

SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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FOREWORD

Over the past thirty-eight years South African foreign policy has been preoccupied with the struggle to assert South Africa's right to exist and participate freely in international affairs, regardless of its internal socio-political system. Continued international criticism and hostility towards South Africa, because of its racial policies, largely shaped its external relations and created the main external dangers for it. Consequently, South African foreign policy makers have been landed with the task of trying to end international diplomatic hostility and to defend and gain acceptance of apartheid.

Initially, South Africa sought to achieve these ends by appealing to the West. Basically, the South African argument was that it was a member of the Western 'Community' in every sense except for the geographical. Continued isolation forced South Africa to turn to the newly-independent countries and attempt to solve its diplomatic problems through them. South Africa had hardly embarked on this course when a new challenge emerged from the Southern African Liberation movements. South^{ern}/Africa became the focus of South African attempts to effect a foreign policy with more options; in other words, one whose scope was not limited to justification and defence of its domestic political system.

For all the time that the South African struggle to survive¹ has been going on, other developments have occurred in Africa. Of most significance for the South African government are the regional developments leading to the independence of Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This situation emphasises South Africa's almost total geographical isolation in addition to its political isolation.

This sub-thesis traces the evolution of South Africa's traditional role in post-war international politics for the following reasons: firstly, to indicate the events by which Southern Africa - not Western Europe or the rest of Africa - became the focus of South Africa's struggle for 'social' acceptance into the international community. Then finally,^{it seeks} to establish if regional developments reflect diplomatic and political acceptance of South Africa by her neighbours which would mean success at least for South Africa.

¹ Here the term 'struggle to survive' is used to describe the struggle for the survival of a white and especially Afrikaaner dominated society in South Africa. This Afrikaaner predominance is what apartheid seeks to protect and perpetuate.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: DISILLUSIONMENT, ISOLATION AND THE SEARCH FOR CONTINENTAL SUPREMACY AND ACCEPTANCE

In retrospect, certain aspects of international politics during the life of the League of Nations, and after, can be identified as indicating the direction that international politics eventually followed at the end of the Second World War. However, none of the world leaders were, at that time, able to foresee the almost revolutionary changes that transformed world politics after 1945. In this respect, the South African Prime Minister, Field Marshal Jan C. Smuts, was no different from other statesmen who, in the closing phases of the war, made a concerted effort to establish the framework of an International Organisation that might serve the world better, in the preservation and maintenance of peace, than its predecessor. It was Smuts who introduced the notion of 'fundamental human rights' into the Charter, at San Francisco. He certainly had no idea that his suggestion that members should

... reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women ...¹

would be quoted against him and future South African Prime Ministers, from the first United Nations (U.N.) meeting.

¹ Barber, J., South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945-1970, London, 1973, p.433.

South Africa's post-war position was such that Smuts could only hope for its enhanced status and prestige in world affairs, because of the role it had played during the war, and Smuts' own participation in post-war preparations for the establishment of the U.N.

As early as 1943, Smuts had assessed the direction the war was taking and concluded that the United States and Russia would emerge as the leading powers, leaving a power vacuum in Europe.² According to Smuts' calculations, such a situation was potentially dangerous and destabilising unless a third power was created to play the role of mediator.³ The ideal country for this role was, as Smuts saw it, Britain because it was the centre of a Commonwealth. The Commonwealth could be extended in membership to include the small powers of Europe in addition to the dominions. This line of thinking reflected Smuts' conviction that small powers would not find safety from isolation in any future order. Therefore, the small powers of the world would have to accept the primacy of Great Powers, and concentrate on building the strength and influence of the Commonwealth. It was with the belief that such a situation would be the post-war outcome that Smuts directed his energies towards strengthening South Africa's links with Britain, despite Nationalist disapproval at home.⁴ For Smuts, the Commonwealth

² Hancock, W.K., Smuts 2: The Fields of Force 1919-1950, Cambridge, 1968, pp.408-10.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Barber, *op.cit.*, pp.45-50. Carter, G.M., The Politics of Inequality. South Africa since 1948, London, 1958, pp.13-16. The South African Nationalist Party had always felt that Smuts made too much of Britain and the Commonwealth connection.

was the means by which South Africa would take its place among the Western countries as their major link in Africa. Smuts had always felt that the borders of South Africa should be 'far flung into the heart of Africa',⁵ and the Commonwealth links would provide a good basis for the extension of South African leadership and influence throughout Africa.

However, by 1948, when the Nationalist Party came into power in South Africa, it was clear that South Africa's relations with other states, at the United Nations, would increasingly be shaped by her internal racial policies. The attack on South Africa had initially focused on South Africa's administration of South West Africa, and on the treatment of Indians within the Union.⁶ These specific issues soon ceased to be the main objections raised by South Africa's critics, as the attacks gradually became associated with the drive against colonialism. This anti-colonialist drive was initially led by the newly-Independent Asian States, who were supported by both the United States and the Soviet Union. The other major Western powers who had trade links with South Africa⁷ criticised the Union's internal policies but agreed with the Union's objection that under Article 2(7) of the ^{U.N.} Charter no state had the right to interfere in its domestic affairs.

⁵ Barber, op.cit., p.19.

⁶ South Africa was ^{known as} a Union from 1910 till 1961, when it became a Republic.

⁷ At this time, Britain and France were South Africa's main trading partners.

All things considered, the period between 1945 and 1960 was particularly worrying and filled with uncertainty for the South African leaders of that time. The hostility at the United Nations was more of a surprise for Smuts than for the post-1948 South African leaders. Smuts had placed so much faith in the Great Powers, the United Nations and the Commonwealth and they all one after the other failed to live up to his expectations. Perhaps the most disappointing occurrence for Smuts was the direction that the Commonwealth took in extending membership to former colonial territories.⁸ He had not bargained for this, and assessed correctly, that this would transform it into another sounding board for South Africa's critics.

In response to this international challenge, the South African governments, from 1948 to 1960, tried to prevent in every way open to them the withdrawal of the Imperial powers from Africa. This was vital to South Africa's survival because decolonisation implied that South Africa would be surrounded by hostile black states. The South Africans also feared that such concessions to Africans, elsewhere on the continent, would encourage the rise of African nationalism within the Union itself.

The main arguments put forward by the various South African governments, during this period, were based on their convictions with regard to the Africans in general.⁹ Their

⁸ Barber, op.cit., pp.38-40.

⁹ Nolutshungu, S.C., South Africa in Africa, Manchester, 1975, pp.46-48. Pelzer, A.N. (ed), Verwoerd Speaks. Speeches 1948-1966, Johannesburg, 1966, pp.513-16.

basic contention was that the Africans were to a large extent still immature and very much in need of guidance. The extension of this argument was that all Africans were the responsibility of both the Western Europeans, and the white South Africans who had a civilising mission in Africa. The South Africans were also convinced that the granting of independence to Africans would mean the end of Western influence on the continent and herald that of the East, through Communism.¹⁰ Again the South African convictions that Communist penetration would be the result of decolonisation were based on their belief that the African leaders' immaturity made them vulnerable and gullible, and therefore sure targets of Communist influence.

South Africa tried to strengthen its perception of a Communist threat in Africa by saying that once the Communists had taken over elsewhere in Africa, their next target would be South Africa because of her mineral wealth and the Cape Sea Route.¹¹ Therefore they appeared to the Western powers to concentrate on this threat to their influence and interests. The South Africans suggested that what Africa needed, more than decolonisation, was either an extension of the North Atlantic Treaty or the creation of a South Atlantic Treaty

¹⁰ The South African fear of Communism was first articulated at this time and has become a feature of South African statements. The South Africans have always identified themselves as a Western state, which is where their anti-communism stems from.

¹¹ Magomba, A., The Foreign Policy of Despair: Africa and the Sale of Arms to South Africa, East Africa Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Kampala, Dar-es-Salaam, 1973, pp.15-20.

Organisation. For a number of reasons,¹² this South African ploy to retain colonial control within Africa, through a defence pact in which South Africa would assume leadership in Africa, was unsuccessful. As the British Prime Minister, Sir Harold Macmillan put it, the South Africans had to accept the 'winds of change'.¹³ Macmillan's 'winds of change' speech delivered whilst he was on a visit to South Africa, reflected what the British and other governments realised, that South Africa had not yet accepted the inevitability of the situation. This fact was evident from South African attempts to persuade the Imperial powers that the establishment of a policy of cooperation between South Africa and the African countries south of the Sahara, in the wider framework of South Africa's traditional links with the Western nations, would enable the Union to be the permanent link between the former colonies and the West. In this way, South Africa would be the Western representative in Africa as an indication that Western civilisation and therefore influence was still predominant. Clearly, the main aim behind such proposals was to make Africa safe for the status quo in South Africa. The thinking behind it was that, if the Western countries could be persuaded to establish links between their colonies and South Africa, then the new states could be made to realise that South Africa had a positive role to play in their futures, and thus accept apartheid.

¹² Spence, J.E., 'The Strategic Significance of South Africa', Year Book of World Affairs, 1973, pp.137-8.

¹³ Barber, op.cit., pp. Nolutshungu, op.cit., pp.

While it is true that a policy of coexistence between the African colonies and South Africa would have been to the former's advantage [because of South Africa's economic and technological superiority] the Union government's proposals were vague, and did not indicate exactly how such links would be established and put into practice.¹⁴ It becomes clear that, in this period, South Africa was merely grasping for straws: on the one hand trying to ensure Imperial control over Africa/^{was retained} and on the other attempting to establish diplomatic contacts with African countries, in the first trickle of Independence. The manner in which the Union tried to establish direct diplomatic links with newly-independent African countries, notably Ghana, was half-hearted and clumsy. And the South African support of Tshombe of Katanga's abortive secession, during the Congo crisis, reflects the desperation with which South Africa was trying to make Africa safe for the continuation^a of its internal racial policies. In the Congo case the South African government made a great show of its eagerness to go to the aid of a 'fellow African'.¹⁵ This was an attempt to gain at least one friend on the continent and show the world that

¹⁴ Potholm, C.P. and Dale, R. (eds), Southern Africa in Perspective. Essays in Regional Politics, London, New York, 1972, Part Two. 'South African Foreign Policy: The Outward Movement', J.E. Spence, p.48.

¹⁵ All three South African Nationalist Party leaders, Malan, Strijdom and Verwoerd had a vague notion of establishing diplomatic contacts with new African states. But because of their internal racial policies/were never explicit on how diplomatic representation would be established in the Union by these states.

they /

South Africa's internal racial policy was acceptable to Africans, and so should cease to become an issue at international forums. At the same time the South African government would have gained a basis^e, north of southern Africa, from which they could extend the same ties with other emergent African states, thus putting an end to their problems once and for all.

Developments within South Africa provide further evidence of the fact that South Africa sought to make Africa^a safer place for its^{own} survival, and to prevent international action, rather than to make any meaningful concessions. The threat of international action was not at that time an unrealistic expectation because the militarist states, at the United Nations, had constantly called for the imposition of economic sanctions against the Union, or direct military action. South Africa had no assurance that its defence, of resorting to Article 2(7) of the Charter, and the support of the moderate states, would prevent the implementation of those demands. A clear indication of South Africa's uncertainty was given by its declaration in November 1956 that South Africa would reduce its participation in the United Nations till such time as

... the United Nations shows that it is prepared to act in accordance with the spirit of San Francisco... and to conform to the principles (of) Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter.¹⁶

¹⁶ Nolutshungu, op.cit., p.78.

This announcement amounted to no more than an attempt to stop criticism, in view of the fact that South Africa returned to full representation in 1958 without prior assurance from member-states that the United Nations would refrain from such actions. Furthermore this move was followed up by an invitation to the Good Offices Committee of the General Assembly to discuss the matter with the South Africans. The aim was to show that the South Africans were more than willing to meet the other parties half-way.

The South Africans were not sure what the future held in store for them, and this is why their mood varied from being fiercely defensive to being more than ready to search for and reach a compromise. Their position was made more precarious by the realisation that when the African countries finally achieved independence, South Africa might be faced with a combined African military challenge, possibly backed by the Communists. It was primarily because of these fears that South Africa engaged in a massive military build-up in the late fifties to early sixties. The budget allocations for defence, during that period, were substantial and there was a sustained increase in defence spending.¹⁷ The rising expenditure was reflected not only in enlarged stocks of military hardware but in expansion of South Africa's own arms industry, with the result that by 1964, South Africa was producing its first automatic rifles.¹⁸ Despite the 1964

¹⁷ Barber, op.cit., pp.192-200.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

Security Council Arms Embargo on South Africa, the Union government continued to expand and improve its defence system with the aid of sympathetic Western countries, most notably France.

Laws passed by the South African government, such as the 'Suppression of Communism Act',¹⁹ to prevent any form of internal destabilization were in fact complementary to the overall military effort. The South African government was clearly strengthening itself against all possible threats that it might be faced with. In this respect the economic growth experienced by the Union within this period, was a great confidence booster for the South Africans. There was a period of economic difficulty following the 1960 Sharpeville crisis in which ⁶⁷ ~~many~~ Black South Africans were killed by South African police, but apart from that the South African economy grew steadily from the end of the Second World War.²⁰

The overall impact of these internal military and economic endeavours was evident in the changed policy of the South African government, from the mid-sixties onwards. This new policy, referred to as the 'outward looking' approach reflected the confidence which the South African government

¹⁹ Carter, op.cit., pp.15-18. Barber, op.cit., pp.54-60. The 'Suppression of Communism Act' and the 'Citizenship Act' of 1950 were only the first in a series of repressive South African legislation. It is interesting to note how from the very beginning the South Africans have readily identified any internal uprising as Communist engineered.

²⁰ Barber, op.cit., pp.200-204.

had in its ability to contend with any possible threat. The critical years of the Cold War were over, thus eliminating the danger of involvement in an East-West conflict. The newly-independent states of Africa had shown themselves to be too interested in maintaining their own internal political control to be able to do much more than criticise South Africa at the U.N. and the O.A.U. Finally, the lack of any direct international action following Sharpeville, showed the South African government that it could possibly handle internal threats to the stability of the government much as it wanted to at no higher price than increased verbal recriminations from the outside world. By the mid-sixties living with such criticism had become normal for South Africa, a bitter pill to swallow but not a cause for real concern. Furthermore, the imposing of economic sanctions on Rhodesia, in 1965, following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Ian Smith, meant the shifting of U.N. attention and recrimination to another white regime in Africa. In brief, South Africa could now sit back and examine the new circumstances, and decide how it was going to deal with them. This marked the beginning of a new era for South Africa, reflecting a new-found confidence and self-assurance based on a thriving economy and sophisticated military system. The economy's steady expansion, which had begun in the 1950s, was only temporarily affected by the Sharpeville shootings of 1960.

