended to travel to the United States via London and to ask for 'suggestions for any meetings you would deem expedient or necessary for me to hold with members of Her Majesty's Government'.[153] Meetings were duly arranged with Chalker and FCO Minister of State William Waldegrave.[154] Mabuza also met Thatcher again alongside Helen Suzman and Frederik van Zyl Slabbert who had previously been two of the few anti-apartheid voices in South Africa's White parliament, where they had represented the Progressive Federal Party (PFP).[155] In 1986, van Zyl Slabbert had resigned as PFP leader and as a Member of Parliament as he believed the institution had become an irrelevance owing to the dictatorial rule of President P. W. Botha. However, in the years since he had played a leading role in arranging informal talks between the ANC and influential White South Africans.

Thatcher told the visiting delegation that she was concerned that her policy of 'constructive engagement' which ruled out sanctions would be attacked at the forthcoming Commonwealth summit in Kuala Lumpur so she needed 'a sign that Mr de Klerk is sincere in his commitment to a new South Africa'. On 10 October, de Klerk did exactly that when he released eight senior ANC members including Walter Sisulu and Ahmed

[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid. It is worth noting that this was quite different from the reaction of P.W. Botha who, according to his Principle Private Secretary Leo 'Rusty' Evans, was 'irritated' by such images of Mabuza and Buthelezi with world leaders 'when he himself was not a welcome visitor in the capitals of Europe'. See Salmon and Jewitt, *The Unwinding of Apartheid*, p. 254.
[152] 'De Klerk Hails Thatcher as Visionary', *Mail & Guardian*, 16 April 2013, Available at https://mg.co.za/article/2013-04-16-de-klerk-hails-thatcher-as-visionary/ [Accessed 29 November 2023].
[153] Mabuza to Renwick, 4 July 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.
[154] Renwick to FCO, 26 September 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.
[155] Minutes of an informal cabinet meeting, 5 October 1989, MPA, KNG, 3/1/1 Cabinet Informal Meetings.

Kathrada – key members of Mandela's inner circle.[156] While it cannot be stated categorically, it is plausible that the three South African visitors relayed Thatcher's message to de Klerk and influenced the timing of this decision.

Mabuza's admiration for the UK is also exemplified in his desire to send his son Sandile there for one year of schooling as he wanted him to 'gain experience of the British education system'.[157] However, school and boarding fees at Perse School, Cambridge, where Mabuza wanted to send Sandile owing to its close proximity to a family friend, were far more than the £1000 he could afford. The Headmaster of the School made some concessions but contacted the FCO to enquire whether the shortfall of £4000 could be paid by some form of government scholarship. The FCO approached Nicky Oppenheimer of Anglo-American, one of South Africa's biggest businesses, who 'readily agreed that we should find some means of supporting Sandile's attendance'.[158] While purely conjecture, it is hard to imagine someone of Mabuza's intelligence and connections would not have known the fees were considerably more than he was able to pay but made contact in the hope that such an outcome would be reached with outside support.

Prior to travelling to London in October, Mabuza had visited Lusaka again and met ANC representatives, whom he claims to have urged to enter negotiations and to bring the ongoing violence between ANC/United Democratic Front and Inkatha supporters in Natal to an end. Mabuza informed Renwick that Thabo Mbeki was 'interested in the prospect of negotiations' but did not believe either side would be willing to enter these for 'some time'. He also believed that the ANC attitude towards Buthelezi was softening. He added 'in confidence' that Lord Brentford had arranged for Mabuza alongside Professor Esterhuyse and Wimpie de Klerk (F.W. de Klerk's brother) to meet Mbeki in London in October.

Mabuza maintained contact with the ANC both inside and outside South Africa and kept Renwick abreast of any developments. He had two meetings with Walter Sisulu, Chairperson of the ANC's internal wing, shortly after his release from prison and claimed to be doing his utmost to 'engineer a meeting' between Sisulu and Buthelezi. He had also unsuccessfully applied for permission from the government to meet Mandela in prison and vowed to apply again, something Renwick 'urged him to do'.[159] In these very tense and violent years, Mabuza appeared to

[156] Colin Darch, 'Apartheid South Africa and the peace processes of 1988–1989 in the Southern African Region: Did the leopard change its spots?', in Miroliubie i mirotvorchestvo v Afrike: sbornik statei k 90-letiiu akademika Apollon Borisovich Davidson (Moscow: Izdat, Ves' Mir, 2019), pp. 236–7. Available at https://www.academia.edu/41680151/Apartheid_South_Africa_and_the_peace_processes_of_1988_1989_in_the_Southern_African_region_did_the_leopard_change_its_spots [Accessed 29 November 2023].

[157] T.J. Andrews to John Sawers, 6 October 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.

[158] Fleur de Villiers to Dales, 31 July 1990, TNA, FCO/105/3434.

