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# The South African State and Africa

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South Africa has since its inception as a single state attached considerable importance to the rest of Africa for both economic and strategic reasons. The Union inherited from British imperialism an economic sphere of influence in Southern Africa characterised by the radial articulation of different colonial territories to the South African economy, and in large measure the mediation of their relations with international capital through and via South Africa which became "a centre in the periphery" with its own sub-imperial ambitions.

All the other territories in southern Africa became and were kept dependent on South Africa in a hierarchy of imperialist interests in the subcontinent which necessitated differential possibilities for economic growth and development. They became, in a way that was in principle not so different from that of the Bantustans, the necessary backwaters to South Africa's industrial development, a pattern moderated only by the existence of different political centres, e.g., the Portuguese imperial power, and the presence of significant settler populations in Zimbabwe and Angola which gave these territories a relatively privileged status in relation to international capital. Furthermore, the tensions between South African capitals and, in various ways, the British state and British capital restrained the expansion and consolidation of South African economic domination, while South Africa's own subordinate role in international capitalism together with the necessary, self-imposed restraints on the development of its own capitalist economy significantly hampered its outward expansion.

Nevertheless, every government since 1910 has been fully aware of the potential of intensified South African economic domination and has understood the future of accumulation in the Union (later, Republic) to be linked with expansion into the African "hinterland".

At the strategic level — military and political — the importance of the continent for white rule in South Africa has also been understood and stressed. In the first and most important instance, the imperialist order in Africa

created the strategic context — i.e. the absence of significant military threats — necessary for the consolidation of the South African state on the basis of a colonial racial order. Successive South African governments feared both the arming of Blacks in the rest of Africa and the entry of new powers into the politics of the continent. In the post Second World War period this made possible the assimilation of a policy favouring continued colonial rule to a virulent anti-communism which conveniently managed to conflate the class enemies at home and the threats to the strategic order in Africa.

Ideologically, Africa has also had a central place in the evolution of the racist state in some ways comparable to “the frontier” idea in other colonial histories. But in an immediate sense, the condition of blacks in other African countries, the balance of power between imperialism and popular forces, and *a fortiori*, the balance of class forces in colonial and neocolonial Africa affected in very evident ways the balance of confidence between the white power bloc and its domestic challengers. Thus in the build up to decolonization black struggles intensified provoking both an intensification of internal repression and an aggressive African policy. Every wave of decolonization in the rest of Africa has seen larger and more intense mass struggles accompanied by increasingly aggressive and violent state responses to both the domestic challenge and to African states.

South Africa's response to African developments has consistently been linked to its relationship with the imperialist powers in two ways. Firstly, as already indicated, South Africa enjoyed the protection of imperialism while benefiting from the role of subordinate partner in economic terms, at least in southern Africa. Thus imperialism would open doors for Pretoria in Africa. Secondly, influence in Africa would secure South Africa's privileged status in the imperialist order both economically and strategically. So important is this relationship that whatever the contradictions between particular coalitions within the South African power bloc and imperialism the state has consistently managed to contain the conflict and to reaffirm the tacit alliance with the West in Africa.

If African decolonization presented a crisis for South Africa, and particularly the decolonization of what had come to be known as the “white redoubt” in the late 1960s, that crisis was a total one, relevant at all levels of state action, domestic and international. The internal struggles in South Africa itself, as well as the conflicts between Pretoria resistances and adaptations to the changing capacities and strategies of Western powers and Western capital on which its survival ultimately depends.

The terminal phase of colonialism corresponds approximately to the period between Rhodesian UDI and Zimbabwean Independence which was critical for the evolution of South African strategies, conditioning to a considerable

degree state responses in the contemporary period in which Western power has to be maintained in recycled forms without empire.