The Sharpeville shootings caused increased international criticism of the Union, and were interpreted by the United Nations as a threat to world peace. A clear indication of

international concern over the incidents was the large outflow of foreign capital from South Africa.²¹ The economic troubles of 1960 and 1961 apparently demonstrated the vulnerability of South Africa's economy to external pressure. Perhaps this was the most critical period of the South African issue, a time when it seemed that international action was imminent. South African isolation was augmented by the Union's forced withdrawal from several United Nations agencies.²² More significant however was its withdrawal from the Commonwealth to become a Republic in 1961 because the Afro-Asian states backed by Canada had refused to accept that a state which practised apartheid could continue to be a member of a multiracial community. Faced with this diplomatic isolation it is obvious why the foreign policy of the mid-sixties was so African-oriented.

The outward foreign policy was more than just a testimony to South African confidence in its military and economic superiority. It was a clear indication that the South Africans had come to terms with the reality of decolonisation and South Africa's position in a decolonised continent, because they felt that they could now cope with this reality. The time for the South Africans to play at concession-making while trying to prevent the inevitable from happening, was past. Once the tremors caused by Sharpeville were over,

²¹ *ibid.*, p.202.

²² Hodder, B.W., Africa Today, London, 1978, p.72.

the South African government was able to launch its campaign of wooing African states into acceptance of the status quo in South Africa, and securing the existence of Southern African buffer states around the Republic. The dialogue campaign through which the South African government aimed to establish diplomatic contacts with African countries north of the region would serve two purposes for the Republic. Firstly, it would, where successful, symbolise acceptance by African leaders of Apartheid and the right of South African governments to rule South Africa as they did. The corollary of this would be that the rest of the world would automatically follow suit, with some of the more militantly conservative countries taking South Africa's side. The second aspect of establishing diplomatic contact with these African countries was to secure economic links north of the region. By the mid-sixties the South African economy had expanded to the level where there was a capacity for industrial exports, and a need to establish markets for them outside the Republic. This situation could have been solved by increasing the earning power of the Black South Africans since the smaller percentage of white South Africans were not in a position to provide an adequate market for the increased industrial produce.²³ However, such a policy would have undermined the basic domestic policy of Apartheid, on which the survival of the white South Africans in their privileged positions rested.

²³ Nolutshungu, op.cit., pp.119-124.

The most dramatic manifestation of the outward looking policy occurred in 1967 when three Malawian Cabinet Ministers visited Pretoria and signed a trade pact with South Africa. This marked the beginning of a long and much criticised relationship, with President Banda of Malawi defending his South African association on the grounds that

... being a good African does not mean cutting your economic throat.²⁴

As Spence²⁵ points out, this display of economic realism by Malawi reinforced the traditional South African belief that economic self-interest of the African states would ultimately triumph over ideological considerations. Perhaps this belief was further reinforced by the mixed reactions of the African countries to South Africa's offer of a dialogue.

In May 1963, when the Heads of the newly-Independent African States met to establish the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.) they resolved to speed up the liberation of African peoples still under foreign or white domination. It is noteworthy that it was only when the issue of the liberation of South Africa was raised that the split between the moderate African leaders and the more radical group began to be resolved.²⁶ It can be argued that if it had not been for the situation in Southern Africa the new African states would not have been

²⁴ Potholm & Dale (eds), op.cit. Essay by Spence, J.E., op.cit., p.51.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Prior to the formation of the O.A.U. the African leaders had been divided on the issue of Pan-African unity. The radical group of African states, led by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, advocating a federation of African Independent States, and the more moderate ones advocating the total liberation of Africa first, followed by economic 'independence' after which further unity would be considered.

able to settle their ideological differences. The 1963 O.A.U. resolution on Southern Africa had been partly responsible for South Africa's fears of concerted military action by the African states.

In November 1966, when B.J. Vorster became Prime Minister in South Africa, he declared that he would deal with the rising Nationalist liberation movements in Southern Africa as one does with enemies in a war. A few years later the O.A.U. reaffirmed their commitment to the Southern African liberation struggle.²⁷ The O.A.U. also took exception to the establishment of cordial relations between Malawi and South Africa. However, when it came to the crunch, there were African leaders, notably from the former moderate group, who considered that it might not be such a bad idea to sit down and discuss the Southern African problem with South Africa, and reach a peaceful agreement. This proposal, instigated by the President of the Ivory Coast, Houphouet-Boigny, constituted one of the major challenges to the O.A.U.'s Southern African position. However, the notion was rejected in the Organisation, by a 28-6 vote, leaving the South African government with no other option but to try and establish diplomatic links bilaterally with the African states. It was with this aim in mind that the South African government sent medical supplies and food to Biafra during the Civil War in Nigeria, a strategy showing South Africa's readiness to exploit any opportunity

²⁷ Potholm & Dale (eds), op.cit. Part Six, 'The Organization of African Unity and the Liberation of Southern Africa', Yashpal, Tandon, p.245.

by which the emerging African States could be balkanized and weakened thus making the achievement of its aim in Africa easier. Balkanization of Nigeria would have been extremely advantageous since that country's economic potential made it a plausible future threat. On the whole, no independent African country north of Zambia, ever really succumbed to the outward policy in the sense that Malawi did.²⁸ Any links that were established between the Republic and countries in West and East Africa were established secretly. No independent African state was prepared to give South Africa the recognition she wanted. Even in Southern Africa where the independent African countries were more directly threatened by South Africa's military might there was no African country, other than Malawi that was prepared to give in to South African diplomatic pressure to accord it recognition. It has been suggested²⁹ that the Lusaka Manifesto of April 1969 was a deference to South African military might and economic power, by the African Heads of State involved (particularly Nyerere and Kaunda) because of their proximity to the Republic. The Lusaka Manifesto represented a more conciliatory mood towards South Africa, stating that the African leaders would rather talk than kill, as long as it was clear that South Africa really intended to abandon Apartheid.³⁰ This Manifesto also stated that

²⁸ Nolutshungu, op.cit., p.267.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.266. The Lusaka Manifesto was the initiative of Presidents Kaunda and Nyerere, along with other Heads of States.

South Africa would be boycotted and remain isolated for as long as Apartheid persisted. The Lusaka Manifesto was subsequently adopted by the O.A.U. thus representing the attitude of most African states to South Africa's offer of dialogue, which has remained basically the same since.

The African response to the 'dialogue' aspect of South Africa's new approach in the continent also ^{indicated} ~~reflected~~ that the African leaders were not taken in by South Africa's Bantustan policy. The latter was an internal policy intended to demonstrate that Apartheid was not only just, but had a positive and progressive aspect to it. In keeping with the basic South African belief in separate development, the establishment of Bantustans involved separating Black South Africans according to their linguistic tribal groupings and settling them in different parts of the Republic, set aside exclusively for them. The South African government described them as different nationalities, each with a right to develop on their own with the help and guidance of South Africa. The long-term aim was to grant 'independence' to these areas once the Republic felt that they were economically and administratively viable as independent entities. The Bantustans were to be the example of the economic co-operation South Africa wanted with the rest of Africa.³¹

South Africa's outward policy with its economic attraction was perhaps most successful in Southern Africa. This was due

³¹ Barber, op.cit., pp.228-233.

to historical links³² established during colonialism, especially in the former British territories. The emergence of African Liberation movements in the region further strengthened the ties between South Africa, Portuguese Africa - Mocambique and Angola - and Rhodesia. In Rhodesia's case the imposition of economic sanctions by the United Nations, following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) of 1965, facilitated South African economic aims; especially with regard to Zambia which complied with the sanctions to its own economic detriment, when the trade arrangements with Tanzania entered difficulties because of development problems in the latter.³³ Eventually, Zambia was forced by its economic circumstances to resort to trade with South Africa, despite its militant stance.

In the former High Commission Territories, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, where the pre-existing economic links with the Republic were strongest, their strengthening was made easier for South Africa³⁴ by the inability of the three

³² Most links were in the form of Labour migration where a large number of Blacks from the former High Commission Territories and a few from Rhodesia sought work in South African mines and farms. Such links prevented a country like Swaziland from turning away from the Republic since most of her male population depended on the South African economy.

³³ Zambia tried to get its goods through Tanzania along the Tanzania/Zambia Railway but the route was not ideal and was affected by development problems in Dar-es-Salaam.

³⁴ By an agreement drawn up in 1910, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland belonged to the Southern African Customs Union, of which the only other member was South Africa. Under this agreement Botswana received 0.28%, Lesotho 0.89% and Swaziland 0.15% of total customs revenue collected. In 1969 the 1910 agreement was renegotiated with a slight increase for the three territories. Nolutshungu, op.cit., pp.130-131.

countries to follow outrightly militant standpoints in view of their economic dependence on the Republic, though Botswana was to adopt a more militant posture as the liberation struggle in Rhodesia progressed.

However such developments were for the future. What is obvious is that by the beginning of the seventies South Africa had achieved most if not all of what she wanted. Firstly, the various South African governments had managed to come to terms with the process of decolonisation once they realised that in reality it presented them with fewer threats than they had feared. Secondly, the rise of African Liberation movements in the Portuguese territories and Rhodesia removed South Africa from its place at the centre of world criticism. For as long as Portugal retained its African control and the Rhodesians theirs, South Africa was not only surrounded by buffer states, on the continent, but was no longer alone in the eyes of the world. Finally, the whole Southern African situation enabled South Africa to take advantage of its economic and military superiority. South Africa had sought leadership in Africa, at the end of the war and when denied this role, she took advantage of the changed circumstances and assumed economic and gradually military leadership in the Southern African region. The military role was to become more evident as the struggles for independence in Angola, Mocambique and Rhodesia gained momentum. However, as far as this period goes, what is clear is that South Africa had overcome the worst and came to realise that the situation was such that it could successfully

manipulate its regional economic dominance to further its political aims.

CHAPTER II

THE CHALLENGE TO WHITE SUPREMACY
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND SOUTH AFRICA'S RESPONSE

The South African government entered the seventies confident that it could successfully pursue an African policy that would secure for the Republic the role of the continent's formally acknowledged leading economic and military power, a place that South Africa had considered as rightfully belonging to it from the time that African decolonisation became an inescapable fact. However, developments in Southern Africa took a turn which made it imperative for South Africa to focus its attention on the region more than anywhere else in Africa, where the achievement of formal diplomatic acceptance into the family of African states was proving to be a trying task. The first indication that South Africa had of the need for greater consideration of regional affairs came when the Rhodesian Front, led by Ian Smith, made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) following the break-up of the Central African Federation with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.¹ Rhodesia's U.D.I. of November 11, 1965 formed the basis upon which African liberation movements were to increase in the region, as Britain unsuccessfully tried to find a solution to the Rhodesian crisis and reconcile Black and White interests in their Southern African colony.

¹ The Central African Federation which was known as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was comprised of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi).

The South African government's reaction to Ian Smith's action had been mixed, largely because on the one hand the situation assured South Africa of a potentially friendly neighbouring state, but on the other hand failure to solve the issue would add another undesirable dimension to international criticism of the Republic if it associated with the Rhodesian government. The last thing the South African government wanted was the emergence of a situation in the region that would distort its attempts to create an image of a state dedicated to the promotion and development of African interests. External criticism of Rhodesia might have offered the positive factor of turning some of the international attention away from South Africa but the situation was not without its negative aspects. Of these, the sure increase of African nationalism almost on the Republic's 'doorstep' was the most undesirable, because heightened African agitation in Rhodesia would undoubtedly encourage similar uprisings within the Republic itself, which had, up to the time of the Rhodesian U.D.I., managed to suppress all internal disturbances and was militarily well-developed to meet any externally-based threats. The ideal situation for the South African government was to keep such uprisings as far away from South Africa's borders as possible.² Thus, when the United Nations (U.N.) Security

² Potholm, C. & Dale, R. (eds), Southern Africa in Perspective: Essays in Regional Politics, London, New York, 1972, Part Five: J. Barber, 'Rhodesia and Interstate Relationships in Southern Africa', p.220.

Council called for an economic boycott of Rhodesian goods, and Britain refused to grant 'de jure' recognition to Rhodesia, South Africa decided to stand by the Rhodesian whites.

Before Rhodesia's U.D.I. the only links between South Africa and this territory had been economic. When the South African Union was first established, in 1910, South Africa had entertained the idea of incorporating Rhodesia but when the Rhodesian whites opposed this, no serious attempt to further the idea had been made after 1928. From the mid-twenties on South Africa and Rhodesia had developed along different lines, internally, as South Africa progressed towards segregation, and Rhodesia, under the Central African Federation attempted to become a multi-racial state. This aspect of internal developments in Rhodesia was one of the reasons why the Nationalist government in Pretoria³ had not sought to broach the idea of union again. Furthermore, the Afrikaansers would not have approved of a union that would strengthen the English-speaking sector of the South African community.⁴ However U.D.I. strengthened the pre-existing economic links as Rhodesia became almost totally dependent on South Africa for fuel and foreign currency, and a major trading route for Rhodesian exports and imports.

³ Pretoria is the South African city where the seat of government is located; the Parliament meets in Cape Town.

⁴ The majority of Rhodesia's white population was of British descent.

By the end of 1967, South African policy towards Rhodesia had extended beyond economic assistance to include some military aid, as South African police units were sent in to augment Rhodesian security forces in the Zambezi Valley. Thus, although South African military involvement in Rhodesia at this time was minimal, the Republic had made its final commitment to the white-ruled state on its northern borders. The South African government, with a record of legalistic resistance against 'interference in its domestic affairs', was aware that its association with Rhodesia's illegality would not go unnoticed in the international community. In anticipation of criticisms from this angle it sought to justify its involvement by claiming that the insurgents were communist-backed. The South African government also argued that

Logic dictated that [South Africa] should not abandon the Rhodesians because any action against (them) might next be turned against South Africa.⁵

This was in fact the real reason behind South African support of Rhodesian anti-guerrilla campaigns. South Africa also realised that if it stood by and allowed economic sanctions to succeed in Rhodesia, then the possibility of their imposition against the Republic would be increased.

