

*Review*

# “Locking- in” Liberal democracy in South Africa, explaining democratization through an alternative perspective

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As the state of South Africa transitioned from Apartheid and into democracy in 1994, many speculated whether South Africa’s democratic experiment would last beyond the initial presidency of then-President Nelson Mandela; fortunately democracy has appeared to have taken rather resilient roots since its inception. However such a development begs the question as to how can South African democratic successes is explained. In this analysis the theory of republican liberalism is introduced, with its propositions regarding the balancing of foreign and domestic interests, as well as the “locking-in” of democratic regimes via international institutions. This paper will explain South African democratization within the purview of republican liberalism, and illustrate not only the explanatory ability of republican liberalism towards the transitioning state of South Africa in 1994, but also exhibit the ability of republican liberalism to be applied in future democratic-theory research.

**Key words:** South Africa, democratization, apartheid, republican liberalism, institutionalism.

## INTRODUCTION

As the state of South Africa emerged from the institutions of Apartheid in 1994 and into the realm of democratic transition, many speculations arose regarding the future and outlook of the Sub-Saharan state. Some theorists speculated about whether South Africa would disintegrate into violence and fragment into regional polities; others pondered whether South Africa, as a new democracy, would follow the pattern of other “democratized” African states and regress into an authoritarian type of regime, as witnessed in Sub-Saharan states like Ethiopia and the Congo. Still others feared that a democratizing South Africa would be unable to cope with the economic and societal implications of a newly enfranchised voting class, and regress back into the Apartheid system (Lyman, 2007).

History has shown that none of these dark scenarios ever came to fruition; today, South Africa continues its democratic development and consolidation both into a universally accepted democracy, and as an archetype for other states to model. Through the period of democratization, however, it is remarkable that South Africa emerged from its Apartheid legacy into a democratic regime relatively unscathed, especially in comparison to the experiences of so many other Sub-Saharan states re-

garding their transitions to democracy. What made South Africa so distinct in its process of democratic transition, so that it was able to overcome the regional tendencies of societal degradation and authoritarian regression? Through the course of this paper it is the intent to answer this question through an examination of various theories of international relations. Through this examination, one particular theory will be highlighted for its contribution towards explaining South African state behavior during its post-Apartheid/democratic transition period. The theory of “republican liberalism,” including its hypotheses linking domestic regime survival and external state interest, will be the focus of this paper, in particular how the state of South Africa utilized the international environment to pre-serve its democratic status and prevent authoritarian regression (Moravcsik, 2000). By binding itself to international institutions predicated upon democratic ideals, the state of South Africa appeared able to ensure both its legitimacy as a democratically reformed state, and its survival as a democratic state for future governments.

This paper will be divided into four main areas of discussion, beginning with a general review of neoliberalism. The result of this study revealed that the QHMs concen-

trations in the tissues of fish species analysed, theory with emphasis upon the predominant influences of republican liberalism. The subsequent section will move into a discussion specifically explicating republican liberalism, including what the theory proposes and advances regarding state behavior and motivations. The third section of this paper will briefly review how alternative theories of international relations fail to accurately explain the behavior of South Africa, both within domestic and theoretical paradigms. The final section of this paper will then conclude with reassessing the theory of republican liberalism within the context of the South African case, in order to obtain a fruitful set of conclusions regarding how the theory of republican liberalism best explains the international behavior of newly democratic regimes.

### **Neoliberalism and the republican liberal link**

In order to best explain the concept of republican liberalism and its application within the field of international relations we must first highlight the roots of republican liberalism's theoretical framework, in order that we may ascertain the role and roots of this theory. While it may be argued that republican liberalism incorporates many different theories from various paradigmatic backgrounds neoliberalism, with its emphasis on institutionalism, rationality, and the importance of domestic politics and actors, appears as the most-suited origin for explaining republican liberalism. In this section we will highlight the link between neoliberalism and republican liberalism, through showing how neoliberalism provides the best basis (regarding concepts of rationalism, power, and institutions) from which we will be able to make our sojourn into a more specific discussion of republican liberal theory.

Beginning with the core characteristics of neoliberalism we first highlight the notions of power, anarchy, and rationality of states; like other theories, neoliberalism shares its philosophical foundations within realism, particularly regarding the core tenets of realist philosophy (Baldwin, 1993). The concept of power, including both its definition and application, provides the basis for our discussion as it is from power that states tend to derive their interests and behaviors, with respect to one another.

Despite variance regarding the concept of power and views of how states tailor their interests in acquiring and employing power to their benefit, there nonetheless remain certain characteristics from which all paradigms of neoliberalism can agree upon; the definition of power that would appear to be the most fundamental and most often adapted emerges from Hans Morgenthau's definition of power as "A Means to the Nation's Ends" (Morgenthau, 1993). From this brief distinction we can characterize power as being both the political and material capabilities of the state employed in activities that are designed to further the interests of the state. Contemporary neoliberal distinctions of power emulate Morgenthau's statement, stating "Power can be thought of as the ability of an actor

to get others to do something they otherwise would not do..." (Keohane and Nye, 2001) Ironically within this context, it is the pursuit of more power that often occurs as the primary interest of states, forcing the state into a cyclical habit of collecting and spending power that appears to be without end. As such, as states pursue their interests of power they consequently compel other states within the international system to compete for power, thus shaping the system into a competitive world of winners and losers, as well as a world of fear. As Mearsheimer states, "Fear among great powers derives from the fact that they invariably have some offensive military capability that they can use against each other...Specifically, the more power a state possesses, the more fear it generates among its rivals" (2001).