### **Domestic Politics**

In the UDI period apartheid enjoyed, for some eight years, a position of considerable strength at home due to two main factors: it has successfully disrupted and repressed the political organisation of the nationalist movement and the working class, and the liberation movements having no easy access to South African territory, thanks to the system of buffer states provided by Rhodesia and Portugal, could only wage a war of very low intensity. In addition, the South African economy continued to boom, benefiting in its external trade also from the sanctions imposed on Rhodesia. Despite rumblings of discontent and splits, the ruling party enjoyed the support of its strongest and potentially most troublesome provincial constituency in the Transvaal from which both Verwoerd and Vorster had emerged. The white population was on the whole content or compliant and the blacks subdued. The state machinery and party leadership at the highest levels were under firm, unitary control by the Prime Minister aided in a decisive way by the secret police.

Repression and economic boom conditions stimulated investors' confidence while the difficulties arising for Britain and Portugal in Southern Africa encouraged a positive valuation of South Africa by Western states both as an economic partner and as an ally in the management of the region. The succession of coups and civil wars in many of the former colonies to the North, as well as the ease with which neocolonialism had been entrenched after Independence, dissipated the threat which the emergence of independent black states had been thought to portend while creating opportunities for the assertion of South African influence on the continent. South African policy in Africa and towards the world generally had an important impact on the internal functioning of the state and its legitimation in ways that would affect subsequent policies and strategies towards Africa.

In the first place, the "outward-looking policy" enabled one faction within the Afrikaner nationalist leadership to consolidate and project its power through the person of Vorster, who in his turn gained for reasons of external as well as internal politics increasing control of key bureaucratic structures. Through the Bureau of State Security led by a personal friend of long-standing, and the Department of Information headed by personal political allies, the Vorster faction was able to autonomise itself from traditional party controls while at the same time displacing the factional conflicts to the domain of state institutions and apparatuses directly. Secondly, the external campaign provided a basis of collaboration among elements of the power bloc otherwise at odds with each other over various aspects of domestic policy.

Foreign policy being closely identified with the internal struggle for continued racist supremacy, the new dispositions became a rallying point for the "White Unity" now felt to be urgent as well as a pretext for the movement of the party leadership towards the accommodation of class elements — foreign and English-speaking business interest — generally viewed with suspicion by the party rank and file still predominantly petty bourgeoisie and working class. Equally important, the non-Afrikaans bourgeoisie could be drawn into close collaboration with the state in the crucial areas of internal security, defence and foreign policy, and harnessed to its defence.

Since this period also saw the expansion of Afrikaner monopoly capital and its interpenetration with non-Afrikaans capital, the approach of the state to capital corresponded to the changing class character of Afrikaner rule and the widening class difference between the top and the bottom of the party.<sup>2</sup> In one sense, Vorster and Verwoerd were doing nothing new, representing just another chapter in the continual adjustment of the relationship between Afrikaner capitalists and would-be capitalists through the state with big (and multinational) capital. If capital's doubts about the ultimate soundness of apartheid persisted and if, moreover, it continued to complain of the racist restriction of labour supplies and markets, and, indeed, investment opportunities, the project of external expansion linked to massive state expenditure and investment linked to security and defence as well as bureaucratic empire — building could win peace — for so long as the economy continued to boom. Under Verwoerd and Vorster the state would be unquestionably senior partner in this alliance, just as in foreign policy the institutions that he (and his personal allies) controlled would dominate. Thus, for example, the burden of supporting the Rhodesians and of manning the borders fell on the police, as did espionage and subversion. Many of the functions of the foreign service were taken over by the Information Department.

The National Party being, like all ethno-nationalist parties, inherently fissiparous, divided by class and by locality and by the political machines-within-machines which such parties invariably foster, each leader in power has created or sought to create an organised base of his own. Vorster's functioned well, until its failure undermined its authority and emboldened others to challenge it for the leadership of state and party. The collapse of the Portuguese stand in Africa, the impact of the oil price increases of the 1970s coupled with violent fluctuations in the price of gold, black revolt, and the failure of South African intervention in Angola all worked to undermine the credibility of the Vorster faction and of its strategies for white survival and prosperity.

