

Nov 04, 2016 by [Adam Clayton Powell, III](#)

African National Congress Before and After 1993: A Study In Public Diplomacy Of A Non-State Actor ^[1]

GRAHAMSTOWN, South Africa – Public diplomacy is usually identified with and examined as the use of “soft power” by one nation or another. But the public diplomacy of non-state actors has had an impact sometimes even more profound than the efforts of the most powerful governments.

Any number of NGOs can claim a major impact on policies of governments and even world organizations through efforts in what could be characterized as public diplomacy, efforts that defeated far better organized and resourced forces arrayed against them.

Here in South Africa, the downfall of apartheid, the first multi-racial election in 1993 and the victory at the ballot box of the formerly outlawed African National Congress remains a source of considerable pride and celebration. And there is also an examination of the public diplomacy tools used by the ANC – especially music, arts and culture – as key elements in the ANC’s victory over the apartheid government, which possessed far more “hard power.”

An article, “Remix of struggle songs hits a dissonant crescendo,” published [here](#) Sunday describes many of these tools; particularly music, much of it derived from the music of the church. This will be familiar to Americans familiar with “We Shall Overcome” and other anthems of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Since the election of the ANC in 1994, the South African government has developed a strong public diplomacy program, using music and culture to project the country’s identity to the world.

However, this article argues that the ANC in its role as ruling party may not be fully utilizing its musical and cultural tradition inside the country. Again, there may be parallels to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and with other movements in the U.S. and in other parts of the world. But that is another blog . . .