Such concerns of fear and power further elucidate themselves when we regard the notion of anarchy, or lack of central authority, within the international system; the concept of anarchy exists within both realism and neoliberalism as there is no "...night watchman to whom they [states] can turn to help..." (Mearsheimer, 2001). Anarchy exists within neoliberal theory upon the similar principles of realism, in that anarchy provides further influence upon state behavior, beyond ambitions of power, so that as states act they do so in either offensive or defensive manners to prevent other states from succeeding in their own separate pursuits of power-based interest. Combining such concerns of power and anarchy, with the notion of positive-sum games, creates the primary motives behind state actions and behavior from which neoliberalism can advance beyond the confines of realism to explain international behavior in further detail (Keohane, 1993; Keohane and Martin, 1995).

However, before we can advance into the details of neoliberal theory we must address the third principle of neoliberalism regarding the nature of states acting in rational and unitary manners, in that states, operating as distinct and whole units within the international system, will naturally conduct themselves within the auspices of rationality and prudence. While states may act within interests of power attainment, they will do so in ways that will preserve their current power status and minimize the likelihood of the state being in a worse position than when it commenced its original activities. In other words, state actions become prefaced with a cost-versus-benefits scenario, in which states will rationally opt for actions that maximize benefits while minimizing losses to its personal resources. State rationality, derived from classical realism, is echoed from Morgenthau's description of state behavior regarding "...prudence - the weighing of the consequences of alternative political actions - to be the supreme virtue in politics" (1993). Neoliberalism consciously adapts these connotations in regards to the classic "Prisoner's Dilemma," where states tend to opt out of cooperation for satisfaction of short-term interests (Lipson, 1993).

At this point we have described the primary characteris-

tics linking together the key associations of neoliberal theory, from which republican liberalism emerges. Through discussion of the connotations of power, anarchy, and rationality we are now able to move onto more detailed descriptions accounting for the neoliberal/ republican liberal link. The following sections will highlight three particular neoliberal variances which have played a rather significant influence upon republican liberal development: 1) collective security, 2) democratic peace theory, and 3) institutionalism. While neoliberalism contains many of the same characteristics of traditional realist theory, regarding power, fear, and conflict, neoliberalism in its application progresses beyond realism in its theories of achieving interstate cooperation and concord amongst all states (or at least a subset of democratic and/or capitalist states) within the international system (Keohane, 1993). Through discussion of these various theories (as will be discussed below), it is hoped that one will understand the nature and mechanics of how such assertions may be validated.

Beginning with the theory of collective security, states within this type of system engage themselves into separate micro-systems whereby each state participating within the system pledges its defense and support for other members of the system against any aggressors that each participant state may encounter. In other words the idea behind the collective security proposition is that states align with one another into agreements of mutual security, where any threats against one state inside the security arrangement become a threat to all the states in the system; this type of arrangement, according to proponents of the theory, enables states to not only assuage certain fears regarding external threats, but collective security also allows states to instill a sense of trust among themselves and to develop sincere cooperation with one another in these types of security systems (Kupchan and Kupchan, 1995). What results from collective security is that as states within the international system band together creating separate security institutions the likelihood of conflict will be expected to lessen, as in doing so would ultimately force states into massive interstate conflicts with associated massive costs and injuries to the state. As a result of this system the expected primary and rational means for interstate conflict-resolution would be to resolve such differences through cooperative and collaborative action. We will see such principles of collective security in action, through the relationship with republican liberalism, when we examine how the theory of republican liberalism incorporates notions of collective security and defense for newly democratizing states, including both support for external human rights regimes and the democratic internal state apparatus.

Within the field of neoliberal theory there also resides the theory of the "democratic peace," and the relationship between the pacific natures of democracies when placed in opposing positions against one another. Democratic

peace theory begins with the premise that democratic regimes within the international system are distinct, in that through their common institutions democracies exhibit certain tendencies and behaviors that stand as distinct in comparison to other non-democratic states. The first noted behavior within this purview is that democracies tend to not engage in armed conflicts with one another, if ever, for the justifications that through the democratic apparatuses instituted within such states, democracies will be more reluctant in acting hastily through the necessities of garnering public support to engage their respective militaries against one another (Russett, 1996). By democratic states and their respective governing executives being accountable to their own voting populations democracies will therefore be required to muster the public will towards military engagement with other states, particularly other democratic states. In addition to the structural restraints imposed upon democratic state action are the institutions inherently established in democracies that provide the appropriate avenues for interstate conflict resolution, such as bureaucratic and parliamentary institutions that tend to be more open and transparent (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999).

Conversely, the opposite of the above statement holds theoretically true as well, being that democratic states will be just as likely as non-democratic states to engage in armed conflicts against non-democratic regimes. In other words, democratic states will be more likely to fight non-democratic states for cognizance of non-democratic regimes being capable of engaging militarily without the traditional democratic restraints (Russett, 1996). Through justifications of being suspicious against countries that, "...are in a state of aggression with their own people, their foreign relations become for liberal governments deeply suspect. In short, fellow liberals benefit from a presumption of amity; nonliberals suffer from a presumption of enmity" (Doyle, 1986). With these presumptions democracies are expected to behave with rather defensive gestures against nondemocracies, including actions such as defensive wars against non-democratic states.

