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THE FRONT-LINE STATES, SOUTH AFRICA AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN SECURITY: MILITARY PROSPECTS AND PERSPECTIVES*

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SINCE 1980 THE central strategic feature of Southern Africa has been the existence of two diametrically opposed political, economic and security groupings in the subcontinent. On one hand, there is South Africa and its Homeland satellite system which Pretoria has hoped, and continues to hope, will be the foundation stone for the much publicized, but as yet unfulfilled, Constellation of Southern African States (CONSAS) — first outlined in 1979 and subsequently reaffirmed by the South African Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, in November 1983.[1] On the other hand, there is the diplomatic coalition of independent Southern African Front-line States consisting of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This grouping, originally containing the first five states mentioned, emerged in 1976 in order to crisis-manage the Rhodesia–Zimbabwe war, and it was considerably strengthened when the resolution of the conflict resulted in an independent Zimbabwe becoming the sixth Front-line State in 1980.[2] Subsequently, the coalition of Front-line States was the driving force behind the creation of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) and was primarily responsible for blunting South Africa's CONSAS strategy in 1979–80.

The momentous rolling back of Pretoria's CONSAS scheme can, in retrospect, be seen as the opening phase in an ongoing struggle between the Front-line States and South Africa for diplomatic supremacy in Southern Africa in the 1980s. Increasingly, this struggle has become ominously militarized for the Front Line; therefore, it is pertinent to begin this assessment by attempting to define the regional conflictual framework which evolved from the initial confrontation of 1979–80 between the Front-line States and South Africa. In this period the two rival power blocs were promoting SADCC and CONSAS respectively as future

*This paper is based upon a lecture delivered at the Zimbabwe National Army Staff College in September 1984 and subsequently as a public lecture under the auspices of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zimbabwe in February 1985.

[1] See the interview with General Malan in *Defence* (1983), XIV, 684–6.

[2] R.S. Jaster, *A Regional Security Role for Africa's Front-line States: Experience and Prospects* (London, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper 180, 1983), 8–18.

regional orders in Southern Africa and the consequent conceptual and ideological collision was a watershed event in shaping the current environment of conflict, security and destabilization.

In 1979, after five years of faltering regional diplomacy, South Africa was determined to establish a constellation system in Southern Africa that would secure her subcontinental military, political and economic objectives.[3] In line with these themes the South African Foreign Minister, R.F. 'Pik' Botha, announced the Zurich Declaration in March 1979 calling for an 'anti-Marxist' Constellation of Southern African States south of the Cunene–Zambezi line which would form a regional security and economic bloc of between seven and ten states. These were South Africa, the Homeland 'states' of Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, Malawi, Zimbabwe and possibly Mozambique.[4]

This CONSAS was to be controlled by means of multilateral councils and an international secretariat while the entire concept was promoted with vigour and confidence by Pretoria.[5] However, the scheme was opposed with equal vigour by the Front-line States, who, in July 1979, countered South Africa's moves by issuing the Arusha Declaration which called for the creation of SADCC to promote economic liberation and the development of a regional communications strategy in order to reduce economic dependence on Pretoria.[6] The real test to see which grouping would emerge as dominant became intimately intertwined with the resolution of the turbulent Rhodesia–Zimbabwe conflict. Apart from South Africa, Zimbabwe possessed the strongest economy and transport system in Southern Africa and potentially was the anvil upon which any SADCC would be forged.

The stakes were enormous although, at the time, this regional competition was obscured by the Zimbabwean electoral process. If Zimbabwe fell into CONSAS then the South African government would be able to claim an incipient regional constellation and a major diplomatic and security triumph. Alternatively, if Zimbabwe fell in with the Front-line States then SADCC would become an operational reality while the regional isolation of South Africa would be accomplished. In the event the rivalry between the Pretoria bloc and the Arusha bloc climaxed over Zimbabwean independence in February 1980 when ZANU-PF eclipsed the UANC and led Zimbabwe into membership of the Front-line

[3] For a useful analysis of the constellation plan, see D. Geldenhuys, *The Constellation of Southern African States and SADCC: Toward a New Regional Stalemate?* (Braamfontein, South African Institute of International Affairs, 1981).

[4] Ibid., 2.

[5] D. Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making* (Johannesburg, Macmillan, 1984), 41; see also Jaster, *A Regional Security Role for Africa's Front-line States*, 27.

[6] Geldenhuys, *The Constellation of Southern African States and SADCC*, 16–20.

States and made possible the true birth of SADCC. South Africa's high hopes for her CONSAS or 'Fortress Southern Africa' scheme were dashed, reduced only to the inclusion of her Homeland clients.[7] Certainly the Republic remained the economic and military colossus of the subcontinent but her diplomacy had again faltered. Southern Africa was now almost uniformly ideologically hostile and politically antagonistic towards Pretoria.

Thus the collapse of CONSAS, the strengthening of the Front-line States by the membership of Zimbabwe and the ability of the Front-line diplomatic coalition to found SADCC, represented, for South Africa, the most shattering regional political defeat since the foundation of the modern Afrikaner Republic in 1961. In addition, the CONSAS failure reinforced a creeping international perception of South Africa as a helpless giant, unable to translate her military and economic might into regional diplomatic supremacy despite a decade of initiatives and schemes.

