

Cultural Relations Collection

Cultural relations and cultural diplomacy in a pariah state: The British Council in South Africa, 1958–1994

Daniel Feather

Cultural relations
and peacebuilding

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The British Council

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Foreword

The Cultural Relations Collection essay series, produced by the British Council's Research and Insight Team, asks early-career and established researchers to examine the theory and practice of cultural relations. We invite fresh perspectives on what has been the British Council's business for almost 90 years – building connections, understanding and trust.

This edition explores how cultural relations can contribute to peacebuilding in different settings and contexts.

Peacebuilding, and the erosion of peace, are intimately connected to many major challenges facing us nationally and internationally. No community that is divided by conflict, or the expectation or experience of conflict, can give adequate attention to less immediate but equally destructive threats, such as environmental degradation or economic instability.

Yet those same factors, left unaddressed, can only increase the likelihood of conflict. The result is a vicious circle which is increasingly difficult to escape.

These essays help us to understand what is meant by a cultural relations approach to peacebuilding and to demonstrate that this approach is both valid and valuable.

Each of the essays comes from a different disciplinary and regional perspective, but some common themes are evident.

One is Galtung's concept of positive (as opposed to negative) peace: peace as an active participatory experience, rather than simply the absence of violence. This supports proponents of cultural relations – and is a riposte to those who argue that soft power interventions in hard power situations are mere wishful thinking.

Also implicit in many of the essays is the importance of enabling safe spaces in which cultural relations can take place. Inclusivity and an atmosphere of trust are a *sine qua non* if citizens and communities are to experience a sense of their own agency.

Related to this is deep listening (listening experienced as a positive and empathetic activity, rather than simply an absence of interruption), a topic explored in depth by one of our essayists. Listening to others' truth and speaking our own, not only to power but to ourselves, is at the core of cultural relations – and especially in our peacebuilding efforts. No true or lasting peace is built on half-truths and evasions.

Indeed, the importance of facing up to our own organisational and national history is addressed directly in one of these essays; and behind several authors stands the shadow of colonialism.

As in previous editions of this series, there is much here for readers, and the British Council itself, to reflect on and absorb. Peacebuilding is a complex and constantly developing subject, to which these essays make a valuable contribution.

The British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. To meet that goal, we will continue to explore with researchers, artists and peace practitioners how our cultural relations work can contribute to peacebuilding globally; this series is just the start.

Scott McDonald

Chief Executive, British Council



Preface to the Cultural Relations Collection

Welcome to the latest edition of the Cultural Relations Collection. As always, it has been stimulating to read fresh perspectives on cultural relations by new voices in the field. Previous editions in the Collection have examined cultural relations and climate change, and the impact of COVID-19 on cultural exchange. In 2022, we invited submissions on cultural relations and peacebuilding, given our renewed emphasis on the role of building trust and connections as central to the conditions required for sustainable peace, and in the spirit of what John-Paul Lederach calls ‘an approach that addresses the culture of violence by transforming it into the culture of dialogue’.

This is not a new area for the British Council, which emerged from the global crisis leading up to the Second World War in the realisation that building trust and understanding between the UK and the rest of the world was crucial. In 2018, which marked the centenary of the end of the First World War, the centenary of Nobel Peace Laureate Nelson Mandela, and the 20th anniversary of

the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement, the British Council worked with partners in Northern Ireland on the conference *Peace and Beyond*¹, an examination of global approaches to building lasting peace including reflections from contributors from countries including Lebanon, South Africa, and Colombia.

In 2023, the need to examine the conditions for peacebuilding are as relevant as they were in 2018. Colleagues around the world continue to work in communities affected by conflict, such as Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Yemen, to name but three. At the time of writing, we are working on research on the role of cultural events in addressing conflict and sharing the values of freedom and international co-operation, given the UK’s role in hosting Eurovision on behalf of Ukraine.

And so, to the individual contributions herein. At the 2018 *Peace and Beyond* conference, Judith Thompson, Chief Commissioner for the Commission for Victims and Survivors², said: ‘Building social trust [...]in a society transitioning from

1 www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/reflections-inclusive-peace

2 www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/reflections-inclusive-peace

conflict is an essential ingredient to [...] building a better future for everyone and the generations that follow.’ This collection builds on that imperative by breaking down varied approaches to the building of trust.

Alice Naisbitt examines the role of science as a peacebuilding tool in two ways: that the connections built reinforce the trust vital to harmonious relations; and that the outcomes of scientific co-operation address drivers of conflict, such as resource scarcity. As with Hannah Dalgliesh’s contribution on the soft power of astronomy in a previous collection³, Naisbitt underpins the role of science as providing neutral, common ground for collaboration.

Naisbitt does not shy away from the historic challenges that have been presented to the British Council over the years, and the accusation that cultural relations – in science, arts, language, or education – run the risk of being instrumentalised for the soft power outcomes, rather than their development objectives. This theme is picked up in Daniel Feather’s fascinating history of educational co-operation between the UK and South Africa, including through the apartheid era when South Africa was globally isolated. He draws the distinction between cultural

diplomacy and cultural relations, although highlights where those lines can become blurred. While not uncritical of the role of the UK and the British Council over this period, his essay makes a powerful argument for the place of education in supporting a country’s transition from structural violence to a more equitable and peaceful state.

Three essays focus on arts and culture as tools for building peace. George Wilkes et al. consider the role of the cultural relations organisation in bridging the local and the global; the need not to overlook the smallest detail of any given conflict, while still recognising the power of building links across borders and amplifying the voice of those affected by conflict. Their emphasis on the need to deal with memory, whether of previous friendships, or of deep trauma, also harks back to contributions in *Peace and Beyond*⁴ by Candice Mama and Cindy Mizher.

The role of the arts to make visible what may previously have been hidden, as well as to imagine new futures, is central to the essay of Daniela Fazio-Vargas and Carlos Pineda-Ramos. They make a powerful case for artistic expression as a means by which different voices can be elevated and building a space in

3 www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-series/cultural-relations

4 www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/reflections-inclusive-peace

which difference is recognised and valued, and that only in this way, can true peace be achieved. Nar Bahadur Saud takes this up in his essay that reminds us that before the arts can support peace and justice, they too must recognise difference. His contribution centres on the need to empower and enable disabled people to express themselves through the arts, and that in doing so not only addresses the inequalities they face as individuals but will contribute to more equitable and peaceful societies.

2022 brought sport to the fore in the discourse on positive peacebuilding – that is, not just addressing violent conflict, but addressing the drivers of conflict, such as inherent violence against marginalised communities, or the continuation of structural inequities. Many people looked to the World Cup in Qatar with mixed feelings, as to whether this was ‘sportswashing’ or an opportunity to open up a human rights dialogue on the world stage. In his essay, Grant Jarvie explores the link between sports and diplomacy, and suggests a more prominent role for sport in development, particularly in peacebuilding, given its emphasis on team spirit, co-operation, and solidarity.