Aside from notions of democratic pacifism and non-democratic aggression, democratic peace theory also postulates the notion of democracies sharing a certain degree of affinity with one another, creating an implicit association of democratic states within the international system (Russett, 1993). Operating under the auspices of the two previously discussed characteristics, regarding democratic pacifism and non-democratic aggression, it will inherently be in the interest of democracies to promote the propagation of other democracies in the international system. The logic of such interest derives from the awareness that not only would the quantitative increase of democratic regimes decrease the chances of such states warring with other established democracies, but doing so would create an understood arrangement of familiarity as each democracy would inherently recognize the institutional similarities between themselves, thus

advancing interstate relations in a positive course.

Normatively, this behavior would hold true as well regarding the methods in which democratic ideals advance themselves in an existential and ontological manner above other non-democratic governing systems (Russett, 1993).

Democratic peace theory, in its relation to neoliberalism and republican liberalism, plays a prominent role in providing insight to the republican liberal paradigm, particularly regarding democratic familiarity and support. As we advance further into the association between neoliberal theory and republican liberalism, we hope to further elucidate the nature of this theory, both regarding its theoretical derivations and its explanatory applicability within the South African case.

The theory of institutionalism, and how international institutions can be the most effective instrument in containing and stabilizing state behavior, arrives as the next variant of neoliberal theory that we will briefly examine (concerning its republican liberal link). Adhering to the neoliberal objective of achieving cooperation in spite of anarchy, institutionalism proposes that states engaged within institutional arrangements may be able to overcome the realist tendencies of distrust and fear by entering into formal and institutional agreements with one another (Keohane and Martin, 1995).

The primary premise behind the theory of institutionalism is that institutions, be they formal international organizations or other informal means, such as international treaties or traditions, are able to shape, influence, and constrain state behavior. The process and logic for such a proposition follows that states, operating out of self-interest and rationality, will tend to opt for the situations and opportunities that will maximize the benefits and gains for each particular state. Where international institutions enter this scenario is in institutions being the most effective mechanism for states to achieve such stated goals.

Institutions, often created out of necessity and out of specifically satisfying certain international concerns, are regarded as being the most efficient means for reconciling and conducting various international affairs (Russett and Oneal, 2001). As such, institutions may be considered enticing for states to engage with, as institutions will be the most cost-effective means for states to gain the most benefits while simultaneously expending minimal costs for conducting their activities within the international environment.

As institutions are able to entice states into participation they are further able to promote long-term participation through mitigating fears of cheating and distrust among states. Institutionalist theory holds that institutions, with their various rules and terms, are able to promote cooperation among participating states by creating pseudo-microcosms of the international environment, in which institutions can mitigate the problems of anarchy by acting as the chief enforcement mechanism to prevent

other states from cheating or free-riding. Either from instituting rules designed to prevent cynicism within the system, from providing bargaining resources and information about actors' behavior, or from allowing participating states to ostracize deviant states, international institutions are able to allow states to engage in cooperative relations that both satisfy each state's desires to maximize their interests and their desires to prevent other states from cheating (Keohane and Martin, 1995).

At this point we have discussed the various characteristics laying at the core of neoliberal theory, while incorporating the various paradigms of collective security, democratic peace theory, and institutionalism into this conversation. While not intended solely as a neoliberal literature review, it is rather the intent to exhibit the origin(s) of republican liberalism so that one may better understand state behavior within the contexts of collective security, democratic peace, and institutionalism. One final characteristic regarding all the theories highlighted that has yet to be discussed regards the matter of overcoming the cooperation-dilemma posited from classic and contemporary realist theory, specifically the matter of states never being capable of acting in cooperative relations with one another out of fears of anarchy and betrayal from other states. What neoliberalism provides as an advancement beyond the realist limitation of international relations is that while states may act with self-regard to their own interests, through the methods and theories described above, states may in fact be able to overcome such tendencies of fear through cooperating in profitable and self-sustaining relations, vis-à-vis external institutions, which can provide both the avenues and controlled environments by which states may be able to employ in their pursuits of interest. It is through this optimistic outlook that we may be able to engage our discussion towards incorporating what we have discussed, up to this point, with what we will discuss next regarding the characteristics of republican liberalism. It is hoped that as we have driven this discussion from a broad description of neoliberal theory and its various highlighted subsets, we will be able to narrow our theoretical discussion into a detailed description of republican liberalism, thus being able to arrive at the point at which we will be able to answer our original question regarding the motivations and basis of South African democratization.

## **Republican liberalism**

What is it that motivates state behavior? Is it power, the ability to act with sovereignty, or is it the desire to simply survive within the international system? These motivations and many others lie within the confines of explaining the theory of republican liberalism, as well as explaining how the theory interprets state behavior. In this section we will highlight the theory of republican liberalism through discussing how the theory both bridges a gap

between contemporary realist and idealist propositions, and in how the theory reincorporates the state and domestic politics into its theoretical paradigm.

As we begin our discussion regarding republican liberalism we first introduce what the primary motivations are behind this theory. As many contemporary international relations theories share their roots within classical realist philosophy, so too does republican liberalism in sharing its interests of power, sovereignty, and survival. Beginning with the shared interest of power, this translates into the assumption that all states share the goal of maximizing their national interests in the most logical and rational manner. For theorists, such as Morgenthau, "The concept of interest defined as power imposes intellectual discipline upon the observer, infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible" (Morgenthau, 1993). This tenet of rationality in acquiring national interests becomes shared by republican liberalist proponents as advocates such as Moravcsik assert that "...republican liberal theories assume that states are self-interested and rational in their pursuit of (varying) underlying national interests" (Moravcsik, 2000).