The failure of South African diplomacy in 1980 precipitated a major reassessment of Pretoria's regional strategy within the Afrikaner élite, and before examining the regional security role of the Front-line States it is necessary to analyse the nature of this reassessment and the challenge that it has posed for the Front Line. In 1980–1 the South Africans watched with increasing consternation as SADCC was institutionalized and internationalized through a series of economic and donors' conferences, all of which represented a triumph for the Front-line States' vision of an independent Southern Africa evolving towards stable economic infrastructures.[8] In addition, the Zimbabwean experiment of multiracial reconciliation was a symbolic challenge to the ideological squalor of apartheid.[9] But above all, the confidence of the Front-line States and SADCC configuration had infected and reinvigorated the urban-guerrilla campaign of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), as was dramatically displayed by the expert sabotage of the SASOL refinery in mid-1980.[10]

Initially there was some hesitation in Pretoria as to how to proceed in the face of this new subcontinental economic and security environment created by the Front-line States. In the 1960s and 1970s South African regional security policy had been formulated by a small closed élite, centred around the Prime Minister and drawn from the Department of Information, the Department of Foreign

[7] Jaster, *A Regional Security Role for Africa's Front-line States*, 27–32.

[8] For a fine analysis of the post-1980 Southern African regional security and economic equation, see B. Weimer, 'Europe, the United States and the Frontline States of Southern Africa: The case for closer co-operation', *Atlantic Quarterly* (1984), II, 67–87.

[9] The Zimbabwean challenge is assessed by S. Jenkins, 'Destabilisation in Southern Africa', *The Economist* (16 July 1983), 20, 23–4.

[10] For the ANC resurgence, see the two articles by S. Jenkins, 'The survival ethic: South Africa: A survey', ibid. (19 Sept. 1981), 11, and 'Destabilisation in Southern Africa', 16–17.

Affairs, the Bureau of State Security and the Broederbond intelligentsia. The mechanics of South African decision-making were based on a rather haphazard and curious blend of military bluster, diplomatic engagement and economic domination as practised by John Vorster and his *eminence grise*, General Hendrik van den Bergh.[11] Such an informal system proved too clandestine, too limited structurally and above all too reactive to prevent the steady disintegration of regional strategic equilibrium following the collapse of the Portuguese African Empire in 1974; and by 1980 the information scandal had swept away the Vorster–Van den Bergh kitchen cabinet. Into the vacuum swept the Botha–Malan national security state management system based on a super cabinet, the State Security Council (SSC), which, co-ordinated by the National Joint Planning Centre, has virtually transformed the South African executive into a civil–military junta increasingly impervious to Parliament.[12] The rise of this technocratic order has been accomplished by the spectacular emergence of the South African military, which was facilitated by the visible failure of South African security policy in the face of the resurgence of the ANC and the Front-line States.[13]

The new military technocrats in the SSC preached a regional strategic policy based on armed power in order to reverse the groundswell of Pan-Africanism and ANC insurgency. General Magnus Malan and his collegues — in particular, General Constand Viljoen, Chief of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and Lieutenant-General Pieter van der Westhuizen, Chief of Staff, South African Military Intelligence — rapidly instituted a new counter-revolutionary warfare strategy of destabilization which was dubbed 'the policy of *swaardmag*' (the power of the sword) by the Director of the National Intelligence Service, Dr Lukas Barnard. The aims were, and remain, simple: smash the stability of the Front-line States and blunt the development of SADCC while simultaneously striking at the ANC and its host nations.[14] The result has been a deadly brew of offensive counter-revolutionary warfare, tactical escalation, economic bludgeoning and the utilization of proxy forces — the MNR in Mozambique, UNITA in

[11] Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation*, 71–88, 147–8, provides a useful analysis of Pretoria's diplomacy during Vorster's premiership. Interviews (3 Mar. and 1 and 4 Apr. 1982) with former senior officials of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization provided further insights into the role of General van den Bergh in regional foreign policy.

[12] M. Hough, *National Security in the RSA*... (Pretoria, Pretoria Univ., Institute for Strategic Studies, Publication 9, 1981), 1–16. This provides a detailed analysis of South Africa's national security management system based around the State Security Council.

[13] See P.H. Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians: Civil–Military Relations in South Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), 29–70, for the rise of the SADF and the theory of total strategy.

[14] See Jenkins, 'Destabilisation in Southern Africa', 15–20, 23–4, 27–8, and K.W.Grundy, *The Rise of the South African Security Establishment: An Essay on the Changing Locus of State Power* (Braamfontein, South African Institute of International Affairs, Bradlow Series 1, 1983).

Angola, the Lesotho Liberation Army, the Zambian Mushala group and various Zimbabwean dissidents.[15]

This, then, is the South African national security state as a regional superpower, reinvigorated by professional military intellectuals, weary of the limited policies of the 1970s and determined to dominate the subcontinent in the 1980s by fuelling dissidence, sabotage and economic chaos in Front-line States. This is South African counter-revolutionary 'total strategy' on the offensive, utilizing military might and destabilization in an attempt to force the Front-line States to accept *de facto* South African regional domination and so emasculating the ANC and forcing all concerned to accommodate themselves to the apartheid system.[16]

This, then, is the security challenge to the Front-line States, and inevitably the questions arise: How should the Front Line react? How much potential is there in independent Southern Africa for joint security? Should the Front-line States and SADCC think in terms of developing a Southern African Defence Organization (SADO), and is this a practical military option? Can the Front-line States in fact contain a South African state practising ruthless *kragdadigepolitiek* (power politics), a state that increasingly resembles a rogue elephant on the rampage? We can only begin to answer these questions by analysing the character and *modus operandi* of the Front-line States.

