
APARTHEID TERRORISM

Log

THE DESTABILIZATION REPORT

A report on
the Devastation of the Frontline States
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for the COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE
of FOREIGN MINISTERS
on SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Summary and Recommendations

After 1980, South Africa began to effect coordinated interventionist policies toward neighbouring states, under the rubric of "total strategy". The specific objectives are: regional economic dependence, formal security agreements, and acceptance of the "homelands". The general goal is to create and maintain a zone that will be politically submissive and economically lucrative, and act as a bulwark against international sanctions to bring pressure for an end to apartheid.

To achieve these objectives, and to bully neighbouring states which are unwilling to cooperate, Pretoria has resorted to illegal and violent measures which have had an enormous social and economic cost for the region. Those states have had to forego considerable development potential and economic growth in order to defend themselves.

The combination of tactics that South Africa uses against each of its neighbours depends on their individual political, economic and military vulnerabilities, from open military aggression against Angola and a surrogate war in Mozambique to sabotage of regional transportation routes and industrial equipment, congestion at border posts, withholding railway rolling stock, customs delays and rate manipulation as well as direct attacks, sabotage and car bombs in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia, economic pressure, assassinations and kidnappings in Swaziland and Lesotho. Through these methods, South Africa is in fact using economic sanctions against its neighbours.

Despite Pretoria's presentation of itself as the region's "peacemaker" and "stabilizer", these goals remain in place and diplomatic forays involving international negotiations and discussions are part of the same process, giving recognition to South Africa's aspirations as the regional "superpower".

In dealing with South Africa, things are never as they seem, and neighbouring states have considerable experience of this over the past eight years. An allegorical description of South Africa's relations with the region is the common police interrogation technique in which one administers the blows while another offers the sweets.

This "total strategy" also encompasses the internal situation in South Africa through preparations for sanctions-busting and military self-sufficiency, tough repression of popular political leaders and co-option of others for the process of apartheid's "reform". From Pretoria's point of view, this strategy has enabled it to weather 10 years

of increasingly severe internal and international pressure, while strengthening its defence capabilities, improving its technology, and employing more sophisticated tactical responses to the region and the international community.

In the case of Mozambique, there was a vicious and widespread escalation of military activity — directed at economic and human targets — after the Songo meeting in September 1988 between P.W. Botha and President Chissano, coupled with mounting evidence of South Africa's involvement in the supply and direction of this "contra" activity. The most senior officials in the US State Department made public pronouncements on this during the first half of 1989.

A tripartite meeting of Mozambique, Portugal and South Africa, to discuss the repair of Cahora Bassa electricity transmission lines was told two months earlier that 524 pylons were in need of repair from previous sabotage. A discussion of reconstruction costs was based on this figure. However, by the end of 1988, a further 900 pylons had been destroyed in the south of the country, most of them after the Songo meeting. The estimated cost of repair trippled after the Songo meeting and, in January 1989, Mozambique openly accused South Africa of responsibility. Since the earlier sabotage, soon after the signing of the Nkomati Accord, Mozambique has been forced to spend valuable foreign currency importing electricity from South Africa.

Mozambique's main railway systems have been closed to regional transit traffic since they were sabotaged in 1984, adding billions of dollars to freight bills for landlocked countries whose trade must transit the longer routes through South Africa. The only railway operating along its full length is that through the Beira corridor, which is defended by the Zimbabwe National Army, vastly inflating Zimbabwe's defence costs. Transportation is a priority of the nine-nation Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), formed in 1980 for the purpose of increasing regional cooperation and reducing dependence on South Africa, and these lines are now being rehabilitated.

Armed attacks from Mozambique across the eastern borders of Zimbabwe and Zambia, which began in 1987, increased through 1988 causing several hundred civilian deaths, destruction or theft of property, and further escalation in defence costs. Reports of new massacres, the funerals of the victims and angry statements by government officials were appearing almost daily in Zimbabwe's national press in January 1989. In one such incident in mid-January, the victims were five children aged 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13, all from one family, and two adults aged 50 and 60.

Zimbabwe has committed troops to Mozambique, and Zambia has

been involved in training Mozambican soldiers as well as protecting its own borders. Tanzania has had to pay the price of defending its southern border, training Mozambican soldiers and sending a brigade to assist in the defence of key installations in Mozambique. Botswana is subjected to cross-border raids and bombings which kill or maim Batswana nationals as well as destroying property. Mineral-rich Botswana, which maintains large foreign currency reserves, is also contributing to the defence of Mozambique and the rehabilitation of its railways.