South Africa thus became gradually involved in the Portuguese and Rhodesian anti-guerrilla campaigns at the possible cost of its Africa policy. The South African

⁵ Potholm, C. & Dale, R. (eds), op.cit., p.221.

government hoped that whilst it helped to maintain the white buffer states around it, it could still lure the Black African states to grant it diplomatic acceptance out of practical consideration, much in the same way as Malawi had had to.⁶ Furthermore while the level of guerrilla action in Southern Africa was low, as it was until the early seventies, South Africa's military involvement was minimal, especially in the Portuguese African territories.

South Africa had embarked on a course of intensive economic co-operation with the Portuguese colonies as part of its overall 'outward Foreign Policy'. There were more constraints on the establishment of close economic ties with the Portuguese territories of Angola and Mocambique than there had been with Rhodesia. Historically, South Africa and the Portuguese colonies had developed along different patterns. While both were considered as repressive regimes the Portuguese policy of assimilation⁷ was considered socially undesirable by the Afrikaners. Furthermore out of the three Portuguese territories (Angola, Mocambique and Guinea Bissau) (although Angola bordered South West Africa/Namibia), only Mocambique shared a border directly with the Republic, which is why the only economic links with South Africa had been those arising from Mocambicans who had migrated to South Africa

⁶ *ibid.*, Part Two: J.E. Spence, 'South African Foreign Policy: The Outward Movement', p.49.

⁷ Assimilation is the social process by which certain Africans could become 'honorary' members of the white society in French and Portuguese colonies.

to work on South African farms and mines. Thus, whilst the South African government made a concerted effort to establish economic links with Angola and Mocambique the use of military force in the Portuguese territories was more noticeably a technique of last resort. It was to be used as sparingly as possible, and then only where Portugal could no longer contain the guerrilla attacks.

Strategically, Angola was the more important to South Africa because of its ~~proximity~~^{adjacence} to the disputed territory of South West Africa which had been under South African Administration since the days of the League of Nations. South Africa had wanted to incorporate South West Africa into its borders in the immediate post-war era, on the grounds that the territory was in fact historically a de facto part of South Africa and had been developed and administered as such under the mandate system. South Africa's request to incorporate South West Africa instead of placing it under the United Nations' trusteeship system sparked what has proved to be a lengthy legal battle over the administration of the territory at the U.N. As with the conduct of its internal affairs South Africa's basic response to objections to its continued administration was placed in a legal framework with the Republic arguing that the U.N. was not legally the League of Nations' successor and therefore South Africa was not under any obligation to place the territory under U.N. trusteeship.

The South African government had been called on to withdraw from South West Africa by October 1969 following a Security Council Resolution⁸ (endorsing the General Assembly's 1966 Resolution) that the Republic had lost the right to administer the territory by failing to fulfill its obligations under the mandate. The South African government refused to even debate the issue on the grounds that it was not bound by an unlawful Resolution.⁹ The South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Hilgard Muller, reasserted South Africa's traditional stand that while recognising that the territory had a separate identity and status in International Law, and while the Republic respected the terms of the old mandate, it had no obligations to the United Nations in its administration of the territory. Furthermore, Muller argued that it was up to South Africa to annexe the territory if it so decided. The conflicting claims continued to be advanced in legal terms while in the territory itself African liberation movements emerged. It was in this context that Angola was of primary importance to the South African government. The Republic could not afford to let a black government come to power on the doorstep of a territory which South Africa not only considered to be rightfully hers, but in which it had already started implementing development measures intended

⁸ Britain and France abstained from voting on this issue.

⁹ Potholm, C. & Dale, R. (eds), op.cit. Barber, op.cit., p.276.

to make it a part of South Africa in all but name.¹⁰ If South West Africa was allowed to go to the Blacks either as a result of international action or African Nationalist endeavours, yet another precedent would be set for South African Blacks and worse still those Black Nationalists would be able to conduct their campaigns from next door to the Republic.

As the liberation movements increased in the region, more noticeably in the Portuguese colonies, the white-ruled Southern African states became diplomatically closer, constituting what has sometimes been referred to as the 'unholy alliance'.¹¹ Primarily because Portugal was a member of NATO, Portuguese support of the Republic at the U.N. partially made up for the negative consequences of South Africa's identification with regimes that were internationally seen as oppressive and dedicated to the prevention of change. But the most important effect for South Africa was that like U.D.I. the Portuguese colonial wars diverted some attention away from the Republic. South Africa was the dominant member of this triad and effectively of the Southern African region, managing through its informal military alliance with Portugal and Rhodesia, to contain nationalist insurgency in the region.

¹⁰ Carter, G.M. & O'Meara, P. (eds), Southern Africa in Crisis, Bloomington, London, 1977: E.S. Landis, 'Namibia: Impending Independence?', pp.170-173.

¹¹ The term has been used by various authors when writing about the three white ruled Southern African states.

While the containment of guerrillas was going well for the three white-ruled countries, during the early seventies, South Africa was still trying to implement its Outward Foreign Policy in Africa. However, its involvement in the Southern African wars removed all credibility from its efforts to promote an image of itself as an 'African' state with African interests at heart.

The Black African countries were totally dedicated to the ideals represented by the Southern African Liberation movements as part of the effort to remove all vestiges of colonial and oppressive rule from the continent.¹² Thus, when economic sanctions were imposed on Rhodesia, the motion was accepted and implemented by all the African countries, except for Malawi whose leader had already committed himself to follow a course of economic pragmatism. Vorster had hoped that this would be Zambia's decision too. However, the Zambian President, Kenneth Kaunda, observed the boycott of Rhodesian goods, ending an economic relationship of long-standing, with Zambia's southern neighbour. Zambia, formerly Northern Rhodesia under the Central African Federation, had been traditionally dependent on Rhodesia for the export of copper - its primary export product. Rhodesia had also been Zambia's only source of coal as well as main supplier of power, from the hydro-electric scheme at Kariba, which was vital for the operation of Zambian mining industries.

¹² Nolutshungu, S.C., South Africa in Africa: A Study in Ideology and Foreign Policy, Manchester, 1975, pp.290-292.

In addition Rhodesia had supplied Zambia with 40% of its import requirements.¹³

Clearly, Zambia's compliance with the imposition of sanctions against Rhodesia was an economic sacrifice of such magnitude that the South African government's expectations were not unreasonable. Kaunda's initiatives and major role in the formulation of the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto should, therefore, be placed in the context of the economic implications of his decision with regard to Rhodesian sanctions. The Zambian government's compliance with the political and ideological stance of most of Independent Africa, with regard to Southern Africa, was a major set-back for South Africa's implementation of the Outward Foreign Policy; especially when it became clear that although Zambia would gradually become more economically dependent on South Africa such a policy was engaged in as a last resort and was not to be complemented by formal diplomatic acceptance of the Republic. The ground was thus set for the South African-Zambian relations of the future with both moving from periods of uneasy truces - in which they tried to come to some agreement about the Southern African situation - to periods of open public hostility and mutual condemnation - as one or the other reached a position where it would not be moved.¹⁴

¹³ Potholm & Dale, *op.cit.* Spence, *op.cit.*, p.54.

¹⁴ Seiler, J. (ed), Southern Africa Since the Portuguese Coup, Westview Special Studies on Africa, Colorado, 1980, Part 4: J. Seiler, 'South Africa in the Region: South Africa's Regional Role', p.102.

For the South African government failure to achieve diplomatic success in Zambia, in addition to the rise of African liberation movements, brought to its attention the need to formulate a coherent framework for South African relationships within the region. Economic initiatives had served to get the Republic only one Black friend, Malawi. Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland's economic ties to the Republic were perpetuated with much resentment on the part of the respective leaders most notably Seretse Khama, who became more openly critical of the Southern African white power, and supportive of the African liberation movements with the passage of time. In short, South Africa had merely managed to solidify its regional economic primacy, while the Republic's informal military alliance with Rhodesia and Portugal provided a demarcation of the white political power bloc within the economic bloc of Southern Africa. The 'unholy alliance' had helped to create an assumption of white unity, toughness, dedication and military strength of the white governments in suppressing African opposition. In as much as it was responsible for the formation of the 'unholy alliance', the Rhodesian crisis therefore identified the contestants in the long-term struggle for Southern Africa.¹⁵

Militarily, South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal managed to contain African guerrilla insurgency for the most part of

¹⁵ Bowman, L.W., 'South Africa's Southern Strategy and its Implications for the United States', Article in Journal of International Affairs, January 1971, London, p.20.

of the period preceding the 1974 coup in Lisbon. However, military success was not without its costs as was most evident from Portugal's colonial war effort which cost that country between 6-7% of its Gross National Product (G.N.P.).¹⁶

Portugal committed over 100,000 troops to Africa and its defence spending amounted to over half of its total national budget.¹⁷ By Portuguese standards, therefore, the African wars which had begun in 1961, had become very costly, despite the informal military alliance with South Africa. Portugal gradually began to encounter problems in containing liberation movements, in three colonies,¹⁸ all of which had intensified fairly rapidly because of the guerrillas' ability to operate from the neighbouring black states.¹⁹ Consequently, by 1974, when the Lisbon coup led to the establishment of a new government in Portugal, and subsequent independence for Angola, Guineau-Bissau, and Mocambique, South Africa had already been warned of Portugal's problems and the fact that they might necessitate Portuguese withdrawal from the region.²⁰

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.24.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Portugal's third colony in Africa was Guineau-Bissau which, because of its geographical position, was not of any importance to the Southern African region.

¹⁹ Angolan and Mozambican guerrillas operated from Zambia and Zaire mainly.

²⁰ Janke, P., 'Southern Africa: End of Empire', Conflict Studies, No.52, December 1974, London, p.16.

South Africa was aware that the time had come for it to take decisive action to try to prevent the negative implications for the regional balance of Portuguese withdrawal. Portuguese departure from Africa was now going to bring in, as leaders, men who had fought side by side with South African, Rhodesian and South West African guerrillas and who, therefore, shared the same political and ideological ideals.²¹ The implications of the situation were that Angolan and Mocambican independence would effectively change the political and ideological boundaries of Southern Africa, as the area of white hegemony was eroded. This would also bring the liberation struggle much closer to the Republic's borders, and necessitate greater South African involvement in Rhodesia's war.²² In short, South Africa was now left with only one sure buffer state in Southern Africa, Rhodesia. While the dispute over South West Africa continued, Angola's independence could only complicate what was already a troublesome territory, both militarily and politically.

Bearing all these implications in mind the South African government began to look for ways of promoting stability in the region. The Republic again started making public declarations intended to impress upon the outside world

²¹ Kitchen, H. (ed), Africa: From Mystery to Maze, Critical Choices for Americans, Vol.XI, Massachusetts, 1976: J.A. Marcum, 'Southern Africa after the Collapse of Portuguese Rule', p.79.

²² The Limpopo is a river which runs along the Zimbabwe-South African border.

the fact that South Africa did not believe in interfering in the domestic affairs of another country, because it did not welcome such action in its own territory. As Seiler²³ points out this live and let live attitude had often been expressed in South African political rhetoric. In the changed circumstances the aim was clearly to gain the acceptance of Angola and Mocambique, as the South African government stated that it was

... a challenge and not a disaster threat...
[which] should rather be seen as an opportunity for [South Africa] to prove further that [it was] ... prepared to and can live and work together with [her] neighbours in peace and friendship, irrespective of who is in power.²⁴

1974 was thus marked by the renewal of secret consultations between the South African and Zambian governments, which at first promised to be successful, because Kaunda had always preferred a peaceful solution if possible. It was therefore encouraging for South Africa when the pressure it had exerted on the Rhodesian government led to an announcement by Smith, on 11 December 1974, that he was prepared to reach a settlement with the African Nationalists; an announcement which would have been out of the question before the Portuguese coup of April. In addition to Rhodesia's positive reaction, South Africa had received assurance from the positive attitude displayed by the new government in

²³ Seiler, J. (ed), op.cit., p.103.

²⁴ ibid.

Mocambique when Joaquim Chissano²⁵ stated, in September 1974, that Frelimo²⁶ did not want to start a new war. Chissano also stated that Frelimo did not pretend to be the reformers of South African policy because 'that job belongs to the people of South Africa'.²⁷ This amounted to a 'specific assurance' as far as Vorster was concerned, that Mocambique would not allow its territory to be used for guerrilla activities. An additional factor, which may have raised the hopes of the South African government, was that the Frelimo regime adopted a general stance of nonalignment in its international dealings,²⁸ refusing to allow any foreign powers to establish military bases on its territory, and declaring its support for the demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean.

Mocambique's attempt to be nonaligned and receptive to the establishment of cordial relations from both Eastern and Western bloc countries was particularly significant in view of the fact that Frelimo had received Soviet aid during its struggle for independence. South Africa could thus hope that Frelimo would not become a Soviet satellite government.

²⁵ Chissano was one of the Mocambique liberation movement's leaders.

²⁶ Frelimo is the name of the ruling party in Mocambique.

²⁷ Bruce, N., 'Portugal's African Wars', Conflict Studies, No.34, March 1973, London, p.16.

²⁸ Carter & O'Meara (eds), op.cit.: T. Hodges, 'Mozambique: The Politics of Liberation', p.71.

There were strong political and economic reasons why Mocambique appeared to engage in a truce with South Africa in the immediate aftermath of its independence. Politically, the Frelimo government still had to consolidate its authority over the territory. Frelimo only had leadership and organisational strength in the Maputo province²⁹ and had yet to consolidate its penetration of the country's major population centres.³⁰ Economically, Mocambique could not afford to break the trade links with the Republic, which had been strengthened during Portuguese rule, without crippling its economy and undermining the little political control it had. Mocambique was absolutely dependent on foreign finance; this situation was not likely to change in the immediate future,³¹ and the South African links had to remain because South Africa was already involved in Mocambique's development. Furthermore only South Africa could provide the vital technical help to keep Mocambique's railroads and harbours functioning. Mocambique was dependent on South Africa for half its port and railroad foreign currency earnings which constituted a third of its foreign earnings. South Africa had formerly paid Portugal up to \$140 million³² worth of gold per year on the free market, as specially deferred mine worker wage payments, and this

²⁹ Maputo was formerly known as Lourenco Marques.

³⁰ Kitchen, H. (ed), op.cit., p.81.

³¹ Janke, P., op.cit., p.17.