As power and interest find themselves intertwined between republican liberalist origins and other contemporary theoretical ideologies the next assumption, regarding the primacy of state survival, arrives as the next topic of brief discussion. Republican liberalism, much like its neoliberal and realist counterparts, agrees that state survival and perpetuation remain as key motivations influencing state behavior. Throughout both neoliberal and neorealist assumptions of the state both ideologies agree that state survival (and security) remain as high priorities within the decision-making processes of states. Republican liberalism shares this motivation as well, with regard to states within this paradigm "locking" themselves into institutional arrangements designed to both validate and perpetuate the existing state apparatus (as will be discussed in further detail).

The last issue of consideration in discussing the key assumptions of this paradigm regards the concept of state sovereignty and how sovereignty stands as a key interest of states within the international system. Within this model Moravcsik observes, "All other things equal, governments in power prefer to maintain short-term discretion to shape collective behavior or redistribute wealth as they see fit" (Moravcsik, 2000). In other words states and their respective governments prefer to retain their abilities to act as they choose (a near complete definition of sovereignty, according to Oxford American Dictionary). Without retaining the ability to act as one so desires states thus lose one of their primary definitions of themselves and thus become threatened with losing their identity and existence altogether.

These three assumptions regarding state power and interest, state survival, and state sovereignty arrive as the springboard from which we will be able to continue our

discussion of republican liberalism into a more in-depth analysis. By expanding this conversation from such familiar factors as described above, it is hoped that we will be able to build upon these factors and elucidate both what this approach describes theoretically, and how it applies to describing state behavior.

Where republican liberalism begins to take its own approach to international relations and state behavior is in regards to the ways in which democracies, specifically newly-established democracies, behave within the international system. Operating within certain confines of democratic peace theory, namely that democratic regimes are rationally desirable over non-democratic regimes and that democracies advocate for the creation of more democracies, republican liberalism adopts and adapts these specific characterizations in framing the theoretical context of democratic behavior. As states become newly democratized a key consideration for both the executives of the state and other democracies within the system is the continuation and longevity of the newly democratized state. What becomes apparent (and assumed) is that a key interest of state leaders is to perpetuate the democratic regime that has been newly instituted. In doing so newly democratized states will be more likely to look outward, not inward, when searching for solutions to mitigate the chances of domestic competitors reverting the state back into a non-democratic regime.

As a newly established democracy searches for solutions to this dilemma republican liberalism posits that these types of states will look to international institutions, with their associated policies and binding agreements, in order to most effectively retain their democratic regimes. It is within international institutions, particularly within institutions predicated upon normative values similar to universal democratic ideals, that newly democratic states will best be able to safeguard themselves against domestic threats desiring to undermine the newly established democratic system. Through this type of outlet states turn to the binding nature of international institutions in order to lock themselves into democratic consolidation. In this sense states willingly allow themselves to be tied within international institutions and agreements, in order that the adjudicating bodies or states comprising the enforcement of the institution may assist the democratizing state regime in "locking-in" its domestic hold on power.

However at this point we reach a significant conflict, in that by newly democratizing states binding themselves into international institutions and arrangements, republican liberalism finds itself at risk of violating a key tenet of international relations theory: voluntary sacrifice of sovereignty. Yet the logic of such activities of democratizing states holds true when the rationality of such action is analyzed; for a democratizing state containing a political plurality it can be expected for rivals of the current regime to exist and compete for domination over the state

apparatus. For such conditions present within a democratizing country the threat of democratic regression remains always present, and as such, the executives and proponents of the democratic regime must weigh the costs and benefits between political sovereignty and political survival (the opportunity to win future elections on clear and impartial terms).

Through this type of comparison the benefits of political stability and perpetuation may outweigh the cost of relinquishing sovereign discretion should an institutional arrangement aid in guaranteeing the survival of the democratic regime. This sort of action is not new within politics, as this presumption draws upon similar theories explaining domestic activities of sub-state actors. Scholars such as Terry Moe (1990), state that "...most political institutions...arise out of a politics of structural choice in which the winners use their temporary hold on public authority to design new structures and impose them on the polity as a whole...[Institutions are] weapons of coercion and redistribution...the structural means by which political winners pursue their own interests, often at the expense of political losers" (Moe, 1990). The theory of republican liberalism builds upon this supposition by expanding the proposition into the international realm, where states may employ international institutions not only as tools of acquiring material-based national interests, but also in garnering such ostensibly normative interests as "democratic legitimacy" and "rule of law" for personal and/or partisan purposes.

Yet despite the proposition and justification of newly democratizing states associating themselves with international institutions, by what mechanisms can international institutions aid democratizing states in their pursuits of political perpetuation? The solution arises from two particular properties of international institutions: participatory self-reinforcement and international adjudication. As previously stated regarding institutionalist theory, states operating within an international arrangement may functionally be able to perpetuate the union of the institution by each member state effectively dissuading other states from cheating within the institution (through examples offered in the previous section). Regarding a context of democratization it would be beneficial for newly-democratic states to engage in institutions predicated upon democratic norms so that not only will the newly democratizing state be able to benefit from the particular arrangements of the institution, the state democratic regime will also be reinforced through the self-preserving/participatory mechanisms that institutions, and their comprising states, may bear.