In Angola, South Africa's military action has been overt, with a full-scale invasion in the southern part of the country, halted in a dramatic battle for the tiny town of Cuito Cuanavale, which saw the first entry into combat by Cuban troops since 1976. The battle for the town, held by Angolan and Cuban forces, was seen in regional and continental terms as an African battle against South African aggression and its aspirations as the region's "superpower". Although South Africa has the most modern and effective long-range artillery, its military limitations particularly show in its lost air superiority. It is an important comment on the UN arms embargo, how it works and how it could work more effectively if fully applied.

If any further military message to the region was required — juxtaposed with the Angola/Namibia agreement and the prospect of talks in Mozambique — it came with the test launching by South Africa in early July 1989 of an intermediate-range ballistic missile, developed with the help of Israel and capable of delivering a nuclear warhead as far north as Angola and Tanzania.

South Africa's "total strategy" has cost its neighbours in the Front-line States a minimum of \$45 billion since 1980, and some estimates range up to \$60 billion at current rates of exchange. The suffering has been enormous with almost half the population of Angola and Mozambique threatened with hunger, and some four million displaced within or outside national boundaries. The war-related death toll in the region has risen to 1.5 million through direct military action, disruption of the delivery or production of food, and destruction of health facilities and immunization programmes. The psychological effect of war and the lost educational opportunities through destruction of schools and murder of teachers bodes ill for future development in those two countries. A generation has been scarred and many of these scars are permanent, as are the ecological scars on the region's environment.

In the case of Namibia, while accepting an independence process in exchange for an honourable withdrawal from southern Angola, South Africa already has in place the structures for economic and military destabilization. Walvis Bay itself provides South Africa with a military base in the heart of Namibia, and control over trade through the

country's only deep-water port. To reinforce the point, South Africa held its biggest ever naval exercise off Walvis Bay in September 1988.

Peace and stability are vital to human and economic recovery in southern Africa and there can be little sustainable growth or development in the region until the end of apartheid in South Africa. An integrated international response involving several components is required:

- Pressure for an end to apartheid must be increased by all possible means. The effect of sanctions, particularly financial, is beginning to show on the South African economy, and has forced Pretoria to be more responsive to the international community. This is not the time to reduce that pressure, when results are beginning to appear, but rather the pressure must be continued and increased through determined widening and tightening of sanctions until the recommendations of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group are fully implemented.
- Any application of sanctions must be accompanied by positive compensatory measures to fortify, strengthen and develop the economies of the SADCC states and thus to assist them in their efforts to reduce their dependence and disengage from South Africa and withstand any retaliation.
- A detailed report on South Africa's military and economic action against its neighbours should be presented to governments and international organizations and to the UN Security Council. This report should be updated on a regular basis, to keep governments and institutions fully aware of South Africa's ongoing aggression, to assist in determining the compensatory measures mentioned above, and to provide a basis for reconstruction should hostilities cease.
- Formal denunciation of South African destabilization and sanctions against its neighbours as a contributory factor to southern Africa's economic crisis should be sought, and special efforts initiated to relieve economic pressure through debt relief, import cost reduction and assisting the SADCC states to find alternative markets on preferential terms to further their efforts to disengage from South Africa.
- Emergency and development assistance to the SADCC region should be increased and should take account of the security situation in the region through governments recognizing the need to provide suitable support to protect and rehabilitate economic targets.
- Provision of all assistance should take into account the need to

strengthen national economies of the region, where possible purchasing within the region, thereby enhancing regional trade, and transportation routes other than those through South Africa.

- The broadest circulation of accurate information about the region's reality is of paramount importance to increase awareness in the international community and to counteract South African disinformation and propaganda. There is also a need for greater awareness within the region as to the importance of information. The Commonwealth has a special role to play in disseminating information about the region's realities, and should consider establishing a fund to assist in visits to the region by journalists, policy planners and others, as Nordic countries do.
- All efforts must be made to ensure "free and fair" elections in Namibia, a stable transition to majority rule, the recognition that Walvis Bay is an integral part of Namibia, and to assist Namibia to strengthen its economy and disengage from South Africa.