Lastly, Emily Kasriel examines a concept at the heart of peacebuilding – listening. Her essay on deep listening illustrates an approach that prepares individuals for encounters across any divides they find within their communities, however they are experiencing conflict. Drawing on both theory and practice, she draws out the transformational nature of this method, and the impact it has had on individuals and communities around the world, enabling them to truly see, hear and understand the person opposite them.

One of the participants in a deep listening exercise said it allowed her ‘to create an atmosphere of inclusivity, trust and positive discourse’. It feels as if we are in a time in which that approach is urgently needed. I hope too that this Cultural Relations Collection makes a similarly positive contribution, and I urge all readers to embrace that spirit.

Christine Wilson

Director of Research and Insight,
British Council

Introduction

UK-South African relations in the period 1958 to 1994 provide a dynamic case study for assessing how cultural relations and cultural diplomacy can be utilised in a pariah state. While historic in its analysis, ideas can be drawn from this case study about the importance of maintaining cultural contact with states whose domestic or foreign policies have seen them isolated, something which the British Council still places significant value on today (British Council, 2021b). Additionally, this essay draws attention to the role that organisations like the British Council can play in promoting peacebuilding through cultural relations. As will be shown, in the latter years of apartheid, the educational opportunities provided by the British Council were seen as important by some anti-apartheid groups in preparing their activists for roles in the ‘new’ South Africa as well as promoting cooperation between all South Africans regardless of race.

There were close cultural connections between Britain and South Africa in the years examined in this essay. These stemmed from the legacies of British imperial rule, not least the sizeable British diaspora in South Africa. However, the divided nature of apartheid

South African society, and the overt racism of the ruling National Party (NP) government, made those connections a particularly sensitive case when it came to promoting cultural relations. Many governments, international organisations, and much of the British public considered South Africa to be an international pariah due to its racist domestic policies, and its efforts to destabilise its neighbouring states through military raids and material support for rebel movements, and its refusal to grant independence to Namibia, which remained under South African rule until 1990. Cultural, sporting, and academic boycotts of South Africa were encouraged by anti-apartheid activists and sympathetic governments as a way of ostracising the country and emphasising the disgust much of the international community had for apartheid. In this context, representatives of the British Council had to take great care in how they engaged with cultural relations in South Africa.

Nevertheless, over the years examined in this essay, the British Council’s work in South Africa grew considerably both in its scale and its importance to the British government. While the British Council is ‘operationally independent’, it

does receive money from the British government in the form of a grant-in-aid (British Council, 2021a). While it is hard to verify how this affects the British Council's work it 'can create relations of dependency in the same way as any unilaterally delivered funding' meaning the British government can be seen to have a degree of influence over the British Council's work (British Council & Goethe Institute, 2018a:11). Additionally, the British Council's charter aims of 'promot[ing], cultural relations between the United Kingdom and other countries; develop[ing] a wider knowledge of the English language' and 'encourag[ing] educational co-operation between the United Kingdom and other countries' all have the potential of contributing to British cultural diplomacy (British Council, 2021d).

British Council representatives in South Africa played an important role in administering much of Britain's scholarship provision in the country. These educational programmes were expanded considerably in the late 1970s and 1980s as British policymakers began to court the next generation of political leaders in an effort to promote a peaceful transfer of power in South Africa, and thus safeguard British interests in the country. Britain's economic stake in South Africa was considerable; in addition to Britain being the country's largest external investor, South Africa supplied Britain with a number of

key minerals (Barber & Barrat, 1990). Additionally, it was estimated that up to one million South Africans were eligible for British passports (Renwick, 1997: 109). Policymakers feared that the destabilisation of South Africa could see these investments crash in value, supplies of key minerals disrupted, and a surge of immigration akin to that received by Portugal after Mozambique and Angola were granted independence in 1975, which was a particular concern owing to Britain's high rates of unemployment at the time (Howe, 1994: 479). This made it even more important to promote a peaceful transfer of power in an effort to safeguard South Africa's long-term stability. As Ewen Fergusson, Deputy Permanent Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and former Ambassador to South Africa told Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Adamishin in 1986: 'I[a]partheid will not last long' but we must hope that 'it's departure was not violent' as 'it is not difficult to destroy a country, but how does it live then?' (Adamishin, 2014).

This essay discusses the establishment of the British Council in South Africa, and the controversies it faced in its early years in the country. The disproportionate number of scholarships and bursaries that went to white South Africans, for example, led to criticism from Labour and Liberal Members of Parliament in Westminster. However, the British Council defended its work in South

Africa, claiming that developing close links with the black majority could see it come into conflict with the apartheid authorities, which in turn could have seen it forced out of the country.⁵ British officials in South Africa argued that if the British Council was forced to withdraw from South Africa an important means by which to promote cultural relations, and ‘liberal’ thought, amongst the white minority would be lost. The British Council representative in South Africa contended that, as the white minority held all of the political power they should be the key target of cultural contact as only they could influence policy, bring about an end to apartheid, and promote a peaceful transfer of power in the country.

The essay will then discuss how, partially in response to the criticism it faced for prioritising contact with white South Africans, the British Council made greater efforts to gradually forge contact with the black majority. This grew exponentially after events in the 1970s signified that there was a growing politicisation of the black majority, and that the dominance of the white minority was not as strong as once thought. To British policymakers, who held the purse strings of much of the British Council’s funding, this meant that it

was essential to make inroads with individuals who it was felt would take up important positions in post-apartheid South Africa. Not only would this ensure British influence was maintained, but by rapidly expanding educational support, they believed it could promote a peaceful transfer of power in the country and ensure that the South African economy would survive a change of political systems, thus safeguarding Britain’s economic interests in the country. Finally, the essay will analyse the experiences of South Africans who undertook bursaries or scholarships in the UK during the 1980s and early 1990s. It is clear from these testimonies that these visits did not always result in a better view of the UK, but could sometimes play an important part in supporting those who sought to build a new South Africa by providing educational opportunities and facilitating greater contact with experts in their fields from around the world.

5 I will be following the practice advocated by Black Consciousness Movement activist Steve Biko of using the term black to describe all people of colour in South Africa. This includes indigenous Africans, the ‘coloured’ community, and the sizeable Indian diaspora in the country.