The other significant mechanism that democratizing states will find as an incentive within international institutions are the judicial processes that aim to bring both assurance and legitimacy to participating states within an institutional arrangement. The benefits of relegating one's state to an international, independent body of adjudica-

tors is that such a body may be able to not only preserve democratic norms by enacting preliminary rulings and verdicts in defense of such norms, but the perceived legitimacy of such courts and bodies may enable democratizing states to garner both international attention and support for one's democratic regime. In regards to such mechanisms of adjudication, Moravcsik observes that, "...governments seek to establish reliable judicial constraints on future non-democratic governments or on democratically elected governments that may seek (as in interwar Italy and Germany) to subvert democracy from within...Salient and symbolic international constraints serve as signals to trigger domestic, and perhaps also transnational and international, opposition to any breach of the democratic order" (2000). While international adjudication may not directly serve the needs of democratizing states as being a material force for democratic preservation, the value and legitimacy placed upon the adjudication processes by conventional democratic norms may serve as a particular "rallying cry" for democratizing states in times of particular instability, thus enabling the benefits of institutional binding to come to fruition for democratizing states.

The particular type of international institution that a democratizing state seeks bears significance as well, according to this model, as states that seek domestic security from potential non-democratic domestic threats will tend to seek out institutions predicated upon democratic norms and ideals. Institutions such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) will most likely be the institutions that democratizing states will seek, as these types of institutions all share common norms regarding human rights and democratic ideals. Even a security institution such as NATO would be enticing for newly-democratized states as this type of institution (and other similar institutions) would contain provisions conducive to democratic stability (Waterman et-al, 2002). For such states seeking these institutions the rationality follows that these types of institutions and the states participating within these arrangements will logically be most likely to bolster support for democratizing states within their own system, as doing so would perpetuate the norms of conventional democratic identities and values.

There is however a certain twist regarding the republican liberal purview of institutional security and support for democratizing states, and it is in regards to the two-sided nature of institutional espousal: democratizing states will tend to be the most ardent supporters of such international institutions while established democracies will be less likely to involve themselves within these types of arrangements (Moravcsik, 2000). For established democracies there is no need to necessarily bind oneself to such institutions for domestic security, as democracy within these types of states is acutely consolidated; established democracies simply do not need to cede parts of their sovereignty to institutional hierarchy as these types

of institutions will not be as effective in establishing benefits for such member states as would be for democratizing states. Democratizing states will therefore tend to constitute the most ardent support for such institutions, as democratizing states will have the most to gain from participation.

Yet there is expected to be a duality of interests within established democracies, as established democracies will be reluctant to surrender power to international institutions but will support democratizing states within such organizations. Obviously states with established democracies will wish to deepen the “democratic peace” by spreading the proliferation of democratic regimes throughout the international environment, and such established democracies will find that they may gain significant influence and sway through establishing themselves (albeit reluctantly and limited) within such democratic-based institutions.

While it has not been explicitly stated up to this point it is important that we note the pluralistic nature of this approach, that is, the manner in which we presuppose the existence of competing interests and groups within the state apparatus. As previously stated republican liberalism explains the behavior of states in regards to competing substate interests, particularly those that wish to undermine democratization. This characteristic of substate interests and groups perhaps relegates this approach with a classic liberal paradigm, however as we have explored the various characteristics of republican liberalism we thus find that many of these traits both fall within and are better explained through a neoliberal context. It is thus our intent to situate this model within the neoliberal paradigm so that we may possess a better foundation from which we will be able to continue this analysis.

This concept of republican liberalism, while appearing complex at first glance, can be considered rather straight forward in terms of the interests that states pursue according to this paradigm. Throughout the course of this paper we have discussed both the main propositions of republican liberal theory, while categorizing this paradigm within its familial field of neoliberalism. Through this next section we will apply what we have discussed into a case analysis of South Africa during its transition period from Apartheid and into democracy; by relating the South African story within a previously unexplored context we will hopefully be able to not only explain South African behavior but also be able to further validate the propositions advanced through this paper.

### **South African democratization: Locking the door from the outside**

More than ten years have passed since the founding elections of South Africa as a universal democracy, and yet many scholars and analysts still find it astonishing and surprising that the South African state and its respec-

tive leaders were able to institute democracy without suffering mass civil strife and political regression. As we move into an analysis of South Africa's behavior during its democratic institutionalization we would like to discuss this issue particularly within the confines of republican liberalism that we have discussed previously. In this section we will delineate the case of South Africa into three main areas of discussion: 1) a republican liberal analysis of the motivations and reasons for international institutionalization, 2) a discussion and exhibition of South Africa behaving within this paradigm, particularly in regards to affiliating with human-rights based international institutions, and 3) an examination of the motivations causing the newly-democratized South Africa to actively promote such institutions, as well as the result of consolidating African National Congress (ANC) rule and the perpetuation of democracy, as would have been expected within the republican liberal paradigm. Through these main areas of discussion we hope that not only will we be able to elucidate certain behaviors of the South African state during its transition to democracy, we will also be able to test whether the theory of republican liberalism may contribute to the explanation of the South African case.

Beginning with motivations regarding both the domestic and international institutionalization of democracy of the South African state we must venture back to 1994 as the newly democratic state of South Africa and its respective leaders found themselves in positions they had previously found unfamiliar. For these newly installed leaders, such as then-President Nelson Mandela, a great burden had figuratively been placed onto their shoulders: with such a massive newly-enfranchised constituency bringing much support to the ANC political party, expectations for the newly-installed regime increased as well. Through the 1994 founding elections of South Africa approximately 86% of eligible voters turned out with the ANC receiving a rather large proportion of votes, at around 63% (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997). With such a substantial amount of support the newly elected ANC was then placed onto the political pedestal with the tasks of not only representing the democratic state of South Africa but also with the responsibilities of reforming the economic and domestic institutions that had long been considered adversarial to indigenous South Africans.