In character, the Front-line States represent a unique idosyncratic diplomatic alliance fully committed to the anti-apartheid cause and the South African liberation movements. It is an alliance, moreover, which has increasingly been forced into a serious consideration of security posture. Front-line summits have regularly called for a 'closing of ranks' against South African destabilization, but concrete joint security action has not so far been forthcoming. Rather, the pattern has been to give diplomatic and moral support to the states most directly affected, namely Mozambique and Angola. None of the remaining Front-line States have up to now deployed any troops to assist Maputo and Luanda.[17] Zimbabwean troops in Mozambique are there primarily for transport security, while none of the Front-line States have any enthusiasm for becoming militarily involved in the Namibian–Angolan imbroglio. Such action would probably only exacerbate what is already an acute regional security crisis and one complicated by East–West involvement in the situation.

[15] Jenkins, 'Destabilisation in Southern Africa', 28.

[16] Ibid., 17–20, 23–4, 27–8. See also C. Coker, 'South Africa: A new military role in Southern Africa 1969–82', *Survival* (1983), XXV, 59–67.

[17] Jaster, *A Regional Security Role for Africa's Front-line States*, 37–8. However, in August 1985 the BBC reported the alleged presence of up to 20,000 Front-lines States' troops in Mozambique: 7,000 Tanzanian troops in the north, 3,000 Zambian troops in Tete province and 10,000 Zimbabwean troops in the south. These appear to be independent operations with each of the three states mentioned assuming an 'area defence zone', *BBC World Service Interview* with Evo Fernandes, Secretary General of the Mozambique National Resistance movement (MNR) also known as the Resistência Nacional Moçambicano (Renamo), 18 Aug. 1985.

Nevertheless, despite a primary emphasis on diplomatic action, the Front-line States have, under the impact of South Africa's regional militarization policy, moved inexorably towards more formal military consultation, if not towards an open and formal defence pact.[18] Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Botswana have all held security talks over the past three years, the most recent being the Zimbabwe–Mozambique talks of February 1985, while in July 1983, following the devastation being wreaked on Mozambique and the SADCC, Defence and Security Ministers of the Front-line States, along with Lesotho, met in Nyanga for talks.[19] After this meeting the Zambian State Secretary for Defence and State Security, Grey Zulu, issued a communiqué announcing the strengthening of Front-line security ties. It is unclear whether this involves a pooling of military intelligence or frequent meetings between Chiefs of Staff and other military officials.

Nevertheless, it is quite evident that the Front-line States are moving towards a far more substantial role in regional security affairs. However, the military options that this may actually open up to independent Southern Africa in the future are really dependent on the *modus operandi* of the grouping. There are four points worth noting concerning the mechanics of the Front-line States' coalition and which explain its workings. Firstly, Africa's elder statesman, President Nyerere of Tanzania, is the Chairman of the Front-line States by informal consensus. Secondly, the Front-line States have no permanent secretariat or institutional consultative body and therefore summits can be called at short notice. Thirdly, regional issues are decided usually by informal consensus, with any disagreements simply allowed to stand. Fourthly, individual diplomatic initiatives are not inhibited by the Front-line States group. This accounts for the 1982 Kaunda–Botha summit, the 1984 Lusaka Understanding and, most significant of all, the Nkomati Accord of March 1984.[20]

The result of this procedure is a type of diplomatic machinery that is highly personalized and informal and which takes into account each country's particular interests. Indeed the Front-line States are reminiscent of a ninteenth-century style

[18] See, for instance, the security summit held in Harare on 12 June 1985 between Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Mozambique. The Mozambican delegation was composed almost exclusively of defence officials including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Joaquim Chissano, the Minister of Defence, Alberto Chipende, and General Sebastião Mabote, Deputy Minister for Defence and Chief of General Staff, along with Secretary of Defence, Gideon Ndobe, and Air Force Commander, Colonel-General Hama Thai. This meeting probably decided on a form of Zimbabwean and Tanzanian military assistance to Maputo, *The Herald* (Harare), 13 June 1985.

[19] Zimbabwe Ministry of Information Press Statement 50/85/MA/SC, 'Zimbabwe–Mozambique Review Security Co-operation', 5 Feb. 1985. The talks involved the respective Ministers of Security, Emmerson Munangagwa and Sergio Vieira, and affirmed the regularity of bilateral security consultations between the 'two sister republics'. For the Nyanga summit of the Front-line States, see *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo), 13 July 1983.

[20] See Jaster, *A Regional Role for Africa's Front-line States*, 34, for the diplomatic *modus operandi* of the Front-line States.

'concert of powers'. The Front-line States seek equilibrium in the face of South African counter-revolution and represent a loose coalition bound by common perceptions and beliefs concerning regional liberation and Africanist ideology. Whether such an alliance could sustain a joint military arrangement in the future is highly debatable. Before discussing the potential form and substance of any Front-line military initiative, it is necessary to examine the structures and strength of the armed services of the six Front-line States and compare them with the SADF in order to understand fully the regional military balance of power.