Soft power, cultural diplomacy, and cultural relations

There is an established body of literature which analyses UK-South African relations in the period in question (Berridge, 1981, Barber, 1983; Hyam & Henshaw, 2003). However, most scholars have focused on political, economic, or military links between the two countries. This essay will make an important and original intervention, emphasising the significance of cultural relations, and the work of the British Council in particular, in British policy towards South Africa. Dr David Carter, who served as the British Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission in South Africa from 1992 to 1996, stated that 'by the time I was in post, there was a great deal of soft power diplomacy' (Kandiah, 2013). This topic, therefore, warrants far greater academic attention, particularly as the concept of soft power (of which cultural relations is an important part) has attracted considerable mainstream interest in recent years. *Monocle* magazine for example, has published an annual soft power 'league table' since 2010 to rank how successful countries are in promoting themselves to the world via their culture (Monocle, 2022). Politicians too have begun to emphasise the importance of soft power and cultural relations in their speeches.

Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson for example, while serving as Foreign Secretary, used his 2016 party conference speech to contend that Britain's 'irresistible soft power' would be vital to its post-Brexit success (Johnson, 2016).

This 'mainstreaming' of the importance of state-to-state cultural relations is in no small part down to the work of Joseph Nye, who coined the phrase 'soft power' in 1990 to describe a country's power of attraction (Nye, 1990:32). Nye defined this concept more succinctly in 2004 when he contended there are three ways in which a large power can handle its relations with smaller countries. One method is to use the 'stick', that is to use force, or at least the threat of force, to ensure that another country does as you wish. The second tactic involves using the 'carrot'. This is effectively the use of bribery to gain support (Nye, 2004:6). Nye criticises these two methods as they do not change the way someone thinks, the nation or person only does what you, or your country wants, because they are scared of you, or want the financial gain you are offering (Nye, 2004:5). Nye contends that the most effective way for a country to

meet its foreign policy objectives is by the use of careful diplomacy and the promotion of its cultural values to ‘win over’ the ‘hearts and minds’ of less powerful nations.

There is considerable debate over the terms which best describe the use of culture in state-to-state relations. Richard Arndt (2005:xviii) provides a useful distinction between cultural diplomacy and cultural relations. He contends that cultural relations are ‘literally the relations between national cultures, those aspects of intellect and education lodged in any society that tend to cross borders and connect with foreign institutions’. In contrast, ‘cultural *diplomacy* can only be said to take place when formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel these natural flows to advance national interests’ (Arndt, 2005:xviii).

Proponents of the concept of cultural relations emphasise its ‘intrinsic value’ and claim to seek ‘genuine reciprocity and mutual understanding’ (British Council & Goethe Institute, 2018a: 5). Whereas cultural diplomacy is generally associated with ‘connotations of instrumentalism and self-interest’ due to the involvement of national governments either in directing

policy or providing the necessary financial support needed for organisations to engage in the promotion of cultural relations, and therefore being able to influence their work (British Council & Goethe Institute, 2018a:5). As an independent organisation in receipt of government funding, the British Council engages in ‘a balancing act between intrinsic and instrumental goals’ (British Council & Goethe Institute, 2018a:5). While the British Council’s charter and ethos places a far greater emphasis on the intrinsic value of cultural relations, by sponsoring educational exchanges and organising events which showcase British music and art, the British Council facilitates contact between important individuals from Britain and other countries, which could be seen to contribute to more formal cultural diplomacy.

Additionally, in many states the British Council representatives work closely with the UK diplomatic staff. In South Africa, the British Council worked out of the High Commission/ British Embassy in Pretoria from its establishment in the country in 1958 until 1987, when it moved briefly to the British Consulate in Johannesburg before moving into its own office in 1989.⁶ Additionally, the British Council representative in South Africa was a diplomatic position entitled

⁶ After leaving the Commonwealth in 1961 the British High Commission became the British Embassy. It has since reverted back to being a High Commission owing to South Africa re-joining the Commonwealth in 1994.

Cultural Advisor until it established its own office. This was to give the representative a degree of diplomatic protection and ensure they could be evacuated from the country at short notice should the situation there deteriorate rapidly. This practice continues in several countries, most notably China, and does suggest the closeness with which the British Council and diplomatic staff work together in certain cases.



The Development of the British Council in South Africa, 1958–1964

After coming to power in 1948, the NP government sought to assert Afrikaner control over all aspects of South African society. This saw the ‘Afrikanerisation’ of the senior staff in the military and civil service at the expense of English-speaking South Africans (Posel, 2010). Additionally, organisations such as the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Association and the Broederbond did much to promote the Afrikaans language and Afrikaner culture more broadly (Giliomee, 2003). In this context, the British High Commission in South Africa lobbied the Commonwealth Office to establish a British Council presence in the country.⁷ British Deputy High Commissioner to South Africa, Arthur Snelling, stated that ‘the English language, the British way of life and the British connection are in retreat in South Africa’ due to ‘the rise of Afrikaans language and Afrikaans culture’ (Snelling, 1955). The following year the High Commissioner to South Africa, Sir Percivale Liesching, followed up Snelling’s initial proposals by sending a lengthy

report to Alec Douglas-Home, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations (Liesching, 1956). Liesching contended that the NP’s entrenchment of power had ‘strong linguistic and cultural implications’ and posed a ‘considerable danger to the future of cultural association with the United Kingdom’ (Liesching, 1956).

Upon reading Liesching’s dispatch Douglas-Home stated that ‘I think this may be worthwhile’ (Smedley, 1956). After negotiations with the British Council Director General it was agreed that the post of Cultural Advisor would be created at the British High Commission in 1958 to act as a representative of the British Council in the country. There would also be a local staff member appointed to help the Cultural Advisor with their work (Church, 1958).

When the Commonwealth Office discussed the nature of the role with the British High Commission in South Africa, it was warned that whoever was appointed would need to be sensitive to the situation in the

⁷ The Commonwealth Office has since been amalgamated with the Foreign Office (1968) and the Department for International Development (2020) to become the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

country and avoid any 'evangelism' in its 'internal political affairs' which might antagonise the Afrikaner nationalists (Belcher, 1958). This influenced the decision to appoint Raymond Butlin, an experienced British Council officer and English language teaching specialist to this role, owing partially to his personal ties with South Africa. Butlin was married to a South African of mixed Afrikaner and British heritage, and he had visited the country several times (Church, 1958). Butlin set out his own interpretation of the role shortly after being appointed, and emphasised that he should 'avoid involvement in apartheid issues' and focus his work primarily on white South Africans (Johnston, 1959). It was also argued that the most appropriate way to help the black majority was by providing a 'liberalising' influence on the ruling white minority, and this would only be possible if the British Council worked within the strict parameters of apartheid (Johnston, 1959).