Economically, the South Africa that the ANC had inherited from the previous Apartheid regime had been considered to be in a precarious position, as problems of foreign debt, elevated inflation, and high levels of unemployment combined themselves with the ANC having the task of resolving such issues within its first administration (Lyman, 2007). With such dilemmas immediately facing the ANC -led regime, it became apparent that not only would the ANC need to find immediate solutions to these issues, but more importantly it would need to prevent such frustrations from escalating into potential civil unrest and even regression into a non-

democratic/authoritarian regime.

Ironically, such fears of democratic regression were not merely isolated to the ANC, they were also shared by the ousted National Party and former Apartheid supporters. For those of the former Apartheid regime such fears stemmed from possible punitive actions that could be taken against white society, including even measures of constitutional change that could place whites outside of the democratic realm. Within the ANC their leaders not only feared that they would be at risk of faltering on their electoral promises (and failing to be reelected), they also feared that the National Party and Apartheid-system could be reinstated in another future election or coup (Such fears of Apartheid reinstitutionalization originated from many predictions that South Africa had much potential to degenerate into civil unrest, even with the (*cont...*) ANC in power, as many South Africans would possibly have been frustrated by their failure to achieve economic growth within the first term of President Mandela and the ANC; as a result such unrest and upheaval enabled the National Party to consider returning to the political forefront. For further description see Lyman, *South Africa in Retrospect*, pp 54-59; and Purkitt and Burgess, pp 202-205). For both the National Party and the ANC the logical resolution for such fears perhaps resided in the continued stabilization of the South African state, and the continuation of institutionalized democracy.

It is important at this point that we note the character of the South African state during its period of democratization, that is, the nature of South Africa being comprised of a pluralistic political environment and not as a single unitary state. Between the two primary political groups of South Africa, the ANC and the National Party, many instances of policies and activities were noted as being of a dual nature in not only serving South African interests but also of the interests of the sitting political group. For example the activities of South African demobilization of weapons of mass destruction programs (including nuclear) and accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), while being characterized as mechanisms for South Africa to both lower costs on extensive military spending and increase its international legitimacy, were also characterized as means to prevent the acquisition of such WMD to the newly-elected ANC, and to safeguard their use against any possible sub-state interests (Villiers et al., 1993). Perhaps such activities may have been taken as precautions against any possible instability that may have resulted from regime transformation; however, in explaining these activities we witness particular distinguishing characteristics at odds with current predominant explanations.

Theoretically such actions as the voluntary dismantling of WMD programs, despite "altruistic" tendencies, stand in stark disagreement with classic and contemporary structuralist models that would characterize military strength and power within zero-sum parameters; in other words it would make little sense for the state of South Africa to

purposely weaken itself militarily. However we know this action to be true as South Africa voluntarily dismantled its WMD programs and willingly acceded to the NPT in 1991 (Villiers et al., 1993). Liberal models, in contrast to structuralist paradigms, would have generally posited that the National Party (and the South African state) would have dismantled its WMD programs for altruistic motives and out of a realignment of ideologies. Again we witness a discrepancy with such characterizations exhibited primarily out of the National Party altering its policies and ideologies, not out of self-realignment, but rather from a recognition of the ANC becoming an ultimate contender for South African leadership. Such actions are better explained through rational interpretations and recognitions of eroding power (against the then-rising ANC) than through autonomous adjustments of norms, values, and culture.

As we introduce republican liberalism in explaining South Africa's behavior to this point we find ourselves able to explain such characteristics and actions in more effective means than through other contemporary theories; here not only does our approach allow for divergent political entities to coexist within the state, it expects it. While other theories tend to treat the state as a unitary body within the international system, republican liberalism and its connotations of differing and competing interests provides more explanatory power.

Through the introduction of this approach within the South African case we also witness this theory's applicability regarding democratic motivations and continuation, as both the ANC and National Party appeared to have found themselves fearing authoritarian institutionalization, stemming primarily from their suspicions of each other. In this sense democracy was the most appropriate solution to the South African state in that not only would democracy enable all South Africans to have a stake in their system (in a normative sense), it would also allay fears of the ANC or the National Party from utilizing the state to either punish or oppress the other side. Thus up to this point not only are we able to effectively explain South African behavior through republican liberalism, we are also able to simultaneously satisfy the first condition of republican liberal behavior regarding motivations of state stability and regime prolongation.

Democratic consolidation and preservation were essential for both the state of South Africa and for the newly enfranchised officials of the state; a key consideration for these leaders was to preserve the institutionalization of democracy for both future governments and for the prevention of another Apartheid-type of regime from ever reemerging. For many of the newly-elected leaders, including then President Mandela:

"The anti-Apartheid campaign was the most important human-rights crusade of the post-World War II era. Its success was a demonstration, in my opinion, of the oneness of our common humanity: in these troubled times, its passion should not be lost...Only true democracy can

guarantee rights. This is why the ANC's decision to take up arms to secure the rights of South Africa's people will only be fulfilled in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Mandela, 1993).