COMPARISON OF THE COMBINED MILITARY FORCES OF THE FRONT-LINE STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA[21]

	Front-line States	*South Africa*
Population	55.5 million	26.8 million[a]
Armed forces	155,750 troops	404,500 men[b]
Army strength	148,000 regulars	197,400 regulars, conscripts and reservists[b]
Paramilitary forces	602,360 police and militia	145,000 police and reservists
Armoured forces	1,962[c]	3,350[d]
Field artillery[e]	812	230
Air strength	207 combat jets	304 combat jets

[a] includes 4.6 million Whites
[b] on full mobilization
[c] main battle tanks, armoured cars and armoured personnel carriers
[d] main battle tanks, mechanized infantry combat vehicles, armoured cars and armoured personnel carriers
[e] self-propelled and towed field guns, but excluding rocket launchers, missile systems and mortars

[21] This comparison of forces has been compiled from data in International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1984–1985* (London, The Institute, 1984), 74–86, and J. Keegan (ed.), *World Armies* (Detroit, Gale Research, 2nd edn, 1983). See also H-R. Heitman, *South African War Machine* (Johannesburg, Central News Agency, 1985), 20–72; International Defence and Aid Fund, *The Apartheid War Machine: The Strength and Deployment of the South African Armed Forces* (London, The Fund, Fact Paper on Southern Africa 8, 1980), 19–46; and K.W. Grundy, *Soldiers without Politics: Blacks in the South African Armed Forces* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1983), 101–17.

The military establishments of the Front-line states are, in order of strength:[22]

Angola	43,000
Zimbabwe	41,300
Tanzania	38,500
Mozambique	15,650
Zambia	14,300
Botswana	3,000

Of these six states three, namely Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe, are involved in internal security operations, and this raises the entire question of how the armed forces of the Front-line States rate in terms of a potential regional military alliance.[23]

Angola

Angola's armed forces (FAPLA) are really too involved in fighting UNITA and SADF incursions against SWAPO of Namibia to become a meaningful member of a Front-line States defence alliance. However, Angola would welcome such an initiative on the basis that it would be the main beneficiary of the alliance. Cuban troops in Angola mainly act as a security garrison for the MPLA government leaving FAPLA to face the daunting task of dealing with the challenge of South Africa and UNITA, which to date has cost Angola US$7 billion of infrastructural damage and is currently absorbing half the Angolan budget.[24]

Mozambique

Since 1981 the Mozambican armed forces (FAM) have been severely tested by South African-based MNR insurgents. By 1983 the campaign in Southern Mozambique, combined with drought, had made the area a zone of anarchy and devastation so threatening to Maputo that the Nkomati Accord of March 1984 was signed with South Africa — a trade-off of the ANC for the MNR, combined with South African–Mozambique mutual non-aggression pact.[25] This, in theory,

[22] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1984–1985*, 74–86.

[23] I am indebted to various discussions with senior members of the Directing Staff of the Zimbabwe National Army Staff College and with members of the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) between January 1984 and February 1985 for many insights on the regional military power of the Front-line States. However, the views expressed in this paper regarding military establishments of the Front-line States are solely those of the author.

[24] L.L. Mathews, 'Angola', in Keegan, *World Armies*, 15–17. See also D.J. Alberts, 'Armed struggle in Angola', in B.E. O'Neill, W.R. Heaton and D.J. Alberts (eds.), *Insurgency in the Modern World* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1980), 235–67; Jenkins, 'Destabilisation in Southern Africa', 17; and 'Angola: The doctor's dilemma', *Africa Confidential* (1985), XXVI, iv, 2–5.

[25] For assessments, see International Institute of Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1984–1985* (London, The Institute, 1985), 106–8; G. Gunn, *Post-Nkomati Mozambique: CSIS Africa Notes* (8 Jan. 1985), XXXVIII, (Georgetown, Georgetown Univ., Center for Strategic and International Studies), 1–8; 'Mozambique: South Africa's nightmare', *Africa Confidential* (1985), XXVI, iii, 4–7; and S, Jenkins, 'America and South Africa', *The Economist* (30 Mar. 1985), 22–5.

makes Mozambican participation in a potential Front-line SADO problematic and rather unlikely. Strategically speaking, the weakness of the two Front-line flanks, Angola in the west and Mozambique in the east, is regrettably not encouraging for Front-line State regional security planning.

Tanzania

The Tanzanian People's Defence Force (TPDF) is the least threatened of the Front-line armed forces, since, in geographical terms, Tanzania is really an East African, not a Southern African state. However, Tanzanian foreign policy has long been enmeshed in Southern African affairs as a result of President Nyerere's philosophy of Pan-African liberation. In addition, Tanzania does border both Zambia and Mozambique. The TPDF is a much more competent military force than either FAPLA or FAM. The Tanzanian Army has had long experience in training guerrillas and in the financial and logistical requirements laid down by the Tanzania-dominated OAU Liberation Committee. Operationally, Tanzanian troops were deployed defensively in Mozambique during the Rhodesia–Zimbabwe war and some 300 military training personnel still operate there and in the Seychelles. Moreover, the Tanzanian Army is one of the few African armies to have had a taste of conventional warfare. In 1978–9, 10,000 Tanzanian troops demolished with methodical skill Idi Amin's Ugandan Army and easily routed some 2,000 Libyan troops supporting the Ugandans.[26] Nevertheless, there are real impediments to Tanzania's participation in a major Front-line State security role in the form of severe economic problems, distance, logistics and insufficient airlift capacity to project force. Most importantly, perhaps, Tanzania is not physically threatened in the true geostrategic 'front line' against South Africa.