[159] Renwick to FCO, 11 December 1989, TNA, FCO/105/3434.

genuinely try and act as an honest broker, attempting to bring together all of the various Black leaders in an effort to bring about a peaceful end to apartheid. He also hosted Mandela in KaNgwane in August 1990 when the ANC leader was in need for respite after the exhausting schedule which had followed his release from prison that February.[160]

While also working on promoting dialogue between all sides in the conflict Mabuza was also thinking ahead to how best he could contribute (and benefit from) life in post-apartheid South Africa. In this context, he decided to take a break from his day-to-day demands as Chief Minister to educate himself on the range of issues facing South Africa. To facilitate this, he approached the British Embassy to enquire if he could be attached to a university in the UK for a month.[161] The FCO was very receptive, and he was offered a Helen Suzman Leadership Award to fund his airfare and a month's stay in the UK where he would be attached to the London School of Economics in January 1991. While in the UK, he met Waldegrave and Chalker again; however, a pre-arranged meeting with the Prime Minister was cancelled owing to Thatcher being replaced by John Major, who did not have a pre-existing relationship with Mabuza.

Shortly after returning to South Africa, Mabuza made the surprise decision to resign as KaNgwane Chief Minister and President of the Inyandza National Movement.[162] He subsequently entered the world of business, profiting, in particular, from appointments to the boards of a number of White-owned businesses that needed to be seen to offering opportunities for Black South Africans in the transition and early post-apartheid years.[163] To these businesses, Mabuza, a moderate, pro-capitalist leader, was the perfect partner. In 1997, only three years after South Africa's first democratic elections, Mabuza died of prostate cancer aged just 58. While he did not have time to achieve what he was no doubt capable of both in business and politics, he did play an important role in the latter years of apartheid in facilitating contact between all sides and promoting a peaceful transfer of power. While viewed a 'stooge' by some sections of the liberation movement for working within the system of grand apartheid as KaNgwane Chief Minister, leading members of the ANC have since recognised his contribution to the struggle and referred to him as a 'comrade' at a special symposium organised in his honour in April 2005.[164]

IV

In demonstrating the degree of autonomy and agency Mabuza had as KaNgwane Chief Minister, this article adds to the scholarship spearheaded by Ally and Lissoni which challenges the notion that the

[160] Renwick, *The End of Apartheid*, p. 145.
[161] Sawers to W.L. Radford, 3 July 1990, TNA, FCO/105/3748.
[162] Sarimana, 'Trials and triumphs', p. 11.
[163] Ibid., pp. 314–24.
[164] Ibid, p. 388.

homeland leaders were all stooges working on Pretoria's behalf. While existing scholarship has focussed mainly on the domestic impact of this agency, this article shines new light on how Mabuza managed to develop a network of international contacts. This topic requires greater research as there were other homeland leaders willing to act autonomously in their efforts to develop international contacts.

This article also highlights how increasingly British policymakers prioritised contact with influential Black South Africans who it was believed would take up important roles in post-apartheid South Africa. Mabuza was one of many Black South African leaders who Britain and other Western nations courted during the latter years of apartheid. Similar efforts were put into forging contact with the likes of Buthelezi, Lebowa Chief Minister Cedric Phatudi, and leading trade unionists such as Phiroshaw Camay and Cyril Ramaphosa.[165] As this article has demonstrated, further research is needed into the nature of these relations as it can offer an illuminating insight into the parallels between the actions of British policymakers towards South Africa in the final years of apartheid and their predecessors who attempted to develop good relations with moderate nationalists during the decolonisation era.

While Mabuza did not live long enough to achieve the heights of some of his contemporaries, he proved to be a particularly useful contact owing to the lines of communication he maintained with most key factions in the country. He was also a key source of information who kept the British Embassy well abreast of developments both within South Africa and outside it owing to his contacts with the ANC in exile and KaNgwane's proximity to Mozambique.

While Mabuza was undoubtedly a valuable contact of Britain, he also gained considerably from this relationship. By maintaining well-publicised contact with the West, Mabuza could shield himself from potential interference by Pretoria. Additionally, it gave him access to important resources which helped him improve the position of the people he represented and navigate the challenges posed by the Mozambican refugee crisis. To maximise the benefit of this, Mabuza appears to have tailored his analysis and requests depending on his audience. Similarly, he was also able to derive personal benefits, including help with his son's school fees while boarding in the UK, and a sponsored study visit of his own to the UK in 1991. It is clear, therefore, that this was a mutually beneficial relationship which helped Mabuza, and the KaNgwane people more broadly, as much as it helped the UK meet its foreign policy objectives.

PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at https://publons.com/publon/10.1111/1468-229X.13418.

[165] This is discussed extensively in Feather, *British Cultural Diplomacy*, ch. 4.