The circumstances of Vorster's withdrawal from the premiership, his failure to engineer a quiet succession and the extraordinary inability of the state to

contain the Information slush fund scandal which eventually brought this faction down in disgrace, are all still covered in mystery. While there is not enough evidence to show that his rivals engineered this downfall, rivals he assuredly had both within the party and in state machinery itself and, at the very least, they did little to save him while they derived immense benefit from his fall.

External failure and sustained black urban revolt accompanied by a sharp drop in investors' confidence, itself, in part, augmented by the Republic's external payments problems — the beginnings of the first serious recession since the Nationalists came to power — created a crisis of confidence among whites which has been variously characterised as a legitimisation or a hegemonic crisis. The imperative task of the state, or whoever gained control of it, would be to restore confidence among whites and among investors abroad and to pacify the Blacks in more lasting ways. In dealing with capital, the bargaining power of the state was less than it had been before even given the signs that some concessions on labour issues were already in the pipeline. Satisfying the capitalist class would be important in securing the confidence of foreign governments in the area of imperialist strategic co-operation in Africa also.

One area where the collaboration between the state and big business had grown importantly was that of Defence, but for reasons of Afrikaner historical sentiment, this had not been a central institutional area for personal power in the National Party. In any event, minded by the Cape Nationalist plutocrat, P.W. Botha, Defence had grown considerably in spending power and bureaucratically in the 1960s and 1970s. Overshadowed by civilian institutions of repression and intelligence yet beholden to its minister who not only responded to its interests but seemed to swallow its formulae for "survival" hook, line and sinker, it became a readily available and potentially formidable organisational base for a challenge to the Vorster faction and the planned succession of Mulder to the premiership.

It required no great perspicacity on Botha's part, in contending for the leadership, to seek the support of another disgruntled element in the white population, namely capital. This was, in any event dictated by the economic crisis facing South Africa, but it was also strategically necessary — for securing the external Western endorsement of apartheid's struggle to survive. Ideologically, also, there was a basis for greater co-operation not only in the fact of the Cape Nationalists' greater "liberalism" but also in the fact that the armed forces' leadership had a necessarily greater "cosmopolitanism" than the civilian instruments of repression for various reasons: the imperial past, training experience abroad especially before the arms embargo, the dependence on strategic doctrines based on globalist anticommunist counter-insurgency, and continuing contact with Israeli and other military leaders

themselves inserted into the global imperialist military alliance system.<sup>3</sup> The policies that Botha proclaimed were an assemblage of concessions to business interests which were neither systematically thought out or consistently implemented but which were to emerge hesitantly and fragmentarily in response to "crisis" they signified an attempt to graft the commonplaces of counter-insurgency onto the structure of racist rule and ideology in a pretended "total strategy" whose most distinctive feature was precisely its lack of a strategic or political purpose beyond that of pushing back the threats to the ruling oligarchy. In execution even that lacked both coherence and conclusiveness.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to domestic politics, the significant point is that Botha was trying, with the aid of the military, to unite business and state behind an essentially military solution of South Africa's problem — in my view, the economic emphasis of this stance is easily overstated — with a promise of political reform. Reform, in so far as it was meant to imply the relaxation of racial discrimination and oppression was made necessary both by the demonstrated failure of policies based on repression alone to curb and forestall black revolt, and by the increasing impracticality of running the economy along strict apartheid lines. But reform meant first and foremost manipulating divisions of race and of class among Blacks in order to incorporate larger numbers of them both as cheap and abundant manpower and as, at best, privileged subalterns in the defence of white capitalist power. Here again the range of concessions to be made was not clear, reforms being extended reluctantly and episodically in response to "crises" produced by the failure of previous ones.