³² Kitchen, H. (ed), op.cit., p.81.

would go to the new government. South Africa also purchased 90% of the hydro-electric power produced by the Cabora Bassa Dam.

Clearly, Mocambique could not cut these vital economic links despite its government's ideological commitment to the remaining Southern African liberation movements. Although there were prospects of financial compensation from Commonwealth and other countries if Machel stopped its trade links with Rhodesia and South Africa, he chose not to do so. He decided instead to leave things as they were promising the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) section of the anti-Rhodesian guerrillas sanctuary and training facilities as soon as Frelimo had secured its own authority.³³

The Angolan situation which was already complicated from its own internal factors at Independence, was not so straightforward for the South African government to deal with. When the Portuguese withdrew from Angola, the three main liberation movement groups were unable to reconcile their ideological and tribal rivalries. These liberation groups were the 'Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola' - MPLA, the 'National Front for the Liberation of Angola' - FNLA, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola - UNITA. Although these groups had appeared mutually irreconcilable during the war with Portugal, the FNLA and UNITA merged into a single group to be known

³³ *ibid.*, p.83.

as UNITA. Therefore by the time that the Portuguese finally granted Independence to the area, the Soviet and Cuban-backed MPLA and the Western-backed UNITA, were the main contenders for supremacy in Angola. The situation created opportunities for increased Soviet and Cuban military aid in support of the MPLA which was recognised as the legitimate governing party of Angola, by most of the African countries.

From the South African point of view, the situation in Angola, with the MPLA easily gaining victory over UNITA, was a prelude to the advent of a Communist state in Angola, and thus almost at the Republic's doorstep. The result was that a 'mystery column'³⁴ appeared out of South West Africa into the South of Angola (UNITA's stronghold) in support of UNITA. The South African government had decided that a military solution was in order for Angola in order to keep Communism at bay and also to make it impossible for SWAPO guerrillas to operate from the southern half of Angola which shares borders with South West Africa. By taking this decision the South African government not only forfeited any chance it might have had of establishing cordial relations with the new government but it also 'legitimized Soviet/Cuban involvement in Angola',³⁵ thus putting an axe to its legalistic non-interference doctrine.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.99.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.100.

The South African decision to support UNITA may also have arisen from an awareness of the fact that Angola's economic dependence on the Republic was nowhere near as great as that of Mocambique. Angola's oil and mineral wealth alone gave it the potential of becoming an important regional power if it could solve its internal political problems. Angola's economic potential threatened the very basis of South Africa's outward policy, which depended on South Africa's economic supremacy being used as a tool to establish links in Africa. Politically, an economically powerful black-ruled Angola could rapidly become an effective launch pad for military action against the remaining centres of white power in the region, a situation which threatened the survival of the core of the South African government, the perpetuation of white supremacy in the Republic.

In summary, therefore, the South African government's immediate response to the withdrawal of Portugal from Southern Africa was to try to put an end to instability in Rhodesia and South West Africa by calling for detente. However, South African actions in Angola showed that South Africa wanted detente on its own terms, which did not include making any great political sacrifices such as giving up South West Africa, or allowing the emergence of a situation that would force the Republic into making such concessions. Nevertheless South Africa showed strong determination to use the opportunity offered by Portuguese withdrawal from the region to change its image from that of the leader of white-ruled Southern African states to the region's peacemaker, this being its only remaining regional option.

To this end, the South African government revised its defence strategy, which had been previously based on the existence of buffer states and keeping the guerrillas at bay on the Zambezi, to exerting pressure on Rhodesia and keeping the guerrillas from penetrating across the Limpopo. The co-operation Vorster got from Smith and Kaunda and Machel's pragmatism made the South African Prime Minister appear as the champion of detente, in 1974. At last, it seemed that Vorster's role, as an 'African statesman', was beginning. Encouraged by this turn of events Vorster had paid a secret visit to the leaders of the Ivory Coast, Senegal and Gabon (Africa's more 'moderate' states) and initiated the Lusaka talks with Kaunda and Smith. Late in 1974 Vorster stated that

Southern Africa is at the crossroads
and should choose now between peace
or escalating violence...³⁶

thus effectively putting the responsibility for future regional developments on the newly-independent Angola and Mocambique.

South Africa's detente policy was also aimed at making South Africa's Namibia (formerly South West Africa) policy appear to be consistent with its overall Southern African policy. Officially South Africa maintained that it wished the peoples of Namibia to decide their own future, which implied that the wishes of white South Africans living in the territory should be considered.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p.85.

However, neither Vorster nor the Southern African Black leaders, Machel, Nyerere and Kaunda, who later became known as the Leaders of the Frontline states, could get Smith and the leaders of the guerrilla movements to come to an agreement. The Rhodesian government's dogged refusal to make even minimal concessions to the African Nationalists led to stalemate and breakdown of talks. This was rapidly followed by renewed fighting and the change in Frelimo's policy that South Africa had tried so hard to prevent, as Machel allowed African Nationalists into Mocambique soon after the unsuccessful 1975 summit meeting at Victoria Falls.

Consequently, the region was again politically divided between the areas of white hegemony and black nationalism. But what was more worrying for South Africa was the dangerous proximity of liberation wars to its borders. The peaceful settlement of the Rhodesian issue had been South Africa's hope for bringing stability into the region but with this failure the Republic not only failed to achieve this aim, it also failed to present a more favourable and commendable image of itself.

CHAPTER III

'DETENTE', SOUTH AFRICA'S ATTEMPT
TO HALT THE EROSION OF ITS BUFFER ZONE

Of all the countries that had viewed the Victoria Falls Conference with great expectancy and optimism, none could have been as disappointed as South Africa at Smith's failure to reach an agreement with the 'freedom fighters'. Initiating talks between the African Nationalists and the Rhodesian Government, and thereby bringing about a peaceful solution to the Rhodesian issue, was South Africa's latest strategy in her ongoing battle to buy respectability in Africa and in the rest of the world. The failure of the Victoria Falls Conference in August 1975 also marked the beginning of the end for Vorster's much publicised 'detente' exercise as the South African defence force (SADF) became involved in the Angolan Civil War less than six months after the abortive 'white train talks'.¹ South Africa's role henceforth became limited to the significant but secondary one of exerting pressure on Rhodesia as the Western Powers - most notably the United States - moved into the region in a concerted effort to reach a peaceful solution. Thus by February 1976 the Frontline Presidents² had re-affirmed

¹ The Victoria Falls Conference was held aboard a white train supplied by South Africa. Thus this conference was sometimes referred to as the 'white train talks' by journalists.

² The Leaders of Zambia (President Kaunda), Mocambique (Machel), Angola (Neto), Tanzania (Nyerere) and Botswana (Sir Seretse Khama) became known as the Frontline Presidents from the time of Vorster's Detente exercise. Angola's leader only became the fifth Frontline President in September 1976 following Zambia's nine month long delay in recognising Neto's MPLA government.

their support for the armed struggle with Mozambique closing its border with Rhodesia as a token of its commitment to the new guerrilla offensive. In Angola, South Africa had emphasised the end of detente by its unsuccessful Angolan intervention. South/^{ern}Africa was again clearly divided between the areas of white hegemony and those of the Blacks and Vorster had emerged from this 'detente' debacle as the champion of intervention rather than of peace. South Africa had wanted peace only under certain conditions, in Rhodesia the tacit condition was that a moderate government which would respect South African hegemony³ should be the outcome. In Angola South Africa had wanted a pro-Western government which would show the same economic pragmatism initially reflected by Mozambique, thus making South Africa's immediate regional environment potentially amicable.

In Western Europe, and especially the United States, Soviet support of the MPLA and the Cuban presence in Angola clearly indicated that the time for active participation in Southern Africa had come. As Callinicos⁴ rightly stated, the United States feared not only for the security of Western investments and sources of raw materials, but also that the crisis of the white regimes in Southern Africa was providing the Eastern bloc with an opening in an area previously considered to be undoubtedly within the Western sphere of influence. Kissinger had described Russian and Cuban involvement in Angola as

³ Callinicos, A., Southern Africa after Zimbabwe, Pluto Press Limited, London, 1981, p.11.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.13.

An ominous precedent ... of grave consequence [which] even if ... [it] occurs in a seemingly remote area ... cannot be tolerated.⁵

The American perception of a Soviet threat in an area of Western influence was probably strengthened by the emergence of Robert Mugabe as Secretary-General of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) soon after his release from detention in the early stages of the abortive South African detente exercise. Mugabe was a self-proclaimed Marxist who espoused a socialist populist ideology and rapidly gained a reputation for radicalism. This reputation stemmed in part from Mugabe's commitment to a full reform of the socio-economic order in an independent Zimbabwe.⁶

The period between the beginning of the 'detente' exercise and the end of 1976 was one of the most shaky in the history of the Zimbabwean Liberation Movement.⁷ It was marked by splits within factions and unsuccessful attempts to merge the major factions of the Liberation Movement which finally culminated in the emergence of the 'Patriotic Front', an alliance between the externally-based ZANU led by Robert Mugabe, and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) led by Joshua Nkomo. The Patriotic Front

⁵ *ibid.*, pp.13-14.

⁶ Seiler, J. (ed), Southern Africa Since the Portuguese Coup, Westview Press, Inc., Colorado, 1980, Part 3: 'C.M.B. Utete, 'Zimbabwe and Southern African Detente', p.71.

⁷ The Zimbabwean Liberation Movement had not encountered such leadership problems since the sixties when the Zanu-Zapu rivalry resulted in violent factional clashes within the country. A brief summary of this background is provided in Carter, G.M. and O'Meara, P. (eds), Southern Africa in Crisis, Indiana University Press, USA, 1977, Chapter I: P. O'Meara, 'Rhodesia: From White Rule to Independent Zimbabwe', pp.28-43.

was formed in 1976 and it claimed control of all guerrilla forces based in Mozambique and Zambia. In effect the 'Patriotic Front' unity was to prove to be most operative and functional for the purpose of presenting a united front of the externally-based movement at subsequent peace talks. However, in the 'battlefield' ZANU directed the operations of its military arm (ZANLA) from Mozambique and ZAPU conducted its military direction of ZIPRA from Zambia.

The rapid escalation in the Rhodesian conflict, and the reaffirmed support of the Zimbabwe freedom fighters by the leaders of the Frontline states,⁸ in addition to the introduction of Soviet influence in the region, emphasised the urgency with which the West had to attempt to repair the broken threads of detente. Thus, in April 1976, Kissinger began his shuttle diplomacy with a tour through the Independent African States denouncing apartheid to gain the confidence of African leaders. Clearly, Kissinger's aim was to demonstrate to Black African governments that regardless of what they thought, he was on their side and on that of the liberation movement, so that he could then persuade them to convince the leaders of the liberation movement to discuss their differences with Smith and solve them through negotiation. Kissinger met the South African Prime Minister twice in the same year, in Munich and Zurich. South Africa was clearly regarded as an important factor in

⁸ Legum, C., 'Southern Africa: The Year of the Whirlwind', in Africa Contemporary Records, 1976-1977, p.A5.

bringing pressure to bear on Ian Smith so that he could also agree to opening up discussions again and searching for a peaceful solution of the differences. From a South African point of view, the introduction of the United States as the main manipulator of re-negotiation would remove from the South African government any overt liability in the eyes of its own followers for forcing Smith to accept black majority rule. Active participation in the search for a peaceful solution of the Rhodesian conflict would fulfill the function of presenting South Africa as a potentially peace-loving nation which believed in the concept of majority rule in Africa. The South African government had clearly not given up hope of using the Rhodesian issue, in any way it could, to gain some respectability for itself. It was also in South African interests to play some part in peace talks and thus exploit any possible opportunity to try and ensure that a pro-Western regime was established in Rhodesia.

Kissinger's diplomatic initiative in Africa led to talks amongst himself, Vorster and Smith in September 1976 in Pretoria, and on the 24th of that month Smith announced his government's acceptance of a new formula for peaceful resolution of the conflict. The most significant aspects of the new formula were firstly, the provision for majority rule in two years, and the establishment of a transitional government, which would implement day-to-day legislative and executive duties whilst preparing the ground work for the Constitution of a fully independent black-ruled Zimbabwe.

The American led initiative had finally succeeded in getting Smith to accept - publicly - the principle of majority rule. The Patriotic Front on the other hand was opposed to any political settlement that left effective veto power in white hands, and this was evident from Nationalist concern over specific aspects of the transitional government's structure, functions and procedures.⁹ As Utete¹⁰ points out the Nationalist leaders were accustomed to Smith's 'divide and stall' strategy and were reluctant to believe that Smith genuinely wanted to make real changes. Despite their reservations, the Nationalist leaders complied with the plans for, and attended the Constitutional Conference which was held in Geneva in October 1976. However, as subsequent events turned out, this conference was doomed to failure as the Nationalist delegations rejected the transition formula, and Smith refused to change it. The result was deadlock as Smith went on to declare his opposition to any further talks involving the Patriotic Front. This qualification gave an indication of the direction Smith intended to take in the future as he began to make preparations to reach agreement with internally-based Nationalist leaders. The Rhodesian government was well aware that South Africa could not be relied upon to support them in what had become a costly war, because it was not in South Africa's political interests to continue

⁹ Seiler, J. (ed), op.cit., p.73.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

to do so. It was therefore up to Smith to attempt to reach some sort of settlement internally, thus allowing the blacks to have their majority rule without removing political power from white control. This aim was to become clear in 1978 when the internal settlement, sometimes referred to as the March 3 Agreement, was effected.

The inability of the Zimbabwean Nationalists to unite into one single cohesive liberation movement¹¹ was mainly responsible for creating a situation which Smith could exploit for his own ends. Despite several attempts to avoid the emergence of a fragmented liberation movement four main nationalists groups were evident by the end of 1976. These were the United African National Council (U.A.N.C.) led by Bishop Muzorewa, Nkomo's ZAPU, Mugabe's ZANU, and another ZANU led by Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole.¹² All of them declared that they were committed to the principle of black majority rule in an independent Zimbabwe. However, the Frontline Presidents recognised the Patriotic Front as Zimbabwe's representative nationalist movement to which they would give full political material and diplomatic support.¹³

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp.70-72. (The writer gives other reasons.)

¹² When Robert Mugabe was released from detention he reorganised ZANU and became leader after some doubts had been expressed with regard to Ndabaningi Sithole's continued leadership. The latter retained leadership of a faction faithful to him which retained the name ZANU but was not in actual fact the ZANU which won the Zimbabwe elections in 1980.