In their efforts to institutionalize universal democracy leaders of the South African state appeared to look outward in their attempts to consolidate and "lock-in" these newly obtained democratic ideals. As South Africa emerged as a newly democratized nation, its leaders appeared rather possessed in incorporating South Africa into a wide array of international organizations and institutions designed to protect and promote democratic ideals. Within the first term of the ANC, instances of South Africa incorporating itself eagerly into international organizations include the redevelopment of the Southern Africa Development Community, the Southern African Customs Union, incorporation into the World Trade Organization, accession into the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and various other agreements that placed South Africa as both an actively participating member and promoter.

During the period of the ANC's first administration, South Africa had instituted itself into over 50 international organizations (World Factbook, 2000); however, perhaps the best illustration of South Africa's outward reorientation was in its efforts to not only assume a higher role within the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but to also reform the OAU into the African Union (AU) in 2002. What makes this achievement even more significant within our discussion is the manner in which South Africa may be credited with the reformation of the OAU, as South Africa had not only played an active participatory role but had also been the chairperson of the OAU at the time of its reformation; even further significance of South Africa's role within this act may be seen through the creation of the AU being carried out in South Africa at that time (Schraeder, 2004). With the replacement of the OAU by the AU, the newly reformed organization would reframe itself as an organization dedicated to principles of both good governance and democratic ideals. Further demonstrations of South Africa's international democratic commitments were exhibited as South Africa acceded to and helped promote the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD); as a affiliated organization within the AU, NEPAD and its objectives commit states to promoting democratic ideals and sound economic management throughout the African continent while simultaneously promoting interests of international trade, development, and debt relief (Meredith, 2005).

As we again take a step back to reflect upon the behavior of South Africa within the republican liberal paradigm we see a rather striking example of how a newly established democracy orients and binds itself within international institutions in order to better "lock-in" its respective democratic regime. As a participatory member within the AU, not only does South Africa commit itself to basic values of good governance and democracy, it also holds

itself accountable to other members of the organization. As the OAU reformed into the AU a noteworthy modification of the guiding principles regarded the notion of noninterference; within the parameters of the AU member states may actually be able to invoke the AU to intervene in domestic matters of other participating states under causes of human rights violations and in preserving legitimate democracy throughout the union, in a process known as "peer review" (Schraeder, 2004). This becomes especially significant as South Africa willingly subjected its sovereignty to a higher international body for the interest(s) of continuously protecting and preserving its democratic regime.

Another significant factor regarding the relationship between the theory of republican liberalism and contemporary South African behavior relates to the issue of human rights, and how the democratic state of South Africa has employed the issue of human rights within its pursuits of democratic consolidation. As stated in the previous section regarding theoretical assumptions of republican liberalism, democratizing states wishing to lock themselves into democratic institutions will be purported to associate themselves within paradigms of human rights adherence and promotion. For the case of South Africa, this proposition would appear to be validated through the apparent enthusiasm with which South Africa has pursued agendas of promoting human rights. As declared by Nelson Mandela South Africa's foreign policies were to include the ideals that,

"...issues of human rights are central to international relations and an understanding that they extend beyond the political, embracing the economic, social, and environmental; that just and lasting solutions to the problems of humankind can only come through the promotion of democracy worldwide; that considerations of justice and respect for international law should guide the relations between nations..." (Mandela, 1995).

Even beyond both the rhetoric and presidency of Nelson Mandela, South Africa has appeared quite sincere regarding its pursuits of promoting issues of human rights. Since embarking upon its democratic transformation South Africa has instituted itself within many agencies that are committed to advocating human rights, such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and even participation within the International Criminal Court (ICC) (World Fact book 2008, and Human Rights Watch World Report 2008, *South Africa*, <http://hrw.org/englishw2k8/docs/2008/01/31/safric17797.htm>). What is perhaps most significant regarding participation within the ICC is that through voluntary mediation of matters (regarding human rights and other democratic ideals) to an international adjudicating body, the ICC thus is able to provide particular stability for both the sitting government(s) and citizens of South Africa. As a result of such activities the state of South Africa was thus able to

advance its interests of preserving its democratic regime by “locking” itself within the jurisdiction of the ICC, making any potential future “war criminals” subject to arrest and prosecution. What is further remarkable is the nature with which the rather recently democratic state of South Africa has chosen to participate within the ICC, while other established democracies (i.e. the US) have been reluctant to do so, particularly regarding issues of balancing sovereignty with democratic security. Such an example of the relationship between the ICC and differing democracies may elucidate further recognition regarding the explanatory significance of South Africa’s behavior.

Even beyond rhetoric of democratic devotion and human rights advocacy, post-Apartheid South Africa has exercised itself both militarily and politically in order to bolster its support for human rights. With peacekeeping activities in Rwanda, Darfur, Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and elsewhere, South African security forces have appeared very active in legitimizing the statements of human rights promotion made by the leaders of the South African state (Lyman, 2007). Also of particular significance is the issue of judicial independence on international matters, with the recent instance of the South African High Court blocking the passage of a Chinese cargo vessel, laden with tons of small arms and other weaponry, bound for the state of Zimbabwe during its most recent tumultuous national elections (Guardian, April 19, 2008). As we again reflect upon the behavior of South Africa within a theoretical context we are compelled at the relevance with which republican liberalism explains such actions; through the three primary mechanisms of institutional binding, institutional proliferation, and human rights advocacy South Africa has appeared to satisfy the conditions of applying republican liberalism within this context.