Much has been said and written about the "total strategy" which Botha proclaimed and the substantial direct presence of the military in politics and in law and order maintenance functions which it brought about. In some ways it represents a well-known tendency of armies to move into politics in times of hegemonic crisis but it is more important as the effect of the carrying of politics into the state machinery itself which becomes factionalised, a process intimately related to the direct role played by the state in Afrikaner accumulation and to the creation of the Afrikaner bureaucratic bourgeoisie. Its significance ultimately lies not in the capacity of the state to manage crisis "hegemonic" or otherwise, but in the lack of cohesion of the state of which it is the result.

The reforms that Botha has been compelled to concede, ranging from the constitutional to the sexual and including most significantly labour laws and mobility, as well as the new doctrines of survival, have not only produced the well-known splits within the white polity but have fundamentally undermined the cogency of the ideology of the racist state and must force it to an even greater eclecticism and opportunism both in its mobilizing slogans

and in its blueprints for action. To a certain extent that reflects the diversity of the elements that constitute the power bloc and their varying, often conflictful, hold on the state of various parts of it. None of this warrants the belief that is often expressed that the Botha program expressed the ascendancy of monopoly capital and the submission of the state to its needs. The state and those in the capitalist class who depend upon it in a most particular way still have need for their own defence, sometimes against the encroachments of those larger capitalist interests they have perforce to serve and with which they are in alliance.

While the reshufflings and the coalition politics have been going on within the state and the power bloc, mass struggles have also developed in response to the changing external circumstances and the internal crises of capitalism and racial domination. It will suffice for present purposes only to mention in a summary fashion the most significant points related to the policies of apartheid towards Africa.

In the 1960s, especially after 1964 when the state had all but destroyed the internal organisational base of the national movement, and in the early to mid 1970s, radical opponents of the regime generally expected a guerilla struggle eventually to develop more or less along the lines of the struggles in the former Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe, and for such a struggle to be closely led from the outside. There were many in 1976 who expected the liberation movements to march in and carry the struggle to victory. The success of Frelimo stimulated great enthusiasm and high expectations, as would the defeat of South Africa and its allies in the Angolan Civil War subsequently. In addition, or as a result, large numbers of militants found their way out of the country into the training camps of the ANC. Equally striking was the radicalising effect of the success of marxist movements: radical socialism became the ground on which the struggle was debated for an increasing number of students and workers.

Developments in the industrial context as well as rural immiserisation reinforced working class militancy and radicalism but now in a context in which there was a stronger impulse towards organisation and the limited scope conceded by the state in part responding to international pressure. The remarkable growth in trade union organisation and in working class community activity have also imposed radical socialism on the consciousness of the mass struggles.

Growing South African violence against neighbouring countries intended to force the expulsion of ANC activists from countries bordering South Africa and to exclude SWAPO from southern Angola, have had perverse effects in that they have intensified the sense of being beleaguered and embattled among the domestic population, in very much the same way that the escala-



tion of aggression by Ian Smith's forces alienated the domestic population driving the young into the armed struggle. Here, however, with the particular difficulties facing guerilla infiltration and war the popular response has taken the form of direct, many-sided resistance within the country. What is particularly noticeable is the series of attacks on collaborators which reflects a growing attitude of war, which is linked to the failure of the structures of collaboration like the Botha constitution and the Bantustans.

The use of collaboration strategies both in South Africa and in the neighbouring countries though it has produced deep division and bloody confrontations among the oppressed themselves has, however, also provided ready "proxy" targets for the enraged masses and high-lighted an area of weakness for the regime — its dependence on black manpower in these ways. The links between collaboration within South Africa in internal repression and the collaboration of certain groups and states across its borders are not lost upon the oppressed, rather, they contribute to polarization and to a radicalization that links repression in South Africa to the imperialist-aided aggressions of the South African state in neighbouring countries.

Finally, the public and defiant avowal of support for the ANC in the mass actions of the last two years has represented a major setback for state policy which was intended to "externalise" and so marginalise the ANC. Since the 1970s many reformers of apartheid both native and foreign have dreamed of an internal settlement with some "moderate" alternative which would facilitate their strategy of assimilating the ANC (and SWAPO) to an external "communist danger" which it was legitimate for Western states and well-disposed African states to assist South Africa in fighting. Undoubtedly the ANC has won "hearts and minds" by its own effort but in launching war upon it, Botha identified it as the ultimate obstacle to the perpetuation of racist capitalism however reformed.