The British Council's initial work in South Africa focused on making presentations of English books to various institutions, the organisation of British exams, and facilitating British Council scholarships, 'visitorships', and bursaries. These were, however, fairly limited. Exchanges of individuals already established in their chosen careers took place on an ad-hoc basis, while two scholarships were offered annually for postgraduate study

in the UK. The British Council also worked to promote other aspects of British culture through the sponsorship of performing arts tours, most notably the Royal Ballet Company's visit in 1960 (Feather 2022a). However, this tour proved controversial as it coincided with the Sharpeville Massacre in which the South African police murdered at least 69 unarmed protestors. While calls for the touring party to return home were ruled out by the British government, it became very difficult to sponsor contact of this kind from this point onwards as the cultural boycott grew in popularity and was advocated by key performing artists' trade unions Equity and the Musicians Union (Feather, 2022b).

While the British Council was hamstrung in its ability to utilise performing arts as part of its work, educational contact continued unabated. In fact, when South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961, the British Council's role as the facilitator of British scholarships and bursaries was expanded considerably to make up for South African citizens losing access to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship scheme (British Council Executive Committee, 1961). The number of British Council scholarships was gradually increased, with 12 offered in the year 1962/63, rising finally to 22 per year from 1963/64 (British Council Executive Committee, 1961). It is clear, therefore, that in

the case of South Africa the British Council provided a useful means of continued cultural cooperation in the context of South Africa's efforts to cut more formal ties with Britain.

These awards, however, were not distributed in a way which represented the diversity of South African society. While there is little data on the gender of the award holders, they appear to be focussed primarily on men. This may well have reflected the bias of those who selected candidates for awards, or it might be indicative of the marginalisation of women in South African society at the time. What is easier to quantify is the racial disparities that existed. While only making up roughly 20% of the population of the country at the time, 18 out of the 22 scholarships on offer in 1963/64 went to white South Africans (Cecil, 1963). This led to fierce criticism of the British Council's work in South Africa by opposition Labour and Liberal MPs who managed to force the convening of an extraordinary meeting of the British Council's Executive Committee to discuss the matter on 5 November 1963 (Cecil, 1963). Despite some sympathy for the MPs' arguments, the committee concluded that removing the British Council from South Africa would be 'a political decision' and was thus the government's responsibility (Foreign Office, 1963).

It should be noted that while the post-graduate awards which lasted two years were dominated by white South Africans, short term bursaries proved more accessible to the country's black majority. These awards were usually around three months and focused more on offering those already established in their field (often vocational rather than academic) the opportunity to undertake a visit to the UK. In 1963/64 of the 10 short-term bursary awards offered only one went to a white South African. The number of bursaries was increased the following year which meant that over half of all awards (bursaries and scholarships combined) went to black South Africans (British Council Executive Committee, 1964). In light of this, the British Council Director General, Paul Sinker stated, after visiting South Africa in November 1964, that he was impressed by the 'gradual improvement in the distribution of awards' (British Council Executive Committee, 1964). Sinker argued that the executive committee could 'feel re-assured that it is possible, even in the present circumstances for the representative to operate effectively in accordance with the policy laid down by the committee' of extending contact with 'non-European' South Africans whenever possible (British Council Executive Committee, 1964).

However, this was clearly a two-tier approach with the far more lucrative awards dominated by white scholars. Additionally, the black South Africans who were awarded short-term bursaries were often employees of the hated Bantu Education Department meaning they would be considered 'stooges' by supporters of the liberation struggle (Foreign Office, 1963).⁸ In fact, British Council policy upon receiving applications from any black South Africans was to ascertain, through informal channels, if that candidate would be granted a passport by the South African authorities (Pilcher, 1964). This would avoid a potentially embarrassing situation which might have brought the British Council into conflict with apartheid officials if an award holder was refused a passport and would, therefore, be unable to leave South Africa to take up their scholarship in the UK. This shows that, to maintain a presence in South Africa, and continue to promote cultural relations, British officials felt bound by the abhorrent racist policies of the apartheid regime. This draws into question the morality of continuing to maintain a presence in a state whose domestic policies are in such contrast to the majority of world opinion on what is right and acceptable.

The controversy surrounding the distribution of British Council scholarships came to a head in 1964 when Archibald Mafeje, a young black South African anthropologist, was offered a British Council funded scholarship to study for a PhD at Cambridge University. In what was presumably an administrative error, Mafeje was informed that he had been successful in his application prior to the British Council representative in South Africa confirming that he would be granted a passport (Cecil, 1964). Unlike some of the other black South Africans who had previously undertaken sponsored visits to the UK, Mafeje was anything but a stooge. He was awaiting trial for allegedly making a speech at Botha Sigcau School in which he called on students to start a branch of the Cape Peninsula Student Union and campaign for the rights of black students (Chief Bantu Commissioner, Western Cape, 1964).

Fearing that Mafeje was not going to be granted a passport, Dr Richards, Mafeje's prospective supervisor at Cambridge, pleaded with the British government to put pressure on the South African authorities to ensure he would be able to take up the award (Cecil, 1964). Foreign Office officials

8 The Bantu Education Act (1953) had separated education in South Africa based on race, with different syllabi being used for different races, the most basic of which was reserved for the black majority. Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders contend that this policy was 'based on the assumption of an inferior potential in African minds' and was designed explicitly to 'prepare blacks for an inferior place in society' (Davenport & Saunders, 2000:674)

were sympathetic, and felt that if Pretoria made it difficult to grant awards to black South Africans ‘it will become increasingly difficult to defend British Council policy’ in the country (Downing, 1964).

British officials in South Africa reacted very differently however. Butlin was angry that the award had been offered despite the fact he had ‘reported that the odds against his obtaining a passport, are to say the least, considerable’ (Butlin, 1964). Butlin also argued that this went against ‘the agreement previously arrived at as a method of dealing with this case’, which was to wait until the South African authorities had indicated if a passport would be forthcoming before formally offering the award (Butlin, 1964). Ambassador Sir Hugh Stephenson argued that making representations to the South African authorities was ‘unlikely to succeed’ and that it was ‘for the South African government, like any other government, to decide whether or not a passport should be granted to one of its nationals’ (Stephenson, 1964).

While Stephenson played down the chances of Pretoria relenting to pressure from the UK, the Secretary of Bantu Administration concluded that ‘[sic] it seems to me that, all in effect, Mafeje’s application can be recommended. It would do more harm than good, from the point of view of possible criticism, not to allow the application’ (Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, 1964).⁹ Minister for Bantu Education and Development, Michiel Daniel Christiaan de Wet Nel, agreed with this conclusion and approved Mafeje’s application for a passport (de Wet Nel, 1964). Despite the warnings from Stephenson and Butlin, now that there was more interest from the British government and UK academics in the case, South African officials feared the potential fallout from refusing Mafeje’s passport application. The British officials in South Africa had overestimated Pretoria’s resolve; South African officials could, on occasion, be pressured into modifying their policies. They could, and perhaps should, have been braver in how they directed cultural relations with South Africa and attempted to push the boundaries put in place by the apartheid regime to further contact with those more critical of apartheid amongst the black majority.