¹³ Legum, C., *op.cit.*, p.A7. The leaders of the Frontline States met at Quelimane in Mozambique from the 7-8 February 1976 and made this decision.

Immediately after the Geneva deadlock and his avowed refusal to negotiate with the Patriotic Front, Smith began to prepare the ground for his own 'peace initiative'.¹ The idea was to get the whites in Rhodesia accustomed to the principle of majority rule and was clearly behind his statement at a conference of white businessmen that

Even if you believe that all
Nationalists are devils, you have
only one choice: find the better
of the devils.¹⁴

Thus, in pursuit of this Smith rejected the Anglo-American proposals for settlement, presented in September 1977, and began to negotiate with Muzorewa, Sithole and Chief Jeremiah Chirau.¹⁵ The talks culminated in the 1978 'March 3 Agreement', which was the basis of an internal settlement and of the birth of the new state of 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia'. The 'March 3 Agreement' provided for elections by the end of 1978 and set out a constitutional framework in which control of the army, police, judiciary and civil service would remain under white control with reserved white seats in Parliament which gave them a veto over constitutional changes. Thus, a transitional government was set up and Muzorewa and Sithole, who claimed that they had the support of the majority of the externally-based guerrillas, called for a ceasefire to take effect by May 1978.

¹⁴ Meredith, M., The Past is Another Country, Deutsch, London, 1979, p.292.

¹⁵ Chief Jeremiah Chirau was made an African Senator by the Smith government and his political activities as the leader of a Rhodesian Front-backed party earned him the reputation of an R.F. puppet.

These claims gave Smith sufficient confidence to declare that there could no longer be any opportunity for Marxist control of the country.¹⁶

The election of Muzorewa as Zimbabwe-Rhodesia's Prime Minister in 1979 would (if it had been longer-lived) have created the ideal situation for the advancement of South Africa's aims in the region, the rest of the continent, and in the rest of the world. South Africa would have been assured of two 'buffer' states, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and Namibia, and also of another black leader to add to the solitary Malawian camp. Primarily the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Constitution left effective control in white hands and was favourable to the promotion of South Africa's foreign policy goals. Furthermore, Muzorewa was not opposed to continuing the pre-existing links with South Africa. In fact, as time went on he emphasised his amicable acceptance of the South African connection by visits to the Republic and statements that reflected his reliability to the South African government. South Africa needed this support from its neighbour especially since the failure of the detente exercise had marked the end of its contacts with the rest of the continent. Apart from fragile links with the Ivory Coast and Zaire the South African government could claim few contacts of any significance.¹⁷ The June 1976

¹⁶ Callinicos, A., op.cit., p.43.

¹⁷ 'South Africa: Relations with Africa', Africa Contemporary Record 1976-77, p.B852.

Soweto uprisings to which the South African police had responded with guns and teargas¹⁸ emphasised to the South African government that if anything its troubles were just beginning. The Soweto rebellion demonstrated more than anything else that the Portuguese coup of 1974 followed by the MPLA's victory over South African troops had encouraged black South Africans to the belief that their white rulers could be taken on and beaten.¹⁹

The Angolan intervention had been an embarrassing catastrophe for the South African government and caused much resentment towards the Americans whom the Republic blamed for the South African defeat. As Johnson²⁰ points out South Africa had never wanted to go into Angola but had given in to American pressures and joint Zambian and Zairean advice that she do so.²¹ It is hardly surprising that the South African government resented the decision of the American Senate to cut-off further funds for the Angola intervention, thus forcing South Africa to withdraw its troops in February 1976. The American decision demonstrated to the South African government that the West could let it down but, more importantly, that the Carter Administration would not be as reliable an ally as Ford's had been.

¹⁸ Callinicos, A. & Rogers, J. (eds), Southern Africa After Soweto, Pluto Press, London, 1977, pp.163-168.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.157.

²⁰ Johnson, R.W., How Long Will South Africa Survive?, Macmillan, London, 1977, pp.159-170.

²¹ Callinicos, A., *op.cit.*, pp.10-12.

The beginning of the detente exercise had witnessed a South African government confident of achieving success within six months²² but, in less than that time, it was clear that South Africa had become internationally more rather than less isolated. In the region, the attempted intervention in Angola had ensured for South Africa the continuing hostility of the MPLA. As Johnson²³ put it, South Africa could no longer 'hope for the rapprochement policy which had shown positive results in Mozambique'. This made all the more necessary a positive outcome on the Rhodesian issue, so Vorster co-operated with the United States during the Kissinger initiative. The South African government had encouraged Smith to go ahead with his post-Geneva policy of seeking an agreement with moderate nationalists because of strained relations with the United States. These had been aggravated by Carter's 'human rights' policy which was marked by a tilt away from South Africa towards Nigeria.²⁴ As a result, Nigeria emerged in 1976 as a significant leader of the African pressure group against South Africa. The Foreign Minister of Nigeria²⁵ warned multinationals that they might soon have to choose between South Africa and the Independent African countries. Consequently, the political situation indicated that South

²² Johnson, op.cit., p.122.

²³ ibid., p.100.

²⁴ Callinicos, op.cit., p.17.

²⁵ Africa Contemporary Record, op.cit., p.B852.

Africa was still the object of vehement criticism from the West,²⁶ and the Independent African States, especially after the Soweto uprising.

Vorster had had no option but to continue to favour diplomatic initiatives for a negotiated settlement for Rhodesia during 1976-7. Legum²⁷ suggests that Vorster's view of the situation was not optimistic 'after the breakdown of the Geneva talks', but he 'insisted that the alternative to peace was too ghastly to contemplate'. Perhaps South Africa could have faced the growing internal and external criticisms if - as some analysts maintain²⁸ - the economic situation had not deteriorated rapidly in the mid-70s. The economic growth rate had declined, the rate of inflation had reached double figures and unemployment among urban blacks had risen to 20%.²⁹ This was a consequence of worldwide economic recession and South Africa with its highly industrialised sector could not remain unaffected.

In short, South Africa was still, towards the end of the seventies, in almost the same position as ten years

²⁶ Hanf. T., Weiland, H. & Vierdag, G. (eds), South Africa: The Prospects of Peaceful Change, Collins, London; Phillip, Cape Town; Indiana University, Bloomington, 1981, p.74.

²⁷ Legum, C., Vorster's Gamble for Africa: How the Search for Peace Failed, Collings, London, 1976, p.16.

²⁸ Hanf, Weiland & Vierdag (eds), op.cit., p.76.

²⁹ ibid. Rothberg, R.I., Suffer the Future: Policy Choices in Southern Africa, Harvard University, Boston, 1980. Rothberg makes the point that further to the world recession the Soweto uprising also contributed to the drop in local and foreign investments. See p.92.

before. Few things had really changed, and those that had only served to emphasise the Republic's isolation in Africa. If anything there was now more cause for frustrations because establishment of trade links with up to 48 Black African countries³⁰ had not resulted in the formation of an equal number of diplomatic and political links. In the light of this general failure to make significant headway in Africa, the importance, to South Africa, of ensuring that a moderate regime took control in Rhodesia becomes clear.

However, any political or military assurance that the South African government may have obtained following the birth of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia could only be short-lived as subsequent events indicated that the March 3 Agreement had failed to effect a ceasefire. If anything conflict increased, demonstrating that the claims of the internal settlement black leaders to have external support amongst the guerrillas had been false. Once again South Africa's neighbour needed South African military aid to contain the escalating conflict.³¹ The ZANLA forces claimed³² to have 'liberated' significant parts of Victoria, Manicaland and Mashonaland central provinces by August 1979. In its own turn the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia regime responded with air raids into Zambia and Mozambique, but the pressure of increasing guerrilla

³⁰ Africa Contemporary Record, op.cit., p.B852.

³¹ Callinicos, op.cit., p.35.

³² *ibid.* Mugabe gave a speech whilst he was in Brazzaville in August 1979 where he stated that ZANLA had effected major incursions into Rhodesia.

numbers indicated that command of the air was not a sufficient advantage. Time was not on the Zimbabwe-Rhodesians' side and the situation had become desperate as evidenced by the introduction of compulsory conscription for black youths into the army.³³ Clearly, Smith was going to have to talk to the Patriotic Front if he wanted to see an end to the conflict. The South African government as well as America and Britain realised that contrary to what Smith had tried to show by reaching settlement internally, there could be no end to conflict if the Patriotic Front were not involved in setting out the terms for peace. These realisations generated another round of diplomatic initiatives to get the Patriotic Front involved in talks with Muzorewa and Smith. These culminated towards the end of 1979 in the Lancaster House Conference at which the chairman, Lord Carrington, managed to persuade the Muzorewa-Smith delegation to drop some features of the Constitution which were unacceptable to the Patriotic Front, and to accept reduced white representation in Parliament, and induced Mugabe and Nkomo to agree to a constitutional draft which gave whites 20 out of 100 seats in the House of Assembly and a veto over constitutional changes. Consequently a ceasefire agreement was signed on 21 December 1979 and the parties to the conflict returned to Salisbury to engage in their last 'battle' at the ballot boxes.

³³ Compulsory military service had only applied to the white, Asian and coloured communities prior to this.

ZANU (PF)³⁴ led by Robert Mugabe won the elections held in February 1980, and the independent state of Zimbabwe was born. Mugabe's clear victory³⁵ seemed to have surprised many Western observers, especially South Africa which had helped finance Muzorewa's election campaign.³⁶ From a South African point of view, the decisive ZANU (PF) victory was the worst possible outcome in a country so near to the Republic's borders. Like most major Western governments the South African government believed that Mugabe's election would be rapidly followed by the arrival of the Eastern bloc. Again these fears reflected a lack of understanding of the importance of sovereign independence for African heads of states which Frelimo had reflected on getting its independence.³⁷

Yet, contrary to everyone's expectations the man whom they believed dedicated to radical courses of action adopted a 'surprisingly' pragmatic and conciliatory policy. When he officially became Zimbabwe's Prime Minister on 18 April 1980 Mugabe stated that although he intended to eliminate the injustices and inequities of the previous regimes the

³⁴ For the purposes of differentiating the Mugabe-led ZANU from the Ndabaningi Sithole-led ZANU, the former was known as ZANU (Patriotic Front).

³⁵ Mugabe's ZANU (PF) won 57 of the total seats for blacks, Nkomo's ZAPU 20 and Muzorewa's QANC 1. The Lancaster Agreement provided for 20 white seats.

³⁶ Callinicos, op.cit., p.3. Geldenhuys, D. & Guttridge, W. (eds), 'Instability and Conflict in Southern Africa: South Africa's Role in Regional Security', Conflict Studies, No.148, Institute for the Study of Conflict, London, 1983, p.17.

³⁷ The factors showing Frelimo's desire to be non-aligned and not show preference for either bloc have been discussed in Chapter II.

whites in Zimbabwe had nothing to fear and had an important role to play in the economic reconstruction of the country.³⁸ In keeping with this unexpectedly moderate approach Mugabe declared that his government would carry on trading with South Africa. Nicholas Ashford, the 'Times' Southern African correspondent, argued that

Mugabe's recently found pragmatism derives in part from President Machel of Mozambique ... [who] was largely responsible for Mugabe's decision to go through with the Lancaster House agreement ... [and who] has subsequently emphasised to Mugabe the need to avoid any actions which could lead to an early white exodus or renewed conflict ...³⁹

While there could be some truth in this argument Mugabe's own assessment of the situation must not be overlooked. He more than anyone else was aware of the numerous internal and external problems which his country was facing. However, for South Africa Mugabe's pragmatism was encouraging, and it seemed at first that there was some hope for its latest strategy in the region. This was the idea of establishing a 'constellation' of Southern African states, in order to avoid the adverse implications of leaving Namibia as the only 'white-controlled' buffer state. The South African government had expressed its hope for such a 'constellation' in Geneva in March 1979 when it was clear that the Rhodesia question would have to be brought

³⁸ 'Mugabe Makes Land Redistribution Zimbabwe's First Priority', Africa Report, May-June 1980, African Update Section, p.23.

³⁹ Callinicos, op.cit., p.58.

to the negotiating table once again. South Africa had undoubtedly run out of 'respectable' options and was reviving an old dream for dominance of the region⁴⁰ in a modified form. The bait remained the same, an offer of economic and technical co-operation in exchange for political and diplomatic recognition.

The fact that South Africa and its 'hostage', Namibia, was now the only area of white hegemony in Africa meant that everything South Africa had fought to avoid had occurred. The 'constellation' idea which would have been easier to implement if Muzorewa⁴¹ had won the 1980 election was clearly an attempt to persuade Black Africa to stop at Zimbabwe. The new South African Prime Minister P. Botha was - like his predecessor - aware that during the 'detente' exercise the Frontline Presidents had made it clear that while they hoped for peaceful resolution of the Rhodesia issue they would not define the exercise as 'detente' until the South African internal issue was resolved. At the 24th Session of the O.A.U. Ministerial Council in Addis Ababa in February 1975 a resolution had been passed calling on African governments to 'avoid all contact with the South African government until Pretoria began talks with South African liberation movements'.⁴² President Kaunda summarised the Black African position well when he noted that

⁴⁰ South African ambitions for a greater South Africa have been discussed in Chapter I.

⁴¹ Geldenhuys, D. & Gutteridge, W. (eds), 'Instability and Conflict in Southern Africa: South Africa's Role in Regional Security', Conflict Studies, No.148, Institute for the Study of Conflict, London, 1983, p.17.

⁴² Legum, op.cit., p.A5.

the Southern African situation [was reviewed] as a whole ... really all three issues - Rhodesia, Namibia, and apartheid - are part and parcel of one main question ... racial oppression in Southern Africa.⁴³

In conclusion it appears that throughout the detente exercise and up to the independence of Zimbabwe, South Africa had been trying to prevent apartheid from becoming the central issue. It had engaged in detente as a means of establishing a basis for South Africa's dissociation from white oppression and for South Africa's identification with the rest of Africa. The 'constellation' proposals were South Africa's new method of achieving what detente had failed to achieve as Prime Minister Botha argued that the 'constellation' offered 'the only possible solution to the region's problems'. In the event, none of the independent black-ruled Southern African states supported the 'constellation' idea. To add to this unfavourable turn of events, the ZANU (PF) victory in Zimbabwe had the same effect on South African Blacks as had Angolan and Mozambican independence. Blacks in South Africa felt that there was hope yet for their struggle, an optimism reflected by the nationwide campaign to free Nelson Mandela⁴⁴ which occurred shortly after Zimbabwe's independence. Black South Africans

⁴³ Hirschmann, D., 'Southern Africa: Detente?' Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol.14, No.1 (1976), p.114.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

were clearly not discouraged⁴⁵ by Mugabe's pragmatic stance when he declared that he could only give the South African Liberation Movement moral and diplomatic support.