For the state, the disposition of the domestic black population has become the principal obstacle to the success of its policies in Africa, policies that were designed in the first place to neutralise its revolutionary potential. Issued from its internal politics the foreign policy of South Africa continues to founder on those politics in ways that also hamper, as we shall presently show, the policies of Western states that are well disposed towards it.

### **Policies towards Africa**

Against the background of its domestic politics it should be easier to see the African policies of the South African state clearly, their purpose and their irreconcilable contradictions. It should also be easier to see why this policy must necessarily be one of violence and be essentially intolerant of independent neighbours with radical socialist aspirations.

Faced with growing international isolation, Verwoerd conceived of the idea

of a South African common market, essentially based upon the former High Commission Territories then destined to become independent as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, but also capable of admitting other states further north. South Africa was confident of being able to hold on to the advantages which its system of communication, its mines and its generally higher level of industrialisation had given it. Economic and technical aid of which emergent African states seemed always to be in need was held out as a promised reward to those who would co-operate. Under Vorster this policy was pursued more vigorously but with the emphasis on southern Africa tending to give way to a search for allies anywhere on the continent. In southern Africa the most important task of foreign policy was to assist the embattled white colonies and so draw them to a greater dependence on South Africa. The Cabora Bassa Dam Project and the Kunene River Scheme arose out of such attempts as did the support for the rebel British colony. While encroaching on Rhodesia's markets in Southern Africa and elsewhere, Pretoria encouraged a rebellion which set back the economic development of Zimbabwe and the growth of Rhodesian capitalism by many years. Simultaneously it was making definite encroachments on the economies of Portuguese colonies which before the wars of liberation had been all but closed to foreigners.

Encouraged by the attitude of Lesotho and Swaziland, and above all by Banda's collaboration, Vorster was to launch his policy of "dialogue" with the aid of France and the most francophile African heads of state, Houphouet-Boigny and Bongo. At this stage the predominant aim of policy was to break the solidarity of African states, to open markets, isolate the liberation movement, and gain wider international acceptance. Western states assigned Pretoria an important role in the region and in their naval strategies — quite apart from the considerable economic significance of South Africa especially for Britain. That support is permanently recorded in United Nations documents where the West opposed every anti-apartheid initiative whether regarding South Africa itself or Namibia, or proffered in compromise diplomatic diversions and stratagems that helped Pretoria more than its enemies — the ill-fated Western Contact Group being perhaps the most outstanding of these.

Although there were acts of aggression committed against neighbouring states, particularly against Zambia by South Africa and its Rhodesian ally, Pretoria's optimism about its prospects in Africa may have acted to moderate its use of force. There was a built in ambiguity in the relationship with Zambia arising from a number of important considerations. Zambia employed white South Africans in mines owned or (later) managed by a South African multinational company. Thanks to UDI, trade between South Africa and Zambia was considerable. While the impact of guerilla attacks on South Africa itself was small, Zambia's identification as a Western-leaning non-

aligned state raised hopes about its own eventual "moderation" while giving it protection in so far as direct force against it would not have been well-received in the West. In addition, with the role of the military being subordinated to the all-important BOSS, the use of massive force did not readily suggest itself to the Vorster faction. Vorster preferred to use the instruments he personally controlled and the measures to which they lent themselves most readily. Finally, it was the assumption of state policy at the time that the decisive theatre was the domestic one where great faith was placed on police repression while Pretoria blithely believed that it could separate the two spheres and forge gainful relations with African states without reference to South Africa's internal politics.