9 It should be noted that the original is in Afrikaans and this is a literal translation.

Moderate policy changes, 1964–1979

In October 1964 the Labour government came to power and with it, at least in rhetoric, a tougher policy towards apartheid South Africa. While economic sanctions were dismissed due to their potential damaging effect on the UK economy, an arms embargo was implemented, albeit with many caveats which allowed some sales to continue (Bale, 1997). Additionally, the British Council's presence in the country came under greater scrutiny, and while it was decided the organisation could continue to operate there, action had to be taken to ensure its awards were distributed more fairly (Butlin, 1965). Additionally, it was felt that South Africa received a disproportionate amount of British Council scholarships. Indeed, as the British Council had effectively taken over the awards previously provided by the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowship Scheme, South Africa received far more British Council awards than any other country in Africa; in 1963, for example, South Africa was allocated 22 British Council scholarships, compared to 32 for the rest of Africa combined (Nicholls, 1963).

Then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Patrick Gordon-Walker, warned that the number of British Council scholarships in South Africa might be reduced by as much as 50 per cent with awards being redirected to other African nations (Butlin, 1965). In an effort to dissuade the Foreign Office from making such drastic cuts, Christopher Ritchie, the British Council Assistant Controller, sent a number of testimonies of former award holders to the Cultural Relations Department in the Foreign Office (Ritchie, 1965). These accounts provided evidence of the intrinsic value of continuing to engage in cultural relations with South Africa. An Afrikaner student studying at the University of Edinburgh placed great emphasis on the number of people they had met as a result of their opportunity to study in the UK, claiming they had made friends with people from Nigeria and Uganda. Another scholar studying for a PhD in Engineering at Cambridge, stated that 'the opportunity of talking to students from all over the world both within the university and through the British Council was also a most interesting experience' (Ritchie, 1965). A

common theme in the testimonies is that the time in the UK gave the scholars the chance for debate and discussion. An Afrikaner lawyer who studied in the UK stated that ‘discussion, even of ideas we hate, is good’ (Ritchie, 1965). An Afrikaner who studied English Language Teaching at Bangor shared this enthusiasm, stating that the South African scholars were well received and enjoyed the ‘enlightening discussions’ they engaged in during their time in the UK (Ritchie, 1965).

The final testimony talked so strongly about the positive benefits of British Council scholarships that Ritchie admitted ‘it might almost have been commissioned’ (Ritchie, 1965). The individual in question claimed that ‘while it is highly desirable that all racial groups should benefit equally from British Council awards’ it was unlikely that many black applicants would ‘receive the necessary travel documents from the South African authorities’ (Ritchie, 1965). Nonetheless, this scholar hoped awards for white South Africans would continue even if Pretoria blocked all awards to non-Europeans as it was ‘impossible to overestimate the great benefits’ these awards entailed. They argued that the only way white South Africans ‘mixed freely with non-whites and particularly African students’ was through schemes like this, which were

‘performing a wonderful service to South Africa and the cause of race relations’ (Ritchie, 1965).

While there is no direct mention of the effect these testimonies had on the officials’ decision, a compromise was eventually reached in relation to South Africa’s scholarship allocation, with the decision that the number of awards to the country would be immediately reduced from 22 to 20 for the academic year 1965/66 (Le Quesne, 1965). This shows that despite the British government’s emphasis on more instrumentalist goals, the intrinsic value of this form of cultural relations highlighted by the award-holders was taken into account by policymakers. Nevertheless, there would be further reductions over the next two academic years, with the total number of full scholarships falling to 16 by 1967/68. There would also be an important change made to the form of financial educational support offered by the British Council. Previously, scholarships were favoured over bursaries as a means of supporting postgraduate study for South African students in the UK. Nevertheless, officials believed that scholarships were less favourable to black candidates as it was felt they were unable to leave their families for long periods of time for fear of financial hardship. It was decided that scholarships should, therefore, be

converted into bursaries which were shorter in length to encourage more black applicants (Le Quesne, 1965).

It was not long, however, before British officials in South Africa were calling for a reversal to these reductions in spending on cultural relations in the country. In 1968 the British Ambassador to South Africa, Sir John Nicholls, called for a radical expansion of Britain's cultural work in South Africa, including greater investment in the British Council's activities. Like his predecessors Nicholls was motivated by a perceived decline in the use of English in the country. He contended that English was a 'vehicle for cultural intercourse with Britain' (Nicholls, 1968). If the

decline of both the usage and quality of English in the country continued, it posed a great threat to UK-South African relations. Nicholls called for the British Council to open an office in Cape Town and appoint additional staff. While these recommendations were not followed up immediately, owing to tight budgetary constraints in Whitehall, an office was opened in Cape Town in 1974 and additional staff appointed including a new regional officer for the Western Cape to share the burden of work placed on the Cultural Advisor and to further contact with the 'non-white sector' in the country (Sherwood, 1972).



A watershed moment: The 1979 policy shift

British educational contact in South Africa moved slowly towards greater contact with the country's black majority over the course of the 1970s. At the same time, the situation in South Africa became much more volatile, starting with the extensive strike action by black workers in 1973, and followed by the explosion of violence that came about after the Soweto Uprising in 1976, and the murder of Black Consciousness Movement activist Steve Biko in police custody in 1977. In light of the sharp increase in anti-apartheid activism in South Africa, British officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and Ministry for Overseas Development (ODM), discussed what might happen in the country in the coming years and concluded that there was a significant chance that, at least in the medium term, the black majority would take up leading positions in the country (FCO & ODM, 1978). It was seen as essential for the British government to gain a foothold with South Africa's potential future rulers as it was 'an area of continuing importance to our national interests' (FCO & ODM, 1978). It was argued that contact should be made with key members of the black South African communities, and it should be emphasised that 'Britain's place

in their lives is not purely historical' (FCO & ODM, 1978). It was hoped that this would safeguard British interests and influence in the long-term once an eventual transfer of power had taken place.

To facilitate this, there was a significant policy shift which saw far more money than ever before invested into the work of the British Council in South Africa to focus on training and education for black South Africans. The £150,000 per year increase in the British Council's budget from 1979 was funded by the ODM. Prior to this the ODM had been very reluctant to support projects in South Africa as, despite the poverty in which much of the country's black majority lived, based solely on its Gross Domestic Product South Africa was considered a developed country (Oram, 1965). However, after on-off discussions with FCO officials over a number of years the ODM accepted the argument that South Africa was, in reality akin to two different countries. While the white minority enjoyed living standard in advance of some nations in the Global North, the living conditions of the subjugated black majority were more akin to a developing country, thus justifying ODM financial support.