Zambia

The Zambian armed forces have an unfortunate military tradition of being observers rather than participants in regional security affairs. In 1978, in their operational test against the Rhodesian armed forces during 'Operation Gatling', the Zambian Airforce was grounded and Zambian Army opposition was brushed aside by Rhodesian troops.[27] In 1982 the SADF swept parts of western Zambia with impunity in search of SWAPO guerrillas. Therefore, the available evidence would seem to indicate a limited Zambian military combat capacity.[28] Nevertheless, improvements may have taken place under the current Army Commander, General Masheke. But, overall, it is difficult to clinically assess

[26] See L.L. Mathews, 'Tanzania', in Keegan, *World Armies*, 574–6.

[27] B. Cole, *The Elite: The Story of the Rhodesian Special Air Service* (Amanzimtoti, Three Knights Publishing, 1984), 232.

[28] 'Zambia: Double "S" sword', *Africa Confidential* (1982), XXIII, x, 5, for an assessment of Zambian military capability.

Zambian defence capabilities at present, except to say that given Zambia's severe economic problems, there is a limited potential for their participation in the regional security of the Front-line States.[29] However, Lusaka remains a haven for exiled revolutionary politicians of the ANC.

Botswana

The 3,000 strong Botswana Defence Force was a creation of the Rhodesia–Zimbabwe war and there is little to say about it except that its miniscule size renders its regional role almost insignificant.[30]

Zimbabwe

In a very real sense, the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) is geostrategically the true 'front-line' force, and the Zimbabwe Army is probably the best in the Front-line region. This is a remarkable achievement when one considers the sheer scale of the integration process in 1980. Integration, and the transformation of the new ZNA into a regular conventional force, was a staggering task and one quite unprecedented in African military history. Yet restructuring and retraining was accomplished with speed and success by 1983 and must rate as the Zimbabwe government's greatest achievement since independence.[31] Like Mozambique, the ZNA faces provincial insurgency which has meant that internal security operations have tended to predominate over wider regional-defence thinking — although the latter has not been neglected, given South Africa's proximity and destabilizing activities. The ZNA symbolizes national unity and reconstruction and stands guardian over a new multiracial order, all of which is unwelcome to Pretoria.[32] Since 1983, the deteriorating security situation in Mozambique and the military weakness of Botswana have made Zimbabwe's eastern and western flanks vulnerable — which may suggest that Pretoria's aim is the ultimate strategic isolation of Zimbabwe, followed in the future by a brand of *kragdadigepolitiek* to force Harare into a political accommodation with Pretoria

[29] Despite these constraints Evo Fernandes, Secretary General of the MNR, has alleged that 3,000 Zambian troops are operating in Tete, Mozambique, *BBC World Service Interview*, 18 Aug. 1985. The report is unconfirmed.

[30] See L.L. Mathews, 'Botswana', in Keegan, *World Armies*, 64. Mathews states that Botswana has considered amalgamation with the South African homeland of Bophuthatswana for security reasons. For Botswana's vulnerability to South Africa, see the report on the June 1985 Gaborone raid in *The Herald*, 15 June 1985.

[31] See the remarks of Brigadier Edward Jones, Commander, BMATT 1983–5, that the standards achieved in the ZNA in four and half years were 'nothing short of miraculous', *The Herald*, 25 Jan. 1985. The evolution of the ZNA has been meticulously followed by *Africa Confidential*: 'Zimbabwe: Military progress' (1981), XXII, xiii, 4–5; 'Zimbabwe: Beyond Nkomo' (1982), XXIII, v, 1–4; 'Zimbabwe: The army' (1982), XXIII, 4–5; 'Zimbabwe: Fear is the key' (1984), XXV, viii, 1–3; 'Zimbabwe: The political undertow' (1984), XXV, xvii, 5–8.

[32] South Africa's dislike for the Mugabe Government is considered by Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation*, 227.

and so curtail Zimbabwe's vital Front-line role. However, at the moment this is purely speculative and likely only if South Africa's security situation should worsen.

Therefore, one can ascertain that the problems of internal dissidence affecting Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, combined with the economic weakness of Tanzania and Zambia and the smallness of Botswana's forces, will make any formal military collaboration among the Front-line States very difficult. In addition there are a number of other factors that also inhibit their security programming. These include organizational difficulties, logistical problems, differences in military doctrine and the disparity in the regional balance of power in military terms.[33]

Organisational Difficulties

The Front-line States have no organizational structure through which to action joint defence. The *ad hoc* and informal nature of the group is designed for international diplomacy, and the flexibility conferred tends to obscure the ideological differences between Angolan and Mozambican Marxism-Leninism on one side and Zambian Humanism and Botswana's multiparty democracy on the other, with Tanzanian *Ujamaa* and Zimbabwean socialism ranged in the middle. If the Front-line States were institutionalized for military purposes the grouping would probably disintegrate, as Botswana and Mozambique are, for example, more vulnerable to South Africa than, say, Tanzania. Thus, institutionalized collective defence could well destroy the unity of the Front Line.[34]

Logistical Problems

The six Front-line States encompass a geographical area of 500,000 sq. km. and therefore the logistical command, control and communication requirements of joint defence would be staggering. The necessary security infrastructure, air defence and airlift capabilities are simply not present and any regional joint high command would sink under the sheer weight of operational logistics and co-ordination problems.[35]

[33] Discussions with senior ZNA officers during 1984. Conclusions arrived at, however, are solely those of the author.