It was with the Angolan intervention that South African military coercion assumed an altogether different order of magnitude. Having been caught unprepared by the Portuguese coup and unable to formulate a response to Mozambican independence, South Africa was presented with an entirely different set of circumstances in the Angolan case. Firstly, the South African military was on familiar terrain where it had been fighting SWAPO all along. Secondly the division of the anticolonial forces into three movements two of which had leaders that were strongly connected to the CIA in the case of FNLA and to both the CIA and the Portuguese military in the case of UNITA provided tempting opportunity. American encouragement as well as indications of support from some African states led Vorster to believe that the action would produce a resounding success for his African and global diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> Finally all the indications are that the military, and no doubt their defence minister, P.W. Botha, were eager to intervene fearing the gain to SWAPO should the MPLA triumph and perhaps hoping to demonstrate to South Africa and the world their prowess with what they thought would be an easy victory. It is highly significant, however, that the action did not then involve a major military commitment to fight to a successful outcome or even to involve the South African public in this campaign.

In the recriminations that followed over the United States' failure to back the South African action as Pretoria had evidently been led to expect that it would, Vorster revealed an old Afrikaner nationalist suspicion of the reliability of its Western allies. There would also occur some public acts of defiance by Vorster during the Carter period which would produce a marked deterioration in relation. Vorster, clearly, had not fully appreciated the evolving United States' role in Africa and the opportunities it might create for Pretoria.

Yet, Carter was weak and in the last two years of Vorster's premiership the Botha faction judged more accurately which way the wind was blowing in the United States and how much closer their own attitudes to both Angola

and Namibia were to those of the dominant interests in the American ruling class. Attacks on Angola increased, attempts to revivify UNITA were stepped up, and with a murderous attack on SWAPO refugees in Cassinga the military sought to overturn plans for a United Nations settlement of the Namibian problem with Angolan co-operation. When Botha took over in 1979 this aggression increased as did strikes by Rhodesia against Mozambique, Zambia and, on one occasion, Angola too. While it is generally believed that South Africa recoiled from a negotiated international settlement of the Namibian issue because of the unexpected (by South Africa and the West) victory of ZANU in the Zimbabwean elections, it is difficult to see any evidence that suggests that the South African military were ever in favour of abandoning Namibia or allowing elections that might have even the remotest possibility of bringing SWAPO to power. Subsequently Namibia would become more than ever their *chasse gardee* and, testing ground for their doctrines of counter-insurgency and for the use of ethnic armies and military men bequeathed by fascist Portugal and racist Rhodesia.

The thrust of South Africa's African policy under Botha was to be southern African rather than continent-wide corresponding to the extent of effective applicability of South Africa's military power and as luck would have it coinciding with an American decision after Reagan's accession to give the highest priority to "fighting communism" in southern Africa while treating the rest of sub-saharan Africa as being of much less importance.

Botha sought to create a constellation of southern African states in elaboration of the idea initially raised by Verwoerd and pursued to some degree by Vorster. The only innovation under the new regime lay in the degree to which the state was disposed to use military force to coerce its neighbours out of any alternative arrangements they might devise, and the use of a variety of subversive forces to disrupt economic installations and especially those linking several countries e.g., the Mozambique-Zimbabwe pipeline and the Benguela railway line. Consolidating and expanding South African economic influence might be expected to appeal to the business class and was often seen as primarily reflecting the pressure on the state from this class, yet it was far more important in hampering the development of independent links with the major capitalist countries. It was an attempt to force recognition of the intermediary subordinate-imperialist role that South Africa had always sought for itself, now in circumstances where it was quite feasible that some of these countries, notably Zimbabwe, might have strong attractions for international capital.

The African policy of Botha is linked to the "total strategy" proclaimed in the famous Defence White Papers and on various occasions by both Malan and Botha. Seeing South Africa as confronted with a total communist in-

spired onslaught the state sought to win, by a combination of "reform" at home, to win hearts and minds and decisive military action in the region. Premised on strong collaboration between the state and big capital the strategy envisaged the encouragement of collaborating classes and strata among Blacks while also using racial and ethnic cleavages to divide and so weaken opposition. Non-essential racist shibboleths would be swept aside while the targeting of internal repression would be more discriminating and less provocative. Frankel has shown the derivation of this notion from the strategic writings of General Beaufre which are treated as Holy Writ by the South African military.<sup>6</sup> What has been little stressed however is its vacuity which echoes the banalities and commonplaces of Beaufre's own conceptions — notions that have, as it happens, been used elsewhere without much success.