By the early 1980s this new education policy towards South Africa was taking shape. In 1981, there were 60 South African students on scholarships in the UK with funding from the British Council, Overseas Development Administration (ODA), and the UN Education and Training Programme for Southern Africa (Hurd, 1981).¹⁰ The radical shift towards favouring black South Africans was highlighted by the fact that only six of these award holders were white, which was a drastic change from 20 years previously when the vast majority of British Council scholarships went to that minority group.

It should also be noted, however, that as in previous years the British Council's presence in South Africa, and provision of scholarships to the country continued to draw criticism. In March 1980, for example, members of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants, the trade union that represented the British Council's staff, put pressure on the organisation to adhere more closely to the academic boycott (Fieldhouse, 2005:110). The Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) also argued against this increase in educational support for black South Africans. In 1983, AAM Executive Secretary Mike Terry warned the British Council that this

policy would do little to change the NP government's stance and argued that it 'may actually serve to further the aims of an evil and oppressive government' (Fieldhouse, 2005:110).

However, as Roger Fieldhouse argues, the AAM's position was greatly weakened by the willingness of leading anti-apartheid activists inside South Africa to undertake British Council awards. This undermined the academic boycott and helped legitimise the British Council's work in the country to those initially suspicious of its motives (Fieldhouse, 2005:111). Beyers Naudé and Desmond Tutu were also keen advocates of the British Council's work in South Africa. Naudé was an Afrikaner theologian who had been under house arrest from 1977 to 1984 due to his anti-apartheid stance, while Tutu was the Archbishop of Johannesburg and a patron of the United Democratic Front, a loose body of religious groups, trade unionists, and student activists which acted as the main internal opposition to apartheid. Naude and Tutu both emphasised to the British Council representative how important it was that grassroots campaigners were given opportunities for greater education and training. This was not just for practical reasons but as a way of offsetting the 'hatred for

¹⁰ The ODM was downgraded from a ministry to a department within the FCO under the Conservative government which came to power in 1979.

whites' that had developed amongst many activists which could prove a hindrance to a peaceful transition of power in the country (Underwood, 1986). Similarly, in 1987 a group of black opposition leaders told the British Ambassador, Robin Renwick that they were enthusiastic about the scholarships and awards on offer from the UK as 'these might be used to help prepare people for the future participation in government' (Salmon & Jewitt, 2019: 90). As stated, this was also the motivation behind British policymaker's decision to rapidly expand cultural diplomacy in the 1980s, and laid the ground work for close contact between the British Council and ANC government after South Africa's first truly democratic election in 1994 (Phillips, 2022).

By the end of the 1980s, Britain had a vast educational programme in South Africa, while not all programmes were funded by the British Council it played a significant part of the organisation and administration of most scholarships. The focus of support

had also been broadened to include both undergraduate scholarships and pre-university courses in Further Education colleges in the UK. Additionally, the British Council also worked with a range of organisations in South Africa to help advance black education in the country. The British Council headquarters was moved from Pretoria to Johannesburg in 1987. This decision was taken as it was felt this would mean the British Council was more accessible to the black majority. Many civil 'non-formal educational and cultural groupings' were based in Johannesburg, which was far more diverse than the capital Pretoria which remained an Afrikaner orientated city where 'every second white wears a uniform' (Baker, 1987). These links also had a commercial benefit after the end of apartheid as the British Council was well placed to bid for contract work in the field of education and training (Phillips, 2022).

The experience of scholars and sponsored visitors to the UK in the 1980s and 1990s

The experiences of former British Council scholars offer a fascinating insight into the effect these visits had on their perception of the UK.¹¹ Few individuals could have more of a fascinating trajectory than Barry Masoga, who initially undertook a British Council funded visit in 1982. Masoga was a keen advocate of vocational education and, with much of the focus on young people's education, felt there was a growing need for adult education and vocational training in South Africa. He set up his own scheme in conjunction with the Educational Opportunities Council (an affiliate of the South African Council of Churches), whereby he taught adult literacy classes in evenings and weekends in Roodepoort. The British Consulate in Johannesburg became aware of what Masoga was doing and took an interest in his work. The Consulate General approached Masoga and asked how they could help. Initially it was in simple ways such as the purchase of material which could be used in the classroom, however later he mentioned an interest in gaining more training to improve his

teaching skills. The British Consulate supported Masoga's application for a British Council bursary and he visited the UK for three months in 1982. During his visit he developed a close relationship with his project officer Sir George Whittle, who had recently retired as a school and college inspector. Masoga discussed how important this relationship was for him, not just in terms of helping him develop his educational skills, but also in helping him break down his prejudices against white people. Masoga stated that he left South Africa with a 'terrible attitude' owing to the horrendous racism he had experienced in his life. He never thought he would 'engage with a white man' but Whittle was 'like a father' to him (Masoga, 2022). Masoga stated that he was 'very aggressive' when he left South Africa but his time in the UK, and relationship with Whittle in particular, helped in channel his anger in a 'different way'.

During the visit Masoga was interviewed by the University of Hull and representatives of the ODA who offered him a scholarship to undertake an undergraduate degree beginning the following year. Masoga enjoyed his time at Hull, however, Britain had its own issues with racism and Masoga felt aggrieved by his treatment, and that of a Nigerian

11 This continues to be a topic of interest to contemporary practitioners engaged in cultural relations (British Council, 2021c; Dalgleish, 2021).

team mate, in the university football team by the white coaches. Only one of the two ever started a match and would be substituted for one another, suggesting that the coaches could only tolerate one black player in the starting 11 at one time. Masoga, along with several other African students at Hull, took this complaint to the university Vice Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor agreed to a meeting and responded to Masoga's complaints accordingly as well as inviting him to a formal dinner, where ideas were discussed about how the university could help black students in South Africa.

Upon his return to South Africa Masoga set up a school in Braamfontein which focussed on helping black students prepare for university study. He then took up a role at the British Council in 1987. A key part of this role was developing closer relations with the black community, something which, despite the apparent change in policy in 1979, Masoga felt the British Council had struggled to achieve. Masoga contended that the decision to move the British Council headquarters to Johannesburg in 1987 was crucial to correcting this as to many black South Africans Pretoria was considered to be the 'heart of the beast' (Masoga, 2022).