[34] Jaster, *A Regional Security Role for Africa's Front-line States*, 33–43.

[35] The severe difficulties that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has faced are the supreme example of the problems of modern military standardization; see, for example, K. Hartley, *NATO Arms Co-operation* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1983), 5; R. Sloan, 'In search of a new transatlantic bargain', *Survival* (1984), XXVI, 242–51; and W. Wallace, 'European defence co-operation: The reopening debate', ibid., 251–61. Nevertheless, Ghana's Major-General Emmanuel Erskine, Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Organization (UNTSO), has suggested an African Defence System based on 'apportioned areas of responsibility' in which various countries would take up logistical and administrative tasks. This may have some relevance for the Front-line States; see Erskine's essay in *Africa Now* (May 1982), 81.

Differences in Military Doctrine

The six Front-line States lack standardization in military doctrine, training and weaponry, all of which are of critical importance in joint defence and combined operations. These factors work to inhibit a Front-line military alliance.[36]

Disparity in the Regional Military Balance of Power

In any conventional military confrontation with South Africa, the Front-line States are simply no match for the highly integrated and standardized SADF.[37] In this sense any joint-defence command of the Front-line States holding manoeuvres might be interpreted by Pretoria as a convenient *casus belli* and thus active Front-line military co-operation in the field would, ironically, merely increase the probability of South African aggression. However, all the Front-line leaders are aware of how this disequilibrium in regional military power limits their security maintenance capability.[38]

Is, then, all hope of a regional security role for the Front-line States an illusion? Not quite. There are three areas where the armed forces of the Front-line States could collaborate meaningfully. These areas are as follows:

Combined Military Intelligence Staff

A Front-line Combined Military Intelligence Staff would be a major step forward in monitoring South African military activities and in unifying and tightening systematic regional security perception. Ironically, a good model for the Front-line States would be the South African–Rhodesian–Portuguese ALCORA intelligence system which operated in the years 1964–74.[39]

Military Staff Exchange Programme

A Front-line systematic Military Staff Exchange Programme would certainly help forge a consensus among senior officers of regional security problems and

[36] See Jaster, *A Regional Security Role for Africa's Front-line States*, 37–8.

[37] See Heitman, *South African War Machine*, 20–8, for the structure of the SADF.

[38] R.S. Jaster, *Southern Africa in Conflict: Implications for U.S. Policies in the 1980s* (Washington, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1982), 14–20, discusses the fragility of the Front-line States. See also Jaster, *A Regional Security Role for Africa's Front-line States*, 19–32.

[39] Interview with a former senior official of the Rhodesian CIO, 17 Mar. 1982. ALCORA appears to refer to the Astral concept of Africa, a reference to the four capitals of the pre-1974 White South: Luanda, Lourenço Marques, Salisbury and Pretoria. The alliance has also been known as ASPRO (Africa do Sol, Portuguese Territories in Southern Africa, Rhodesia); see B. Weimer's important and lucid study *Die Allianz der Frontlinien-Staaten in Südlichen Afrika: Vom 'Mulungushi-Club' (1974) zum 'Nkomati-Akkord' (1984)* (Ebenhausen, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985), 233–9 (English summary). I am indebted to Mr Weimer for making this study available to me at short notice.

could prove invaluable in familiarizing them with the structure and training of neighbouring armed forces.[40]

Joint Defence Procurement and Weapons Systems Study Group

With the world on the brink of the age of intermediate military technology, there are indications that, by the early 1990s, relatively low-cost precison-guided munitions (PGM) might well revolutionalize the conventional battlefield. For the first time since the 1930s, armoured forces are threatened by defensive missile technology — and such developments give labour-intensive African defence forces the prospect of acquiring an infantry-operated anti-tank and air defence capability which would be cost-effective and militarily credible, based on man-portable and crew-portable seeker guidance and lock-on targetting PGM systems.[41] A most pressing need, therefore, is for the armed forces of the Front-line States to create a weapons system study group that would help forge a doctrinal and technical consensus on potential defence procurement and future weapons acquisition for Southern African security based around PGM. The overall benefit for the armed forces of the Front-line States would be the future prospects of mounting a mobile defence that is economically sensible and which could act as a deterrent against South African armour and air power. It is high time that the South Africans be taught that their helicopters, tanks and infantry fighting vehicles will, in the future, be endangered and indeed eliminated by missile-armed infantry of the Front-line States' armies during cross-border raids. PGM is not the complete answer to defence in independent Southern Africa but it is the major alternative to expensive tanks and jets and, therefore, represents a real military option in the future for the Front-line States. In addition, PGM does provide some form of deterrence against the SADF's material superiority.