## Implications

How South Africa has evolved from its Apartheid past and emerged as a democratically instituted state provides a striking example of an alternative approach applied to the contemporary world. While prior justifications of republican liberalism have employed case studies primarily within European contexts, this analysis of South African behavior after the dismantlement of Apartheid can perhaps provide a more salient exposition. Within this examination of applying South African behavior within the context of republican liberal theory we have discussed the various manners in which the state of South Africa had appeared to act in accordance with such theoretically predicted behavior. As democracy had become instituted as the replacement into the post-Apartheid government of South Africa the state has since appeared to pursue interests of democratic preservation and international participation rather earnestly.

At this point what can we conclude regarding the state of democracy in South Africa today? In terms of demo-

cratic consolidation we may be able to say that South Africa has been able to strengthen its democratic regime through the occurrence of three successful elections, yet we may also have to limit our confirmations regarding the various definitions of democratic consolidation. To scholars such as Huntington democratic consolidation may be considered legitimate once the state has accomplished the “Two- turnover test,” in which “...the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of transition loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to the winners of a later election” (Huntington, 1991). Still, other definitions of consolidation may occur through such conditions as “1) No significant group out of power advocates the use of force to secede or capture the government...2) Those in power respect the constitutional rules...3) Citizens are willing to defend the constitutional rules by withdrawing their support from leaders and groups who advocate violating the rules” (Weingast, 2002). While in terms of Huntington’s definition South Africa may still have quite a journey before attaining objective consolidation (as the ANC still has yet to demonstrate its capacity to peacefully transfer power to another political group), yet by considering alternative definitions we may witness certain validating behavior.

The case for South African democratic consolidation may not be lost; while the ANC still remains as the only group in power at the federal level since the founding democratic elections there has nonetheless been progress. Opposition parties have won regional and local elections, and South Africa still continues to have regular multiparty elections (represented proportionally). South Africa has also appeared to demonstrate a capacity in advocating voting within its society, as witnessed through an 89% voter turnout in its 1999 elections and a 98% turnout in the 2004 elections (Percentages based upon numbers of votes divided by those registered to vote.

Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. *South Africa*. [http://www.idea.int/vt/country\\_view.cfm?CountryCode=ZA](http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?CountryCode=ZA)). Of more recent consideration regards the election of Jacob Zuma in the latest national elections, including the replacement of former-President Thabo Mbeki in a process regarded as a generally transparent and democratic affair (including the resignation of Mbeki and appointment of Zuma occurring in a rather frictionless manner), as would be expected within an institutionalized democracy (The Economist, 30 April, 2008).

Yet while South Africa can boast such levels of turnout, perhaps an appropriate catharsis regarding the nature of consolidation may be borrowed from Bratton and van de Walle (1997), in that “...consolidation is the more or less institutionalization of democratic practices, complete only when citizens and the political class alike come to accept democratic practices as the only way to resolve conflict.” In this sense perhaps we can regard

consolidation of democracy in South Africa as an ongoing process, which will occur not at some arbitrary point in time, but instead at a juncture when such ideals of democracy are so entwined they need not be reinforced through participation in international democratic institutions. Through adoption of this purview perhaps the case of republican liberalism may be further validated as we witness newly established democracies transition themselves into established ones, thus no longer requiring such compromises between sovereignty and security.

As we conclude this discussion of South African democratization within the realm of an alternative approach we may reflect upon what republican liberalism may offer in explaining South African behavior, and even vice versa. Through the course of this analysis the relationship between South Africa's behaviors following its transition into democracy and the theory of republican liberalism has been shown to be rather remarkable, in that through the descriptions of South Africa and its leaders not only binding themselves to international institutions, but in also taking rather promotional roles within these institutions, we have appeared to satisfy such preconditions necessary to apply republican liberalism as an effective model in explaining the South African case.

Besides overcoming an Apartheid system of government, the case of South Africa has also overcome the theoretical tendencies and predictions that envisaged a much different and stark outcome. Theories of realism and liberalism would have underscored the importance of the efforts of the ANC, as the ANC would not have even been regarded as a participant within the sub-national political landscape. Furthermore, contemporary realist and liberalist theories would most undoubtedly have predicted that change for South Africa and participation within the international environment would have been the result of coercive or persuasive efforts from the great powers of the time. However, we understand that this type of explanation cannot follow, as there stands much evidence regarding the ANC and South Africa as independent promoters of democracy and its associated ideals. In regards to other theories relating the association between developing democracies and the outbreak of wars, South Africa again has appeared to break the theoretical mold that it was expected to follow, particularly through the strength of its domestic institutions maintained after dismantlement of the Apartheid system (Mansfield and Snyder, 2005). Through both the retention of strong domestic institutions and the involvement within international institutions South Africa has been able to retain its domestic stability and safeguard its democratic institutions from internal threats to its prolongation.

Perhaps we may elucidate further lessons regarding the implications of such theoretical association into other arenas in international affairs; as the case of South Africa exhibits a success of a post-authoritarian state reemerging as a democratically instituted and committed regime, policy makers and researchers may find salient aspects of this

case that may have purpose in assisting future states in their pursuits of democratization. As was presented earlier, the African continent has witnessed both the emergence and disintegration of democracy from various countries of the continent; what should remain important is that while the experiences of democratization may not be exclusive to just South Africa, its success should be considered illustrative. As other countries on the African continent and elsewhere around the globe continue in their own struggles for democratization, the case of South Africa and republican liberalism can serve as examples that peaceful democratization can in fact be achieved with the international dimension playing a key causal role.

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