Geoff Schreiner, who worked for the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) a multi-racial

confederation of unions, took up a British Council scholarship in 1986 to undertake a master's degree in the sociology of labour at Warwick University. Schreiner spoke very positively about his visit and stated that this did improve his perception of Britain, however not in a way that British policymakers would have liked. Rather than developing a fondness for British institutions, Schreiner spoke positively about meeting left-wing grassroots activists campaigning against apartheid, and other left-wing causes (Schreiner, 2022). Nonetheless, there is a school of thought amongst theorists of cultural diplomacy that by disposing visiting scholars to critics of their host country can enhance their views of this country by demonstrating the freedom of that country's individuals to speak out against their state while also demonstrating the plurality of ideas in that society. Another potential weakness of this visit was the lack of follow up by the British Council after Schreiner return to South Africa. However, he self-deprecatingly noted that this might have been because, unlike many of his comrades, he did not go on to become a leading member of the trade union movement or enter politics (Schreiner, 2022).

Another leading figure in the South African trades union movement who undertook a British Council funded award was June-Rose Nala. Nala had played a key role in the wave

of strikes which engulfed Durban in 1973 (for which she was detained for several months) and went on to become General Secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (South African History Online, 2013). Nala initially undertook a British-sponsored diploma at Ruskin College, Oxford, which specialised in worker education. Nala thrived on this course and successfully applied for a British Council award to undertake a master's degree at Warwick (Watkins, 1984). On her return to South Africa she worked as a lecturer at the University of Cape Town, before moving to the University of Natal. Unlike Schreiner she maintained contact with the British Council and approached the organisation for help in establishing a worker's college in Durban modelled on Ruskin, which was opened in 1991 (Sawers, 1988). She now lives in Oxford where her daughter is a Labour Party Councillor.

While many of those who came on courses to the UK were positive about their experiences, this was not always the case. Neville Alexander, a 'coloured' campaigner, academic and Robben Island 'graduate', and Karen Press, a white Jewish radical educationalist and poet, were fiercely critical of a course they attended in the UK in 1984. Alexander and Press were both members of The South Africa Committee for Higher Education (SACHED), an organisation founded in 1959 as

an 'innovative response' to the University Extension Act designed to 'provide alternative access to tertiary education through correspondence education with the University of London' (Nonyongo, & Ngegebule 1993:40). While theoretically ideal targets for educational support from the British Council they were disappointed with their course as they felt that the programme was too focused on the UK experience and gave little opportunity for audience participation (Nielson, 1984). This perhaps indicates that educationalists involved in courses like this were still, at this time, driven in part by a paternalistic approach to engaging with individuals from the 'developing world', possibly an indication that aspects of colonial thinking had filtered into post-colonial educational contact. The feeling on the part of Press and Alexander could also be related to a perception of the British Council as a 'colonial organisation' owing to its close relationship with the British government; a perception which persists in other nations who were impacted by British imperialism to this day (British Council & Goethe Institute, 2018b: 7). This highlights that care must be taken to ensure that courses are designed to take the views and experiences of attendees into consideration and tailored to meet their needs.

Despite Alexander and Press' apparent dissatisfaction with their British Council sponsored course, contact with individuals like this, particularly Alexander, was used as a counter to arguments that by continuing to provide educational support to South Africa the British Council was simply 'ameliorating Apartheid' (Renwick, 2015: 47). Alexander was clearly anything but a stooge, and the fact he was willing to engage with the British Council gave the organisation greater credibility amongst black South Africans who were initially suspicious of its work and motives. Indeed, in 1985 the British Cultural Advisor Richard Watkins claimed that a Black Consciousness Movement activist was 'totally dumbfounded' when he told him about Alexander's contact with the British Council and the organisations 'credibility soared' amongst anti-apartheid groups in South Africa (Watkins, 1985a).

Another scholar who did not have a particularly positive experience was Lucus Sigela, an organiser for the South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Sigela's negative experience appears to have derived from poor communication and planning between the various

stakeholders in the process of granting and administering his award. The British Council was responsible for administering the ODA funded work within South Africa; however, it was not always an easy relationship. British Council officials in South Africa were often faced with long waits for funding to be arranged in London. Sigela was one of the first black trade unionists to be granted an award directly from the ODA in September 1984, but had to wait until March 1985 before he was able to start his course with the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in the UK (Tarimo 1985a). Despite these difficulties, the British Council believed a 'varied and useful training programme' was planned for Sigela, and it was hoped that he would enjoy the course and promote the value of such visits on his return to South Africa (Watkins, 1985b). Unfortunately, his visit was not a success and he had to return home early due to ongoing medical and mental health issues which it appears the British Council were not aware of (Tarimo, 1985b). In fact, Sigela had been shot during the Soweto Uprising and had lived with a bullet in his head since (Sigela-Hlongwane & Sigela-Mabasa, 2020).¹²

12 While it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss this point in depth, this example does raise the importance of a careful selection process which considers the prior experiences and personal circumstances of candidates for scholarships and bursaries. Once selected the British Council, and other similar organisations, have a duty of care to these individuals and must ensure that they are supported both academically and pastorally over the course of their award.

In a similar vein to Alexander and Press, other sponsored visitors to the UK did not necessarily lead to a more positive view of the country. Liz Floyd, for example, who worked for a non-government organisation focussing on occupational health which worked closely with the South African NUM, was surprised by the rather slow pace of life, both in the UK and Europe more broadly. When she visited the UK under a British Council scholarship she was particularly surprised that 10am was considered a relatively early meeting, and that civil servants she met would often take a one hour lunch break, consuming several pints of beer in the process before returning to work 'not sozzled, but not completely sober' which meant the afternoon's work did not go 'anywhere very fast' (Floyd, 2022).

Many scholars of cultural diplomacy contend that it works best when the 'target' has a similar culture to those deploying it (Nye, 2004:15). In theory, this should have been the case with Floyd, who described her background as 'British, English' with three of her four grandparents being born in the UK and having been brought up in a 'colonial enclave in Cape Town' (Floyd, 2022). Nonetheless, as she grew up Floyd became increasingly critical of this, and rather than solidify any pro-British sentiment her visit to the

UK actually helped her to understand more about where many of these unusual traditions and 'mimicry' had come from. In particular, she compared the formal dinners and gowns worn at the University of Oxford where she attended an event, with the traditions of institutions like the University of Cape Town.