It appears then that the eighties promised many causes for concern for the South African government and also that it was going to take all their skill to avoid apartheid becoming the regional issue and centre of the world's attention in Africa.

⁴⁵ 'South African Blacks Campaign to Release Nelson Mandela', Africa Report, May-June 1980, p.24. Also see Callinicos, A., op.cit., p.5.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEARCH FOR REGIONAL ACCEPTANCE,
REJECTION AND THE FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

The beginning of the eighties marked the start of what promises to be perhaps the most trying time for the South African government. Nothing could have emphasised this more than the rejection by the Black Southern African states of the 'constellation' idea. As Stultz¹ put it, the 'constellation' idea failed to appeal to Black leaders because it contained 'no plan for the deracialization of the economic core area ... South Africa'. The Frontline states (now including Zimbabwe) showed by their unwillingness to consider the 'constellation' idea and their concerted efforts to establish their own economic union that the principles² incorporated in the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto and at subsequent conferences on Southern Africa were still to be upheld. In other words, the Frontline states were still prepared to help find a peaceful settlement to South Africa's internal problems only if South Africa showed itself willing to do so. So nothing had actually been changed by Zimbabwe's Independence and Mugabe's show of pragmatism over commercial relations.³ South Africa if anything found itself heading

¹ Stultz, N.M., 'Bridging the Black-White Gulf in Africa', Orbis - A Journal of World Affairs, Winter 1982, p.889.

² The Lusaka Manifesto has already been discussed in Chapter I and the principles upheld in this are the same as those upheld at Quelimane in the mid-seventies by the Frontline states as discussed in Chapter II.

³ Davidow, J., 'Zimbabwe is a Success', Foreign Policy, No.49, Winter 1982-83, p.100.

for potentially greater isolation than at any other time in its history. While the Republic had tried to bring politics in line with economics by the 'constellation' notion, the Independent Black Southern African states equally sought to bring economics into conformity with politics as they met to prepare to form the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference (S.A.D.C.C.) For the nine⁴ states involved Zimbabwe's independence was seen as opening the way to regional economic cooperation among the black majority-ruled states.⁵ It was hoped that with Zimbabwe under black rule, the re-opening of transport links between it and Mozambique, and the re-opening of the Beira-Mutare oil pipeline a new transport infrastructure would be developed, enabling the S.A.D.C.C. countries to improve their economies and decrease their dependency on South Africa.⁶ Of the nine S.A.D.C.C. states, six (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland) are landlocked, while three (Angola, Mozambique and Tanzania) have port facilities. In 1965, when Zambia had tried to diversify its transport routes following UDI, the importance of the Southern routes had become evident. Furthermore, Mozambique and Zambia had both suffered economically during the 'war for the liberation of Zimbabwe' because of Rhodesian cross-border air raids. For

⁴ The nine S.A.D.C.C. countries are Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Angola, Tanzania and Zambia. The Frontline states formed the core members in 1979 when the idea was being discussed and it was clear that Zimbabwe was becoming independent.

⁵ Jaster, R.S., 'A Regional Security Role for Africa's Frontline States: Experience and Prospects', Adelphi Paper, No.187, 1983, p.27.

⁶ *ibid.* 'S.A.D.C.: Southern Africa', MOTO, Mambo Press, Zimbabwe, April 1984, p.18.

Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, S.A.D.C.C. clearly meant a chance to end South Africa's stranglehold on their economies, whilst for Malawi this was probably seen as a chance to be seen as conforming with Black political ideologies. As Arnold⁷ put it, in addition to the fact that Zimbabwean Independence brought an end to border incursions for her immediate neighbours.⁸ Zimbabwe's natural wealth and promising economy⁹ meant that there was potential for 'transport trade and new impetus' for development. Zimbabwe being the focus of the area's transport network, its Independence meant that Zambia had access to the routes to Beira and Maputo (in Mozambique), Botswana at last had a railway alternative to Beira through Zimbabwe, and Mozambique had the advantage of its ports and facilities which it could offer to the landlocked Black Southern African states.

Clearly, the formation of S.A.D.C.C. was meant inter alia to show South Africa that none of the Independent African States was prepared to grant it political and diplomatic recognition for as long as it failed to do something positive about its internal situation. For the Black African states South Africa had no option but to approach the apartheid question, whilst the 'constellation' proposal implied, firstly, that South Africa was still willing to accept apartheid as

⁷ Arnold, op.cit., pp.40-41.

⁸ Isaacman, Allen & Barbara (co-authors), 'On the Road to Economic Recovery: Mozambique', Africa Report, May-June 1980, pp.4-5.

⁹ The Rhodesian economy had despite sanctions managed to diversify successfully into agriculture, and in this way U.D.I. proved to be a boost to the economy.

the central issue to the region's problems and, secondly, that the South African government was determined to make sure that black majority rule in South Africa would not be their only remaining option.

South Africa's bleak situation was made even more desperate by the fact that Western pressure for a settlement of the Namibia issue was threatening the survival of the Republic's last 'buffer' state. From 1977, when the Namibia issue was revived at the UN¹⁰ by combined African and Western pressure, it became clear to South Africa that it would have to be resolved in a manner which the rest of the world would deem positive. The Republic's initial response to this reinforced pressure - emphasised by the establishment of the 'Western contact group' on Namibia, consisting of the USA, Britain, West Germany, France and Canada - was to continue to move toward an internal settlement for Namibia in a manner remarkably similar to that followed by Smith after the abortive Geneva talks on Rhodesia. Prior to 1977, when the Republic had been trying to indicate that its 'detente' exercise and good neighbour policy extended to the whole region, it had tried to encourage the idea of a greater Ovamboland¹¹ in Namibia. This aimed to effect unity between

¹⁰ Hodder, B.W., Africa Today: A Short Introduction to African Affairs, Methuen, London, 1978, p.79. Also see Jaster, R.S., Southern Africa in Conflict Implications for U.S. Policies in the 1980's, American Enterprise Inst., Washington, 1982, p.6.

¹¹ Ovamboland is the territory in Northern Namibia where SWAPO operate in as it is on the borders of Southern Angola. The local inhabitants are known as Ovambos.

the Ovambos of Namibia and those of Southern Angola, then eventually grant 'Independence' to them. This plan clearly showed that the Republic meant to implement its 'bantustan' policy in Namibia, and 'reduce substantially the black-white imbalance',¹² in Namibia, whilst remaining with a more controllable buffer state hopefully free from the threats posed by SWAPO. The Ovamboland plan also offered the advantage of extending Namibian borders into the Ovambo part of Southern Angola. However, this plan had failed to get the desired response from the Namibian parties involved.

While the Carter Administration directed a Western effort to reach an internationally approved settlement of the Namibia issue under the auspices of the United Nations,¹³ South Africa had launched a formal Constitutional Conference for Namibia. This Conference, known as the Turnhalle Conference (begun in 1975), had met in June and August 1976, and excluded SWAPO and other nonethnic parties based in Windhoek (Namibia's capital). In direct response to concerted Western pressure to show that it was genuinely trying to bring about change in Namibia, the South African government had in mid-1977 appointed an Administrator-General, Judge Marthinus Steyn, to bring Namibia to Independence.

Steyn's efforts to eradicate segregation in Namibia began and ended with minor changes, such as the ending of

¹² Seiler, J., 'Which Way in Southern Africa?' Africa Report, May-June 1981, p.18.

¹³ Jaster, op.cit., see note 10, p.6.

desegregation of hotels and restaurants and the promise to desegregate all residential areas. As Seiler¹⁴ points out the 'new' policy only applied in Windhoek and not the rest of Namibia, and was never followed through after 1977. Clearly, South Africa was applying the 'divide and stall' strategy in Namibia, in the hope that both African and particularly Western pressure would ease. Unfortunately for the South Africans the reverse occurred, and by April 1978 they had been pressured into accepting the principle of Independence for Namibia expressed in UN Security Council Resolution 435¹⁵ of 1978.

Although no final settlement of the Namibian issue has been effected to date, the fact that the United Nations 'recognized S.W.A.P.O. as the sole representative of the Namibian people'¹⁶ can be of no comfort to South Africa. Furthermore South Africa cannot ignore the S.W.A.P.O. factor in any plans for the final settlement of the Namibian issue, and its chances of effecting a 'favourable' non-S.W.A.P.O. Independence are narrow. The South African government charged that both the United Nations and the Western contact group are biased in S.W.A.P.O.'s favour¹⁷ showing that its greatest fear is that settlement of the

¹⁴ Seiler, op.cit., p.19.

¹⁵ This is the resolution which provides the framework for Namibia's transition to Independence.

¹⁶ Hodeer, op.cit., p.79.

¹⁷ Jaster, op.cit., see note 10, p.6.

Namibia issue will bring Black Africa finally and decisively onto the Republic's remaining border. As Gutteridge¹⁸ points out 'South Africa's reservations have centred round the question of the impartiality of the U.N. and the exclusive support given to S.W.A.P.O.' to the exclusion of other internal political parties. Thus, although the South African government continued to declare its desire to get out of Namibia and see the issue resolved, Mugabe's victory in Zimbabwe in 1980, and the U.N. support of S.W.A.P.O. have been indicators to South Africa that the worst may yet occur in Namibia. This is probably why the South African government began placing more obstacles in the way of a settlement.

The situation in Southern Africa undoubtedly called for cautious handling of the Namibia issue by the South African government, since a S.W.A.P.O. victory in the territory would make it possible for the two main black South African Liberation groups - the Pan-African Congress (P.A.C.) and the African National Congress (A.N.C.) - to launch operations against the Republic across its entire borders, from Namibia, as well as from Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Clearly the political trends were not in South Africa's favour and the situation called for more urgent action than mere stalling over the Namibia issue. By the middle of 1982 it had become evident, at least to the Black Southern African states, exactly how the Republic meant to maintain its

¹⁸ Gutteridge, W., 'South Africa: Strategy for Survival?' Conflict Studies, No.131, June 1981, p.6.

internal status quo and deter the threat of cross-border invasions from the A.N.C. and the P.A.C., as one after the other Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Lesotho began accusing the Republic of launching various forms of destabilization within their territories. These allegations heralded in Southern African politics an era of a new kind of subversion and destabilization. The Zimbabwean government declared that South Africa was intent on subversion and destabilization¹⁹ in the region and their allegations supported those of the Mozambican and Lesotho governments. The incidents which the leaders of these countries used to back their allegations included more obvious incidents of economic subversion such as the 1981 decision by the South African government not to ~~know~~^{allow} the lease on twenty-five locomotives on loan to the Zimbabwean railways just when a bumper maize crop and other products needed transport.²⁰ In addition South Africa's 'destabilization programme' was said to include sending sabotage squads into neighbouring territories, ~~such as~~^{some evidence being} the three South African soldiers who were killed in Zimbabwe.²¹ Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Mozambique all hold the South African government responsible for giving support to anti-government rebels within their countries.²²

¹⁹ Davidow, op.cit., p.101.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.101.

²¹ Geldenhuys, D. & Gutteridge, W. (eds), 'Instability and Conflict in Southern Africa: South Africa's Role in Regional Security', Conflict Studies, No.148, 1983, p.21.

²² *ibid.*, pp.20-22. Also see Jaster, op.cit., see note 5, pp.20-21, where he cites evidence that the Frontline states' leaders have given in support of their accusations.

In Angola the South African government was involved in repeated military attacks against military and economic targets, and provided U.N.I.T.A. with covert material support since 1975.²³ The aim of South Africa's pressure in Angola was to maintain a credible buffer zone to inhibit S.W.A.P.O. supply lines. This buffer zone was consolidated by the South African Defence Force in their 1981 'operation Protea',²⁴ invasion of Angola, and became South Africa's launching pad for attacks into Angola in December 1983.

South African officials denied most of the charges of destabilization outright or avoided direct comment on them, preferring instead to argue that the leaders of the neighbouring Black states were trying to blame the Republic for their own inabilities to handle their internal problems. While it is true that in both Lesotho and Zimbabwe, and to a lesser extent Mozambique, the internal situation were potentially troublesome, the leaders of these countries did have a basis²⁵ for arguing that their internal problems were being aggravated by the South African government's acts of subversion. Furthermore, South Africa's more obvious military excursions into neighbouring states, such as the South African Air Force's bombing raid on what it claimed were A.N.C. bases in Maputo (conducted shortly after the A.N.C. claimed responsibility for the bomb explosion in Pretoria in May 1983) give more obvious credence to the destabilization allegations.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Jaster, *op.cit.*, see note 22.

Apparently, destabilization and subversion had become South Africa's regional response to the threat of isolation and escalating criticism implicit in the formation of S.A.D.C.C. and the continued support of the A.N.C. and P.A.C. by the Southern African countries. South Africa had entered the eighties facing more threats than ever before, and S.A.D.C.C. had underlined the fact that an economic dimension could, at least as far as the Black states were concerned, be added to the political dimension of South African isolation. In view of this near-desperate situation alone, destabilization was not an incredible option for the South African government to follow, and was nothing new as a form of exerting political pressure in South African history. It had been used to ~~pressure~~ ~~pressure~~ Zambia in the early stages of the Rhodesian War where periodic threats were made by South African Cabinet Ministers that they would retaliate against Zambia for harbouring guerrillas.²⁶ It could also be argued that because of the involvement of South African troops in the Rhodesian War, South Africa sanctioned raids conducted by Rhodesian security forces into Mozambique and Zambia, which did a lot of harm to the economies of these countries, and were in that way economically destabilizing. From this point of view then there was in actual fact nothing new about South Africa's policy of destabilization and subversion.

²⁶ Potholm, C.P. & Dale, R. (eds), Southern Africa in Perspective: Essays in Regional Politics, Free Press, New York; Macmillan, London, 1972, Part Two: J.E. Spence, 'South African Foreign Policy: The Outward Movement', p.54.