Given the above assessments of the problems that the Front Line faces in actioning meaningful joint defence, along with the obvious military superiority that South Africa enjoys in the region, one might legitimately ask the following questions: If South Africa is so powerful, then why has she spent millions of rand on destabilizing states that represent no military threat to her? If South Africa is so omnipotent militarily, then why the strategy of instigating regional chaos against the Front-line States? The answer to these questions lies in ideology — in this case the ideology of Pan-Africanism and Black South African or Azanian nationalism.

[40] Zimbabwean–Mozambican military staff co-operation has already begun with British military advisers and Zimbabwean instructors training Mozambican officers at the ZNA Battalion Battle School at Nyanga and at the ZNA Staff College, Harare.

[41] See R. Burt, 'New weapons technologies: Debate and directions'; J. Digby, 'Precision-guided weapons'; and J.J. Mearsheimer, Precision-guided munitions and conventional deterrence', in J. Alford (ed.), *The Impact of New Military Technology* (Aldershot, Gower for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Library 4, 1981), 46–77; 78–89 and 102–10, respectively.

There is an inherent paradox in the strategic equation between South Africa and the Front-line States; it is this: South Africa is strong militarily and economically but she is weak ideologically since 80 per cent of her population reject apartheid. In contrast the Front-line States are strong ideologically but are weak militarily and economically.

Therefore, the Front-line States threaten the South African racial system simply by existing,let alone prospering through the SADCC. Their ideological appeal threatens to increase the already burning impact of Black Consciousness in South Africa. It threatens the stability of the South African labour force and, in consequence, the entire economic infrastructure, including the military–industrial complex. In short, the powerful Africanist ideology of the Front-line States, added to the strength of the ANC as the symbol of Black South African aspirations, is profoundly destabilizing to the apartheid regime.[42]

The SADF has, therefore, faced the acute problem of fighting an idea. The strategy they have adopted is essentially offensive, involving the repression of the internal symptoms of Black unrest while striking at the external roots of the ANC and bludgeoning those Front-line or SADCC states which aid revolution. So the Front Line is faced with a two-fisted counter-revolutionary strategy of destabilization and dissidence, fuelled from Pretoria, that has the ultimate aim of converting independent Southern Africa into what Simon Jenkins has called 'a shield of instability' behind which South Africa will perpetuate the essentials of apartheid.[43] Such a military policy clearly compensates for serious ideological weakness and lack of domestic Black political support.

Indeed, South Africa is powerful but she is far from invincible, and it pays to examine her politico-military weakness with respect to regional security. Firstly, the SADF has developed a destabilization strategy based on dissident forces because there are limitations to the deployment of South African military power throughout the entire region on a coast-to-coast basis. The SADF is already heavily committed in Namibia and, until recently, in Angola. In operations in these areas, the South Africans have used up to 11,000 troops for large-scale, single combined-arms tactical incursions.[44] Not suprisingly, General Magnus Malan is on record as stating that open-ended external regional military operations by South Africa might well increase domestic Black unrest and

[42] Jenkins, 'Destabilisation in Southern Africa', 15–20, 23–4.

[43] Ibid., 28. See also Coker, 'South Africa: A new military role in Southern Africa 1969–82', 62–6.

[44] Coker, 'South Africa: A new military role in Southern Africa 1969–82', 60–1. For further analysis of SADF external operations, see F. Toase, 'The South African army: The campaign in South-West Africa/Namibia since 1966', in I.F.W. Beckett and J. Pimlott, *Armed Forces and Modern Counter-Insurgency* (London, Croom Helm, 1985), 190–219.

insurgency, creating a potential anarchic internal situation.[45] The October 1984 Sebokeng operation involving 7,000 police and troops and the recent deployment of South African Army units into the Eastern Cape to quell unrest is indicative that in future the South African military may well be increasingly required for internal security operations.[46] Thus the competing needs of external militarism and internal repression may work to put a degree of restraint on South Africa's regional power projection. In addition, there are limits to the amount of available manpower which the SADF can draw upon without dislocating the economy.[47]

Secondly, and more seriously, there exists within South Africa a very real potential for a civil–military crisis over the next decade as Afrikaner political unity increasingly disintegrates over the issue of reform simply because the parameters of defensible political reforms are so ill-defined.[48] The managerial–technocratic security state is ironically paralysing the White electorate and is breeding not optimism but an aggressive political fatalism. South African politics today represents a potentially explosive cauldron which ultimately only the military may be able to control. In the 1981 general election, fought over the most cautious reform plans, 33 per cent of the Afrikaner vote deserted the National Party in favour of the extreme Afrikaner right-wing. In 1982, the awesome and long-dreaded Afrikaner *volkskeuring* (division of the people) occurred as Andries Treurnicht led sixteen MPs into the fanatical laager of Verwoerdian racial reaction.[49] With him he has carried the Afrikaner working classs fearful of any hint of Black advancement. The Afrikaner workers and the Treurnicht *verkramptes* (reactionaries) now virulently oppose the Botha–Malan alliance of the military, the *verligte* (pragmatic) technocrats and English-speaking big business.[50]

To compound the agony of Afrikaner fragmentation has come the Black challenge of Front-line States Africanism, ANC insurgency, United Democratic Front (UDF) agitation, and militant trade unionism and civil disorder in the Eastern Cape. South Africa is thus caught in a spiral of rabid multidimensional political conflict to which there seems no easy solution. There is no vision of true multiracial reform, and there is no charismatic Afrikaner de Gaulle poised to save the *volk* from racial catastrophe. Instead, as White South Africa's political options become more stalemated and atrophied and as Black South Africa

[45] S. Jenkins, 'The Great Evasion: South Africa: A Survey', *The Economist* (21 June 1980), 23–5. See also Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians*, 29–70.