During the negotiation process in the early 1990s, the British Council more overtly supported projects which were designed to help the development of a free and democratic South Africa. In 1992, for example, the British Council provided funding for a number of South African legal specialists to attend a conference in London organised by Jeffrey Jowell, the South African-born Professor of Public Law at the University of London.¹³ The conference was on administrative law, this was of particular interest to South African legal scholars who were, at the time, engaged in discussions over how such law should be designed in South Africa once the apartheid system was dismantled. When asked about the visit one of the attendees, Khanya Motshabi was very positive owing to the contacts he was able to make with a number of legal scholars from around the world. He also stated that he 'loved' visiting London as it was a 'very cosmopolitan city'

13 It should also be noted that Jowell was South African-born and married to Helen Suzman's daughter Frances. For more in Suzman see Renwick, R. (2013) *Helen Suzman: Bright Star in a Dark Chamber*. London: Biteback.

and ‘commercial centre of the world’ (Motshabi, 2022). Motshabi was also very pleased to have had the opportunity to learn ‘how the British legal profession works’ particularly in a country without a codified bill of rights (Motshabi, 2022). Karthy Govender, another British Council funded attendee was even more positive stating that ‘it was an excellent conference’ and a ‘precursor’ to the organisation of a series of workshops organised by Professor Hugh Corder, University of Cape Town, ‘to fundamentally change South African administrative law’ (Govender, 2021). These workshops formed the basis of the three Breakwater Declarations from which ‘major legislation emanated’. While being careful not to exaggerate Govender stated that, to an extent, administrative law in South Africa today ‘gets its genesis from that conference in London’ (Govender, 2021).



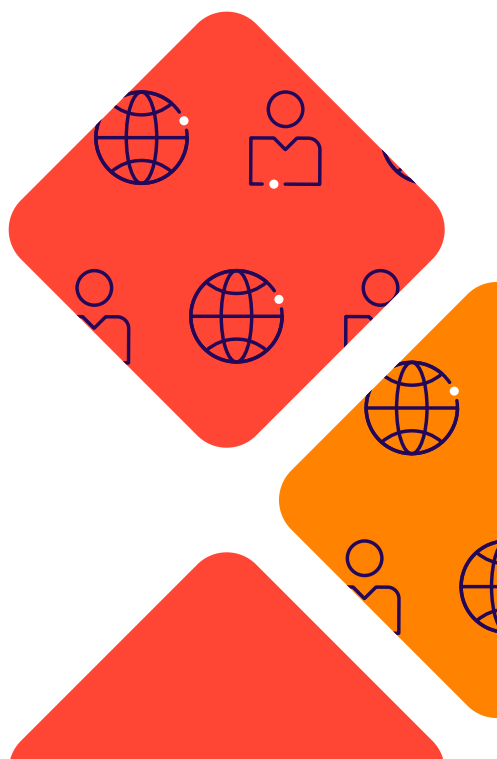
Conclusion

It is clear from this essay that the British Council's work in South Africa is a fascinating case study from which to analyse the promotion of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations in a pariah state. As has been demonstrated, at times the British Council's presence in South Africa was controversial, particularly during its early years in the country when it prioritised contact with white South Africans and essentially vetted black candidates prior to offering awards. However, if the British Council had not taken this approach it may well have been forced out of the country. While this would arguably have been the most moral course of action, and would have certainly enhanced the British Council's reputation elsewhere, it would have seen an important means by which to promote cultural relations removed from the country. By maintaining a presence in South Africa the British Council was able to implement its charter objectives which in turn contributed to the British government's policy goals. This demonstrates that continuing to use cultural relations as a form of engagement with pariah states can have both instrumentalist and intrinsic value, and the British Council, due to its independence from government, is well placed to facilitate this. While historic in its analysis these conclusions are still

relevant to the British Council's work today, which often involves navigating difficult local circumstances, and engage in a balancing act between different interest groups in fragmented states or societies in transition (British Council & Goethe Institute, 2018b).

In South Africa, British officials sought the gradual dismantling of apartheid, a peaceful transition to democracy, and the protection of British economic interests. In the cold-hearted world of diplomacy, for the British Council to impact these it needed to maintain a presence in South Africa despite the well justified criticism it received for working within the framework of apartheid. This became even more apparent when the British Council, once it was established in the country, began to focus more on providing educational assistance to the black majority. Indeed, the British Council grew in importance over the course of the 1980s as a conduit for efforts on the part of the British government to develop contacts with leading members of the internal black leaders and their allies. If the British Council had withdrawn from South Africa in the early 1960s, as critics of its work there called for, it would not have been in a position to help these individuals and to begin to

establish contact with future leaders. While the British Council's work was far more defensible from this point onwards, it still received criticism for breaching the academic boycott and taking away the responsibility from the South African government for providing educational opportunities for all of its citizens regardless of race. Nonetheless, many South Africans, even those closely involved with internal opposition and sympathetic to the liberation movements, were willing to undertake British Council awards as they saw the opportunities it provided as key to helping build a new South Africa. This continued after the end of apartheid and, in the words of Les Phillips, who was the British Council Director in South Africa from 1994 to 1997, the organisation was 'knocking on an open door' when it sought to expand its work in the country under the ANC government elected in 1994 (Phillips, 2022).



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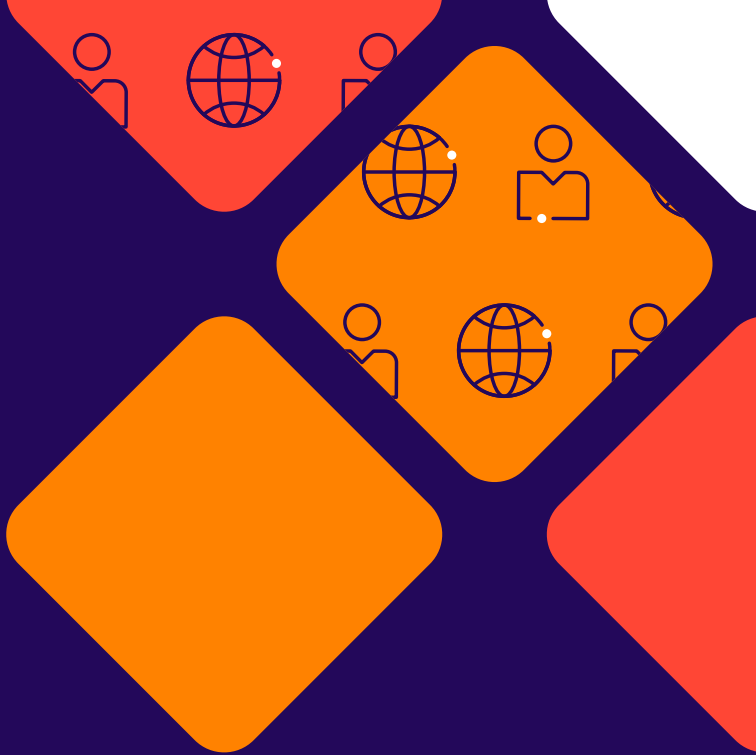
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