In its South African version "total strategy" applies principally to the removal of the threat of insurgency from Namibia and South Africa itself. It contains no guidance to external policy beyond the militarization of diplomacy and the overkill that necessarily follows. It is nevertheless of greater ideological significance in so far as it made possible the translation of apartheid's parochial defence to a cosmopolitan global function in the defence of imperialism's peripheries. Its embrace and proclamation by the South African military was itself evidence of their self-identification with the wider counter-insurgency culture in the West. If the South African regime gained through this doctrine a plausible formula for survival that gave it more flexibility than more conventional apartheid doctrines allowed, it also sought to link its own concerns with those of international capital and specifically those of the United States.

Yet despite its portentousness and seeming *savoir faire* the new approach was far from coherent or even clearly purposeful. Reference has already been made to its fragmentary and reactive concessions to reform in domestic politics. In Namibia as in South Africa it could not succeed for lack of a viable political purpose to which any "hearts and minds" that were at all human hearts and minds could be won. Often as applied to neighbouring states, particularly in the earlier period, to Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, it amounted to little more than an unfocused destabilisation and disruption leading to no clear benefit for South Africa. Even when aggression aimed to evict ANC cadres from neighbouring countries it threatened to incite sections of the local populations to militant identification with the ANC cause and thus spreading rather than containing the problem of "insurgency". Often it was conducted, as seems to be the case with the MNR and also with some of the raids into Botswana and Angola, by elements of the security forces subjected to no rational direction from the highest levels.

It was United States policy toward Angola that was to give South African destabilisation the global significance it needed and the real possibility to

implicate imperialism more strongly and more dependably in the defence of the South African state. In a move that must have very few precedents great power diplomacy outside the US - Israel relationship, Washington proceeded under Reagan to tie its own policy to that of South Africa in Namibia (though by necessary implication, in other areas as well) the principle of "linkage".<sup>7</sup> Eager to eject the Cubans out of Angola and to reverse the "Soviet victory" there, but lacking Congressional support and still constrained by the post-Vietnam syndrome, the Reagan administration found South Africa to be a useful military proxy in Angola. Others too were recruited or coordinated to help Savimbi and Botha: Morocco, Zaire, Saudi Arabia and France under Giscard D'Estaing (helping FLEC and Mobutu) and less directly Senegal under the Negritude Poet and Philosopher Leopold Senghor and Ivory Coast.

Thanks to the United States "linkage" politics South Africa felt less pressured to agree to an international settlement of the Namibian dispute but instead stepped up its attacks on Angola and neighbouring countries generally, and from 1981 actually reoccupying Angolan territory. In this way it was also able to block any possibility of an improvement of relations between the United States and Angola, thus turning "linkage" to its own good use.

The destabilization of Mozambique was also an international effort with South Africa playing the central role in the effort to roll back the frontiers of socialism. When Botha felt the need for a diplomatic approach in 1984, forcing upon its eastern neighbour a leonine pact, the Nkomati Accords, the security and military forces continued the destabilization to the extent that subsequently the state was either unable to halt it (in accordance with its promises to Maputo) or judged safest for its own cohesion to abandon the idea of calling a halt to destabilization. Although Nkomati was welcomed as a signal victory in the Western capitals, there were evidently many who looked forward to a complete reversal of the Frelimo government or, at the very least, a dramatic show down with the USSR comparable to Sadat's repudiation of Moscow in 1973. When that did not happen little or nothing was done to ease the pressure of subversion against Mozambique.

