Rising Powers Mourn the Death of Nelson Mandela

On December 5, former South African President Nelson Mandela, died at age 95. Mandela served 27 years in prison for anti-apartheid activities and led his country into a new era of freedom and democracy. In this Policy Alert, we examine commentary from China, Russia, India, South Korea, Japan, and Brazil on the legacy of one of the greatest political leaders in history.

CHINA

The media and government officials praised Mandela for his contributions to South Africa's development. Mandela's death dominated major Chinese TV channels, while Baidu, the largest Chinese search engine, turned its search page background all-gray in mourning for Mandela.

- Chinese president Xi Jinping lauded Mandela as a "world-renowned statesman" and an active champion of Sino-South African friendship and cooperation.
- "Mandela was not perfect, and the country he leaves behind still faces many problems. But despite his shortcomings, he leaves the world an inheritance to treasure," wrote China Daily.
- The government-run Global Times said, "One of Mandela's points of significance is that both the West and the East identify with him. This consensus is very precious for this conflict-ridden world."
- "Mandela's extraordinary global appeal has been attributed to [his] unaffected forgiveness, along with charisma and self-deprecating humor. It is hard to imagine that anyone less exceptional could orchestrate the painful national reconciliation that enabled peaceful transition to majority rule, under which he became the country's first black president," lamented the South China Morning Post.

RUSSIA

Russian dignitaries expressed an outpouring of sympathy and regret at the loss of Nelson Mandela.

- Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed condolences and admiration at Mandela's strength of character. "A brave man and a wise leader, Nelson Mandela rightfully earned great respect at home and high prestige abroad," Putin wrote. "The memory of Nelson Mandela will forever remain in the hearts of millions of Russians."
- Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov wrote in the South African Embassy's Condolence Book, "Mandela devoted his life to the struggle for the freedom of the country and every South African citizen. The strength of mind, moral and the power of conviction were his main instruments."
- "His memory, memory of his life, his choice, his courage, his manliness in the most difficult situations, of his true love for his country, should remain forever in our hearts," remarked Mikhail Margelov, head of the international affairs committee of the Federation Council's upper
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INDIA
Indian leaders and media outlets paid tributes to Nelson Mandela, who was remembered as "South Africa's Gandhi" for his embodiment of Mahatma Gandhi's values and ideals.

- Prime Minister Manmohan Singh hailed Mandela as "a true Gandhian." "He represented the conscience of the world. He was a beacon of hope for those struggling against oppression. A giant among men has passed away. This is as much India's loss as South Africa's."
- Bharatiya Janata Party's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi said the world has lost an "apostle of peace" in Mandela's demise. "Many of us are not fortunate to see Gandhi alive. We are blessed to see the life of Nelson Mandela, who embodied his values and ideals."
- The Economic Times lauded Mandela as "a message of peace and hope, a moral authority and guide whose presence and life seemed to reassure us that a better world is yet possible."
- The Indian Express joined the praise, saying that "He taught us how to be human and humane and how to use political power to this end."
- The Business Journal took a critical view on Mandela's often overlooked economic legacy, which it characterized as "too timid Keynesianism." His "center-left economic policies that displayed an uncharacteristic lack of vision have yet to produce the prosperity and decline in inequality the great man must have hoped for."

JAPAN
Japanese leaders and newspapers mourned the death of Nelson Mandela, as Crown Prince Naruhito left for South Africa to attend the funeral service.

- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hailed Mandela as a "great leader...who fought a strong will to eliminate apartheid and achieved a great deal by putting national reconciliation at the center of his nation-building."
- Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida offered his condolences: "I express from my heart respect for the achievements of the former South African president and hope that the government and people of South Africa will get over their grief and proceed to develop their country."
- The Asahi Shimbun praised Mandela as "a truly great leader who preached forgiveness to the people, as would an affectionate father to his children," emphasizing the importance of his philosophy of peaceful coexistence to today's world, which still continues to be plagued by various kinds of conflict driven by hatred and distrust.
- The Sankei Shimbun also drew a lesson from Mandela's vision of forgiveness, reconciliation, and optimism for bringing about peaceful political transition in many parts of the world that are facing internal conflict and difficult political transformation.

SOUTH KOREA
South Korean leaders joined the rest of the world in mourning the demise of Nelson Mandela.

- President Park Geun-hye offered her condolences, calling him "a great statesman who peacefully ended the apartheid that divided South Africa for a long time." "His profound contributions will be the cornerstones of world peace and forever cherished in our hearts."
- Rep. Choi Kyung-hwan, the floor leader of the ruling Saenuri Party, expressed his respect for the African leader. "A great star of mankind who symbolized democracy and a peaceful campaign for human rights has fallen."
- Kim Han-gil, the chief of the main opposition Democratic Party, also extended his condolences. "Mandela's ideal of a democratic and free society where people live harmoniously with equal opportunities will remain in our hearts for a long time."

BRAZIL
Mandela was remembered in Brazil as the "greatest person of the 20th century."

- Folha reported the government's official statement: "The Brazilian government and people are
saddened to receive the news of Nelson Mandela’s death. The greatest person of the 20th century, Mandela led with passion and intelligence one of the most important human being emancipation efforts in modern history."

- President [Rousseff](http://www.risingpowersinitiative.org) is one of six heads of state who spoke at the former South African leaders funeral. Former presidents Lula Inacio da Silva, Fernando Cardoso, Fernando Collor and Jose Sarney also attended.

POLICY ALERTS of the Rising Powers Initiative inform U.S. policymakers and media professionals of the ongoing debates in China, India, Russia, Japan, and South Korea on current issues and events relevant to American foreign policy. The Rising Powers Initiative includes a research project that identifies and tracks the worldviews of major and aspiring powers in Asia and Eurasia. This project is supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

We are excited to announce that the Elliott School's new [Brazil Initiative](http://www.risingpowersinitiative.org) will be joining the Rising Powers Policy Alerts, giving voice to the 'B' in 'BRIC.' The Brazil Initiative promotes improved understanding of Brazil through hosting special events and research related to Brazil.

*Find the Brazil Initiative online: esbi@gwu.edu; Facebook; Twitter*

For further information and analysis, visit the Rising Powers website and blog at [http://www.risingpowersinitiative.org](http://www.risingpowersinitiative.org)

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