The withdrawal of the Portuguese in 1974 and the ending of the Rhodesian conflict had merely removed the 'camouflage' from South African activities. Furthermore, the fact that the Republic's own interests were now being directly challenged by the turn of events in the region only called for an intensification of methods already used by the South African government in fighting for the survival of its state in its desired form.

When the South African government began to revive 'detente', towards the end of 1983, by making tentative contacts with the leaders of Mozambique and Angola in a search for peace it added credibility to the destabilization allegations. Clearly South Africa had been involved in a major campaign to exert pressure on its neighbours not only to deny the P.A.C. and A.N.C. . . . bases there, but also to wreck havoc on their economies and thus maintain its economic grip on them. While the Mozambique Resistance Movement (MNR) continued to sabotage railway lines and the oil pipeline, the economic developments which the Black Southern African states had hoped to see materialise with Zimbabwe's Independence could not even begin to be realised. Thus, South Africa did through destabilisation or what has been called the 'sjambok' (a whip) and 'carrot',²⁷ policy manage to ensure that for the time being it would remain economically dominant in Southern Africa. The drought also worked in South Africa's favour and the Republic's economic position was assured for the time being.

²⁷ 'Southern Africa: Carrot and Sjambock', The Economist, Vol.289, No.7321-7322, December 24 1983-January 1984, p.30.

On 16 March 1984, South Africa signed a non-aggression and good neighbourliness agreement with Mozambique which marked the Republic's first victory in its campaign of making its neighbours virtually its political hostages. The Agreement, known as the Nkomati Agreement, after the place where it was signed, states in part that

The ... Parties undertake to respect each other's sovereignty and independence and in fulfilment of this fundamental obligation to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the other ... [and] shall not allow their ... territories ... to be used as a base ... by another state, government, foreign military forces, organisations or individuals ...²⁸

This Agreement if nothing else emphasizes South Africa's strategy for the eighties, which was to bring political pressure to bear on the Southern African states by military measures if and when necessary and then to follow this up with peace talks when the target state had been visibly brought to its knees. This was clearly the case in Mozambique which has not known a peaceful moment in the last twenty years. This was due to the fact that Mozambique became involved in the Zimbabwean liberation movement soon after its independence. And, when Zimbabwe became independent it took the already economically-troubled Frelimo regime everything it had to deal with the troublesome MNR which the Frelimo regime argue was invented by the Rhodesians and inherited by the South Africans in a bid to keep Frelimo's control unbalanced and fragile.²⁹ In addition to this

²⁸ MOTO, op.cit., see note 23, p.4.

²⁹ *ibid.*

unfavourable political environment, Mozambique was affected by a severe drought - as were other Southern African countries - from 1981 to 1983.

In Angola too South Africa is to-date following the same pattern of making initiatives for peace with the country's leaders. The most significant development with regard to the Angolan situation was South Africa's agreement, after years of denials of its presence there, to withdraw its troops from Southern Angola, subject to certain conditions, which centre on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from that country. The indications are that this too will have a favourable conclusion for the South African government in which case the Republic may have effected a more credible albeit temporary detente exercise in the region. The message to Black Africa from this strategy is all too clear; it has been, so far, that South Africa is not prepared to give up what its Nationalist forebears fought so hard to create. Neither is it willing to lose the only hold it still has on Black Africa, i.e. the economic one. As Murapa³⁰ put it, South Africa deliberately left Zimbabwe out of this 'detente' exercise in order to isolate that country which was its biggest potential economic threat in the region.

The implications of the detente exercise [without] Zimbabwe are that once South Africa manages to normalise relations with its African neighbours, Zimbabwe will cease to have the economic value

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.5.

it [potentially has] ... and [perhaps] the *raison d'être* [of S.A.D.C.C.] will have fallen away...³¹

This whip and talk strategy which South Africa rapidly developed within the first three years of this decade is only part of what has been referred to as the Republic's total strategy.³² The other part of this overall strategy was inspired by political developments within the Republic itself and was developed as a counter to them. From the time of Mugabe's victory in Zimbabwe there was a growing militancy amongst urban blacks within South Africa itself, generated by groups such as the Soweto Civic Association and the Azanian People's Organisation which are part of the black consciousness movement silenced in the late seventies by a massive police crackdown.³³ The situation was taking an unfavourable turn for the South African government as black workers started striking in an effort to exert pressures on the ruling regime. And, as if to emphasise the urgency of the situation in South Africa, Chief Buthelezi of one of the South African created 'homelands' KwaZulu [previously renowned for his general cooperation with the South African government] began in 1980 to stress his links with the banned A.N.C. Although Buthelezi, as head of a bantustan, is seen by liberation movement leaders

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Gutteridge & Geldenhuys, *op.cit.*, p.3.

³³ 'South Africa's Growing Black Political Activism Strikes Ford', Africa Report, January-February 1980, p.23.

as operating within the framework of apartheid³⁴ - and therefore helping to maintain it - he caused a stir when he quoted from a banned book by the imprisoned A.N.C. leader, Nelson Mandela, towards the end of 1979.³⁵ Buthelezi said later that he had not obtained government permission to quote a banned person and 'would continue to do so without authorization in the future'.³⁶

When the South African Prime Minister announced his intention to hold a referendum among the white electorate about giving the coloured and Asian population a vote and thus a stake in the country, the aim was clearly to find a solution to rising militancy amongst urban workers. The ~~Pretoria branch of the~~ ^{at Pretoria University} Institute of Strategic Studies/ had recommended that the South African government allow workers to enter legal trade unions which would transform the conflict at work places from one between workers and police (and therefore the government) to one between workers and management.³⁷ However, Botha decided to go a step further and implement a policy reminiscent of what historians and political scientists, writing on colonialism, have termed the 'divide and rule strategy'. The thinking behind this offer of constitutional representation for Asians and

³⁴ 'Buthelezi Meets ANC Leaders in London', Africa Report, January-February 1980, p.23.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Maveneka, L., 'Cosmetic Changes Will Not Fool Blacks', Article in MOTO (Mambo), March 1984, p.19.

Coloureds was that this sector of the population would be compelled to take up arms in defence of apartheid, and would probably be gradually wooed over onto the side of the white South Africans thus weakening the mass base of the black liberation movements. More importantly, such concessions on the part of the South African government [with its historical tradition of total exclusion of anyone slightly off-white from participation or representation in politics] was aimed at the rest of the world. It was clearly meant to demonstrate to all outside observers that the Republic had accepted and was prepared to implement internal change. This was the internal dimension of South Africa's 'revived detente' and related diplomatic offensive. Despite this and other internal measures by Botha, which show that the majority of South African whites recognise the need for change, there has been no decisive action to indicate that the South African government intend to implement change as the blacks would like it. This has resulted in the South African government's actions being described as not genuine and merely cosmetic by internal and external blacks.³⁸

If anything, the South African government's relations with its neighbours in the last few years, coupled with its offer of constitutional representation for Asians and Coloureds only demonstrate a projection of historical evolution rather than an attempt to reverse it. This trend

³⁸ Gutteridge, op.cit., p.26. Maveneka, op.cit., see note 37, p.20.

is strengthened by the fact that every South African action both internally and externally can only be described as aimed at ensuring the survival of the internal political status quo. Botha, like Verwoerd, Strijdom Vorster and Muller before him, is still fighting for the survival of the status quo in South Africa, and also to remove South Africa from its internationally embarrassing and diplomatically frustrating position, while trying to influence regional developments in a direction that will enhance South African dominance and prestige.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: INTERNAL CHANGE STILL THE SOLE ANSWER
TO A MORE FLEXIBLE FOREIGN POLICY

For nearly four decades, South African foreign policy has been preoccupied with efforts to gain acceptance and assurance for the survival of its internal socio-political system. These efforts were initially directed towards the major Western European powers at various international forums, in the immediate post-war era. At that ~~point in~~ time the South African government sought to assure its own survival by preventing the advent of decolonisation into Africa. However, when the South African government realised that Africa was not to be by-passed by these new forces for change, it had to redirect the focus of its diplomatic struggles. African decolonisation implied that, in addition to coping with the challenges presented by a changed international society, South Africa had to first counter those threats to its survival emanating from the continent itself. Dialogue and the 'outward-looking' foreign policy, backed by offers of economic cooperation, became the means by which South Africa sought to assure its survival in post-colonial Africa.

The South African government would probably have made more concerted efforts towards gaining diplomatic and political links with the new African states if developments within Southern Africa had not demanded its immediate attention. The rise of African Liberation movements in

Southern Africa posed a real danger to the South African government because if they were allowed to succeed in Rhodesia and the Portuguese territories South Africa would be the next target. Southern Africa thus became South Africa's primary concern in its battle for survival and also in its efforts to create a less hostile and thus diplomatically and politically more flexible environment for the conduct of its external affairs. It was through exploitation of the Rhodesian conflict that South Africa had first attempted to make the transition from its position as the champion of white hegemony and disturber of the peace by initiating 'detente'. Despite the various setbacks which prevented South African goals from being realised through 'detente' and later the 'constellation' proposals it remained imperative for the South African government to attempt to influence regional developments in its favour. With Zimbabwe independent and Namibia seemingly moving in the same direction, the South African government faced its biggest challenge ever. Somehow it had to manipulate a potentially hostile situation into a more amicable and flexible one.

For some observers, South Africa's new constitution and its agreements with some of its black neighbours coming so soon after the South African government was accused of embarking on a policy of regional destabilization,¹ mark the

¹ Geldenhuys, D. & Gutteridge, W. (eds), 'Instability and Conflict in Southern Africa: South Africa's Role in Regional Security', Conflict Studies, No.148, 1983, pp.11-12. Also Jaster, R., A Regional Security Role for Africa's Frontline States: Experience and Prospects, pp.20-24. Both deal exclusively with the destabilisation allegations and Jaster points out that there is evidence that they were true.

beginning of a more hopeful phase in South Africa's external relations. However, to view the recent Nkomati and Lusaka agreements as indications that the Southern African states are willing to end diplomatic and political isolation of the Republic, would be to overstate the significance of these agreements. Basically, they are economic agreements - albeit with a security angle - and as such only serve to emphasise the long-established but ambivalent relationship between South Africa and the Independent African countries. The agreements emphasise the fact that while African countries find South Africa's policy of apartheid abhorrent, the realities of their economic conditions prevent them from ignoring South Africa's trade offers. Thus, while the African countries have been ^{primarily} responsible for keeping the issue of apartheid alive in international affairs they have not been successful in finding adequate substitutes for their economic links with the Republic. Furthermore, the fact that the Southern African countries established the basis for ending their unfavourable economic links with the Republic, when they formed S.A.D.C.C., proves that they seek to discontinue these ties as much as is possible. The fact that allegations of South African destabilization came soon after S.A.D.C.C. and were followed by peace talks in which South Africa concentrated on enhanced economic cooperation as well as security issues² provide further evidence that the allegations

² The Nkomati agreement and the Lusaka talks on Angola both centred on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and not to allow attacks to be launched on each other's territories by dissident groups. See Chapter IV.

were not completely groundless³ since such destabilization put these countries in a position where they were forced to accept South African proposals. Clearly, South Africa sought to eradicate once and for all the adverse implications of S.A.D.C.C. while using these negotiations as a basis for moves towards the establishment of more amicable relations with its neighbours. From this point of view South Africa has not 'asserted a new domination of its region, and wrested unofficial recognition from the countries to its immediate north...'⁴ as some observers have suggested. It has merely succeeded in ensuring that the Frontline states remain dependent on the South African economy, a situation which was made more plausible for South Africa because of the drought. The South African government's alleged and obvious⁵ military actions in the region (before the latest peace initiatives) appear to have deprived the Frontline states of the ability to offer more than moral support to the A.N.C. and the P.A.C. for the time being. All of this creates a deceptively favourable regional environment for South Africa. The decision by the South African Prime Minister, Botha, to make an unprecedented diplomatic tour of Western

³ Jaster, R., op.cit.

⁴ 'The Limits of Ostracism', The Economist, 12-18 May 1984, p.15.

⁵ Here, reference is being made to the allegations of destabilization by support of dissident groups in neighbouring countries, as well as more obvious attacks such as the Maseru air raid. See Chapter IV.

Europe shortly after the conclusion of the Southern African agreements adds further to the deception if Botha embarked on it in order to persuade the world that he had now established the basis for diplomatic acceptance by the Southern African states. ~~1980-1981~~ The recent Southern African agreements only confirm South Africa's military might in the region and that her economic superiority is still the main basis for interaction with her neighbours.

Botha's European tour can be viewed either as an indication that international acceptance of South Africa and its internal socio-political system is on the way, or on the other hand, it could be interpreted as the latest in a long historical list of calculated South African tactics to persuade the world into accepting apartheid as the most viable domestic policy for the Republic, and also as a potentially stable rather than a destabilizing policy for regional peace.⁶ Whether or not Botha's tour marks the beginning of the thaw for South African diplomatic and political isolation depends very much on the course of events between the Republic and Western Europe after the end of the tour. However, if South Africa's altered constitution and regional initiatives are not followed by radical internal changes its manoeuvres will amount to nothing more than tactics to delay the inevitable (even though this inevitability may take some years to be effected).

⁶ One of the main arguments against the continuing practice of apartheid has been that it is a potentially destabilizing practice because it not only divides but seeks to oppress the majority population by denying them participation in government. Thus for as long as it exists those whom it suppresses will seek to remove it by violence which means that there can be no regional peace while apartheid remains.

And the Republic is not without experience in developing such tactics since the single most significant factor in the history of its external relations is its effort to avoid the destruction of apartheid.⁷

For the time being then, the South African government's new constitution and its agreements with Mozambique and Angola do not in themselves constitute progress away from apartheid, and do not justify any relaxation towards the Republic's socio-political system. As some observers put it

The slap of paint recently applied to neo-apartheid does not disguise the things that make it offensive - influx control, group areas restrictions, the racially biased franchise.⁸

In other words, the South African government has to complement its regional and international diplomatic efforts with convincing internal measures for change. It is up to the South African government to ensure that internal political developments do not provide the basis for increased international criticism and resentment from its neighbouring countries. However, as Gutteridge⁹ points out,

constitutional arrangements for political participation ... have little prospect of success unless accompanied by major changes in the laws relating to discrimination and separate development.

⁷ Arnold, G., 'Which Way in Southern Africa?' Africa Report, July-August 1980, pp.41-44. This article briefly summarises the history of South Africa's fight for survival.