South Africa achieved for itself a military role in United States policy in Southern Africa which would enable it not only to secure a stronger commitment of Western support for its own internal defence and "reform" but would give it something of a veto on Western policy. Attacks on the smaller countries while determined by more local concerns — with driving out the ANC and demonstrating strength to anxious white supporters — have also indicated the comparative lack of Western interest to restrain Pretoria or

the certain knowledge on its part that Western disapproval in these cases is far outweighed by approval of the larger role and by the attractions of South Africa itself, especially for Britain and the United States.

By contrast, however, having begun with a distinctly hostile attitude, South African policy towards Zimbabwe has been much more restrained than that applied to other states of socialist aspiration. Commercial considerations here are important as they once were in the case of Zambia. The absence of a "soviet factor" and Zimbabwe's more limited involvement in the South African struggle have also been noted. But, essentially, United States and British interest in the country has been sufficient to hold back Pretoria which can content itself with simply blocking Harare's every attempt towards independent economic development that would disengage it from the South African communications system and economy, or that could make it a rival attraction for foreign capital.

While South African policy has been distinctly less concerned with the rest of Africa in recent years, developments there have clearly aided South Africa in its southern African policies and in forging the new relationship with imperialism on the continent. The divisions in the OAU, the economic and ecological crises, and the virtual collapse of Nigeria's economic position (and for a time its nationalist commitments on the continent also), all made the United States' and South Africa's passage much smoother. Weakened by the international recession and their own reactions to it and by a deepening external dependence, most African states are simply not disposed or able to threaten credible sanctions against those who collaborate with Pretoria. The truly radical states are, in most cases, among the poorest and often subject to severe military pressures on their own ground.

Yet, there have emerged significant openings for Pretoria — in the neocolonial semi-military alliances that are emerging under United States auspices, through the activities of multinationals (the oil swaps which provoked strong reaction in Nigeria in the late 1970s for example), through undeclared trade and informal deals, and through the informal, quasi-governmental activities of right wing pressure groups (those associated with the Reverend Moon being perhaps the most colourful). The abortive attempt to overthrow the Seychelles government, supposedly without the authorization of Pretoria, indicated the disposition of the South African state machinery to intervene forcefully outside the southern African area. The failure of total strategy at home and in the immediate vicinity may yet provoke diversionary actions further afield, while growing anti-apartheid agitation in the West may create the need for Pretoria to do even more to prove its worth to imperialism pulling American chestnuts out of fires further to the north.

What remains as a certain fact is the need for South Africa to retain southern Africa as its distinctive sphere of influence and to disrupt attempts by its key states to forge independent economic and military links. To that extent, attempts to revive a progressive African unity or to orient southern Africa economies more to the north in order to escape South African satellitization — to use the interior language of the Cold War — will always be resisted by South Africa.

For the rest, the military element has become central to South African diplomacy and this now appears irreversible. While there are important battles still to be fought at the diplomatic level, African states will increasingly have to look to their own defences, individual and collective, or succumb. That however raises the problem of external military assistance which is linked to the equally delicate issue of the balance of power among states more important than South Africa in regard to the continent. Such considerations would take us too far from our present task yet that is where this reflection seems to lead irresistibly. In any event, whatever the level at which they may feel able to resist South Africa or even a "reformed" South African sub-imperialism, these states can have no greater source of strength than their own people without whose committed democratic engagement in anti-imperialist struggles in their own "independent" countries the opposition to South Africa and those it serves can only be feeble.

#### Notes:

1. See also Giliomee's contribution in Giliomee and Adam *Ethnic power Mobilised* Yale.
2. On the background of Afrikaner nationalist class politics, see O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*
3. Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians*, Cambridge, deals with some of these issues.
4. Cf. Davies and O'Meara, "Total Strategy" in *Jnl of S.A. Studies* 1984.
5. Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation*, Macmillan
6. Frankel *op cit passim*
7. See G. Bender, in Bender, Coleman and Sklar (eds) *African Crisis Areas and US Policy*, California.