[46] The use of troops in the Sebokeng operation was the first time since the 1960 disturbances that the South African armed forces were used in internal security operations (ISOPS).

[47] See Grundy, *Soldiers without Politics*, 120–3.

[48] H. Giliomee, *The Parting of the Ways: South African Politics 1976–82* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1982), 158–61.

[49] Ibid., 159.

[50] Ibid., 34–42, 131–4, 147.

becomes more turbulent, more assertive and more organized, so Afrikaner security will become the dominant theme and militarism will inevitably gain ascendency.[51] Already, General Malan has referred to the problem of reconciling South Africa's White democracy with the total strategy imperatives of the national security state;[52] already, industry has been integrated into the managerial security system by means of a Defence Advisory Board,[53] already, the Head of the Army's Civic Action Department has been involved in a scandal to disrupt parliamentary control over aspects of the defence budget;[54] already, the South African press has gloomily referred to the rise of the 'Executive State', defined as the silent 'Malanite' *verligte* dictatorship;[55] and, above all, the militarized SCC under an executive State President, has proven how utterly cosmetic the new tricameral multinational parliament is in policy matters.

South Africa is poised, then, between the Scylla of White repression and reaction born of a fearful confusion and the Charybdis of Black revolution and insurgency born of utter frustration. To prevent anarchy, South Africa may well end up under martial law with the iron men of the military facing mass labour unrest and the spectre of social chaos in a variation of the Polish Solidarity crisis.[56] Ruling generals are not new to South African politics, as the case of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts demonstrate, but at least they were constitutionalists. The true Afrikaner 'man on horseback' has yet to visibly appear either to dictate directly or to broker power between faction-ridden Afrikaner politicians and antagonistic African revolutionaries. Given the stark absence of any internal political mechanisms of resolving racial conflict the military will probably emerge as the future arbiters of power. This will symbolize the ultimate moral bankrupcy of apartheid as a governing system.[57] It will also mark the end to the powerful psycho-political metaphor of the Afrikaner's Great Trek. The myth will die as it was born — in the wilderness and in despair.

[51] Grundy, *Soldiers without Politics*, 232–7; Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians*, 161–83.

[52] *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 13 Mar. 1977. See also Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians*, 57–63.

[53] Giliomee, *The Parting of the Ways*, 34.

[54] The officer concerned was Major-General P. Pretorious, a psychological warfare specialist trained in the United States. The document that detailed steps to nullify the Progressive Federal Party's (PFP) criticism of the Prime Minister, P.W. Botha. Dr Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, leader of the PFP, responded by calling the Defence Force 'The National Party in uniform'. For discussions of the scandal, see Grundy, *Soldiers without Politics*, 109–10, 124; Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making*, 144; and *The Cape Times*, 26 Apr. 1980.

[55] Giliomee, *The Parting of the Ways*, 34, and Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians*, 173–83.

[56] Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians*, 171, comments that widespread public disorder and urban terror along with mass industrial action could trigger military intervention 'displacing civilian authority as a demonstrably incompetent mechanism for upholding the state and the interests of the military within it'.

[57] Ibid., 132–3, 173–9, provides some perspectives on the future political role of the SADF; see also Grundy, *Soldiers without Politics*, 232–7, who comments: 'a civilian and military junta is not out of the question', repressing dissent on both the left and right.

What conclusions, then, can one make regarding Southern African regional security over the next few years? The only thing that is certain is that everything will be uncertain. It is tempting to view the Front-line States and South Africa as representative of a regional stalemate; but given the fluidity and volatility of the subcontinent, such an analysis may well prove superficial. Nevertheless, on present trends it seems likely that the Front-line States will continue their system of informal summitry, perhaps alongside a modest but positive degree of military co-operation, and therefore the Front Line will remain an ideological thorn in the flesh for Pretoria. South Africa, for her part, will probably continue to try and neutralize the independent subcontinent wth her destabilization strategy and promotion of CONSAS. Thus the Front-line States will remain vulnerable to superior South African military and economic power. Finally the question arises: On whose side is time? Afrikaner intellectuals would argue that the continental African economic crisis will force the Front-line States and the SADCC into an open accommodation with apartheid. Front-line leaders would argue that the tide of history is upon the Afrikaner; that whether he submits or defies he will still be engulfed; that the legend of the Voortrekker and of the last frontier has vanished; and that apartheid, no matter what its modifications, will be destroyed by a combination of internal and international forces.

All of this again highlights, in this unfolding Wagnerian drama of Southern African turbulence and change, how the Front-line States and South Africa interact upon each other, how they are doomed to coexist yet are also doomed to confrontation. Ultimately, Southern Africa cannot survive 'half racist and half non-racist'. It must become one thing or the other, either all CONSAS or all SADCC. There are great moral issues involved, perhaps the greatest of the late twentieth century, yet I fear that any change in South Africa will be a by-product of bullets and barricades. And so, like the Roman before me, I am filled with foreboding and I seem to see not the Tiber, but the Limpopo, the Vaal and the Orange, foaming with much blood.

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