⁸ The Economist, op.cit., see note 4.

⁹ Gutteridge, W., 'South Africa: Strategy for Survival', Conflict Studies, No.131, June 1981, p.3.

In August 1979 Botha postulated a twelve-point plan for internal change point six of which emphasises that although 'in favour of removing ... unnecessary discriminatory measures ... [Botha was] not in favour of endangering [his] own people's right to self determination'.¹⁰ Point one dealt with the recognition and acceptance of a 'multinational' society in South Africa and point three with the establishment of constitutional structures that would facilitate the

complete independence of the various
black nations in the RSA ... [and]
meaningful consolidation of the black
states and areas.¹¹

These proposals may appear to be a meaningful basis for internal change but if examined alongside the justifications given for apartheid in the dialogue and outward-looking foreign policy era,¹² it becomes easier to identify them as being merely a new way of trying to redefine apartheid and gain it some respectability. The fact that, following Botha's plan for internal reform,¹³ the extremist right wing party (H.N.P.) gained many more votes than they had in the previous elections provides evidence that the majority of South Africa's white population do not have the political will to reform.¹⁴ As Gutteridge points out

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.3-4.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Barber, J., South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945-1970, Oxford, London, 1973. He deals with dialogue and the outward foreign policy in Chapters 15 and 17. Nolutshungu also provides an analysis of these policies in the conclusion of his South Africa in Africa, Manchester, 1975, pp.303-304.

¹³ P.W. Botha called for an election in April 1981.

¹⁴ Gutteridge, W., *op.cit.*, p.24.

that momentum [for reform] depends first not on legislation ... but on a widespread conviction that in terms of white self-interest and survival, radical change is essential and on a fundamental change in attitudes ...¹⁵

Although Gutteridge's main argument is that it will be difficult for Botha to implement reforms because of the increased move to the right evident from the results of the 1981 election,¹⁶ Seiler makes a different assessment of the apparent divisions within South Africa's white electorate. Seiler¹⁷ argues that firstly, the ruling Nationalist Party does not function in a vacuum and as such is

remarkably sensitive to Afrikaaner political and economic interests ... [and] especially [with] the overriding preoccupation of many Afrikaaners that... Afrikaaner communal identity or even its survival will be at risk if too many concessions are made to pressures for change ...

He goes on to make the point that Afrikaaner Nationalist leaders not only share in these overall beliefs but also 'construe their constituents to be far more conservative than themselves' so that they can present this as the 'dominant constraint to policy change ... (which might) rise in wrath and disown the government'.¹⁸ Thus if change can only be effected by shifts in Afrikaaner thinking then

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.25.

¹⁶ *ibid.* The results are given on p.25.

¹⁷ Bissel, R.E. & Crocker, C.A. (eds), South Africa into the 1980's, Westview Press, Colorado, 1979: J. Seiler, 'The Afrikaaner Nationalist Perspective', pp.3-7.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.5.

Seiler's contention which is based on various opinion polls¹⁹ seems to add weight to the allegations by South African blacks²⁰ that the recent internal reforms are nothing more than 'cosmetic changes' to stall external criticism. Furthermore, points one to seven of Botha's twelve-point plan seem to back the view that for the Afrikaners

the policy of separate development is the only acceptable platform for change, a process that most of them believe has been occurring in a sustained way ... since Dr Hendrik Verwoerd announced ... the eventual Independence of black homelands.²¹

It is worth noting that these proposals for internal reform were made at the same time that Botha was trying to gain acceptance for his 'constellation' proposals. Bearing this in mind, the proposals for reform can be viewed as an attempt to make the 'constellation' notion more acceptable to the Southern African states by illustrating that the Republic was ready to implement internal changes. Had these states accepted the constellation notion, that would have been an indication that they believed in the genuineness of South Africa's will to reform and were willing to live amicably with it. Subsequently, the rest of Africa and then the rest of the world would not have had much cause for continued criticism of the Republic when its militant neighbours were prepared to accept the South African formula

²⁰ Bishop Desmond Tutu described the internal reforms in South Africa as cosmetic when he was on a visit to Australia in May 1984.

²¹ Bissel & Crocker (eds), op.cit. article by Seiler, op.cit., p.7.

as the most viable for righting internal wrongs. Furthermore South Africa would not need to worry about the threats implicit from allowing S.W.A.P.O. to come to victory in elections for Namibia's independence. From this point of view then the rejection of South African overtures by the Southern African states was a major blow to the Republic's hopes.

Currently, Mozambique and Angola have been pushed into a 'reluctant compromise'²² with South Africa because of internal political problems and economic difficulties. Throughout the negotiations for agreements Machel reiterated his solidarity with the A.N.C. stating that

[his] country will not be swayed from supporting the fight against Apartheid which is a crime against humanity ... [and that he would] continue to support the struggle ... on a diplomatic basis.²³

While the other Southern African states continued to criticise South Africa for what they saw as attempts to 'hold the ... black states to ransom'.²⁴ But, despite their continued criticism of the South African government's methods, they conceded that the 'peace talks' would enhance

²² 'Up Against the Facts', South: the Third World Magazine, April 1984, No.42, p.23.

²³ 'Talks with South Africa Affect Us All - Machel', The Herald, Harare, 29/2/1984. Also see 'ANC Still Locked in Talks With Maputo', The Herald, Harare, 23/2/84, where Machel again pledged his support for the A.N.C.

²⁴ 'S.A.D.C.C. Talks Open with Attack on South Africa', The Herald, Harare, 3/2/84.

their economic prosperity and perhaps provide the answer to the problems besetting the region.²⁵ Furthermore, the point was made that African states have always believed in peaceful negotiations if they created harmonious relations and that

the non-aggression pact [was a symbol of this African] spirit of good neighbourliness and co-existence [and also that] it would be palpable self-deception for the South Africans to construe the signing of the pact by Mozambique as an acceptance of the system of apartheid.²⁶

Therefore, regardless of how South Africa may attempt to take advantage of the role it created for itself in the latest peace initiative the Southern African states still conform to the principles of the 1969 Lusaka Agreement. That is, to accept negotiations for peaceful change provided that real changes, human rights and human dignity are assured for South African Blacks. The implication is that despite the peace pact the Southern African states will back the South African liberation movement more positively if this becomes necessary, as a last resort. Presently they have been beaten into peaceful talks, but, should another Soweto or Sharpeville occur they might be morally forced, despite the consequences, to give the A.N.C. and P.A.C. bases much in the same way that Mozambique gave ZANU (PF) bases following the detente deadlock.

²⁵ Comment: 'Co-Existence', The Sunday Mail, Harare, 26/2/84.

²⁶ *ibid.*

At present, South Africa's military superiority²⁷ is forcing the Southern African states to go along with South Africa's regional and internal plans. However, if subsequent events do not lead to internal changes in the Republic because of continued lack of the will to reform by the whites, internal blacks might themselves become more militant. Such a situation can only be met by the traditional South African response to demonstrations, which has been by police and guns. Jaster argues that

A well-publicized slaughter of South African blacks by the police would allow - might even force - the United States to apply some form of economic sanctions against South Africa...²⁸

It should be borne in mind that the possibility of more positive action against South Africa is more plausible today should another 'Soweto' or 'Sharpeville' occur because South Africa has once again become the focus of international attention. Thus, while it can be argued that during 'Sharpeville' the black states of Africa were still becoming independent, and that during 'Soweto' the 'Rhodesia issue' was there to divert attention away from the Republic, this is no longer the situation. Once South Africa has given in on the Namibia issue there will be no situation to divert attention away from any violent clashes within the Republic. For the Frontline states such an occurrence would call for

²⁷ South Africa's military superiority is a fact accepted by the African states as a whole. For details and comparisons see pp.88-89 in Bissel & Crocker (eds), op.cit.: Chester Crocker, 'Current and Projected Military Balances in South Africa'.

²⁸ Jaster, R.S., Southern Africa in Conflict Implications for U.S. Policies in the 1980's, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, 1982, p.34.

appeals for positive international action against the Republic. If these do not give satisfactory results the black states would then have no option but to allow the A.N.C. and P.A.C. to launch attacks on the Republic from their territories in the hope that the Soviet Union and China would enhance their support for these groups - by giving more weapons - as a counter to South African responses to such attacks.

If such a situation were ever to occur,²⁹ however, it is unlikely that the United States would allow it to degenerate into outright conflict³⁰ without making a determined effort to limit it. Rather, the point is that, despite South Africa's diplomatically significant tour of Western Europe and encouraging statements by some Heads of Government (such as Mrs Thatcher who said that South Africa deserved to be listened to primarily because of its important role in ending the Rhodesian conflict)³¹ South Africa has not enhanced its options in Southern Africa for ending diplomatic isolation and ostracism. Indeed Botha's

²⁹ Bissell & Crocker(eds), op.cit. article by Crocker, op.cit., pp.92-99 gives a detailed analysis of possible scenarios and how South Africa would deal with them. Gutteridge also points out that South African Defence White Papers from 1977 demonstrate that South African military planning is based on the worst case scenario with attacks from outside and inside simultaneously. See Gutteridge, W., op.cit., p.17.

³⁰ Bissell & Crocker (eds), op.cit. article by Crocker, op.cit., p.93.

³¹ Ian Aitken, 'Thatcher Airs Views After First Five Years', The Canberra Times, 9.5.1984, p.6.

European tour can be viewed as an attempt to camouflage its continued regional political isolation by using the fact that it has brought black states to the negotiation table to cover the fact that these states only did so reluctantly and under considerable pressures. Alternatively, Botha may not even bother to try and cover the fact that he forced Black Southern African states to the negotiating table. He may use the recent talks as evidence that South Africa is powerful enough not to need goodwill from its neighbours now or in the future. And on the basis of this argue that the leaders of Western Europe should support him since he is willing to consider internal change and can also force his neighbours to go along with him. Consequently, whatever way one looks at this, for South Africa the Southern African peace initiatives have provided it with the opportunity to persuade the world that its immediate neighbours are prepared to live peacefully with it. This would then make nonsense of continued isolation from the rest of Africa and the rest of the international community.

By merely looking at the diplomatic significance of Botha's ability to embark on a European tour, it would seem that South Africa has come a long way in its struggle for survival as a durable and viable entity in the international system. However neither the Southern African peace initiatives nor the much-publicised tour can effect internal changes in South Africa, because they were not meant to do that but to do the opposite, which is make the world safe for the status quo in South Africa. The peaceful co-existence

in Southern Africa was not founded on mutual respect and is therefore a dangerous peace. Furthermore, the fact that this peace was 'founded on fear of Pretoria's military might and economic muscle',³² means that South Africa has not succeeded in creating a durable favourable environment for the conduct of its foreign policy. It has only temporarily stalled the mere adverse implications of the situation in its immediate environment. The fact that the present state of affairs is only temporary is emphasised not only by the factors militating against radical internal changes³³ within the Republic, but also by the continued existence of the A.N.C. and the P.A.C. despite the 'Peace talks'. While it may appear impossible to imagine who the A.N.C. and P.A.C. will manage to launch military attacks against the Republic, in view of the recent 'peace undertakings', both groups have pledged their continued commitment to the liberation of South Africa.³⁴ Even whilst Angola and Mozambique were engaged in peace talks with South Africa, the A.N.C. stated that the talks would not bring peace to Southern Africa unless apartheid was dismantled,³⁵ adding that

³² South, op.cit., p.24.

³³ Gann, L.H. & Duignon, P. (eds), Why South Africa Will Survive. A Historical Analysis, Croom Helm, London, 1981, pp.299-300.

³⁴ This was established primarily from talks with the A.N.C. representative for Australia and the P.A.C. representative for Australia.

³⁵ 'A.N.C. Still Locked in Talks with Maputo', Herald, 23/2/84.

No non-aggression pact will stop the ANC and the people of South Africa from fighting for their right to self-determination and liberation.³⁶

The P.A.C., on the other hand, has described the recent Southern African events as Pretoria's attempts to 'give apartheid a human face'³⁷ and asserted that

The pacts that are being forced on some frontline and neighbouring states cannot determine the course of the Azanian Revolution ... Whites [will] not bring about fundamental changes ... [only] the participation of the masses in our people's war [can] determine the ... success of our revolution.³⁸

Clearly, the objections to apartheid will remain for as long as it remains the major determinant of South Africa's socio-political system. In terms of South Africa's foreign policy capabilities, continued adherence to the principles of apartheid will ultimately keep South Africa in a defensive position in international affairs despite recent regional developments. From the end of the Second World War to the present, South Africa has been preoccupied with safeguarding its survival and expanding its sphere of influence and operation. Following its failure to effect this by being recognised and supported as an 'outpost of Western civilization' and a 'bulwark against communism',³⁹

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ 'Beware of Pretoria's Apartheid Con - P.A.C.' *Herald*, 21/3/84.

³⁸ 'P.A.C. Marks Birthday With Victory Pledge', *Herald*, 6/4/84. N.B. The word 'Azania' is the Black Liberation Movement's name for an Independent South Africa.

³⁹ Hanf, T., Wieland, H. & Vierdag, G. (eds), *South Africa: The Prospects of Peaceful Change*, Collings, London; Phillip & Indiana University Press, Capetown & Bloomington, 1981, p.74.

it sought to exploit the new African situation for these purposes. The Bantustan policy had been the cornerstone of 'a wider system of economic co-operation',⁴⁰ from which diplomatic and political co-operation were expected to evolve. South Africa's primary concentration on South Africa over the last decade suggests that this region has become the cornerstone of the Republic's goals in gaining wider options for the conduct of its foreign policy. If viewed from this angle the South African government clearly manipulated regional affairs in order to facilitate its launching of a strategy to impress upon the world the viability of apartheid, and of South Africa in Africa. However, the restraints on South Africa's foreign policy options in Southern Africa, and subsequently in the rest of the international system, have not been eradicated. South Africa's foreign policy will remain centred on defending apartheid or attempting to push for the acceptance of an 'apartheid redefined' for as long as it fails to accept the advice of people such as Mr Rowan Cronje⁴¹ who warned that

it [is] important to act for change promptly ... [and that] the most important lesson learned by whites in Rhodesia was that reluctance to accept change meant that in a year or nine months you will have to give up more.⁴²

⁴⁰ Nolutshungu, op.cit., p.117.

⁴¹ Rowan Cronje is a former member of Ian Smith's Cabinet during U.D.I.

⁴² Arnold, op.cit., p.41.

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