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Destabilization and Dialogue: South Africa's Emergence as a Regional Superpower

by John de St. Jorre

Dialogue, if not eternal friendship, is suddenly the name of the game in southern Africa. And just as South Africans not so long ago were doing most of the fighting, now they are doing most of the talking. A South African-Mozambican "nonaggression and good neighborliness" accord has been signed. South African and Zimbabwean officials deal regularly and amicably on security and economic matters, although Harare has thus far declined to upgrade the relationship to ministerial level. South African and Angolan military personnel are jointly monitoring the former's pledged withdrawal from southern Angola, an exercise that has already involved some jointly administered punishment of recalcitrant South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrillas. South African military intelligence has met with senior SWAPO leaders at least once. And there are reports from Western diplomatic sources (unconfirmed by the parties involved) that South African officials have met with top exile leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) in Lusaka. The pivotal questions are why, how far will it go, and do we stand on the brink of a new era of stability and cooperation or is this merely a breathing space before the next round of regional violence?

But first a scorecard. South Africa, without a shadow of doubt, has notched up a major victory both for its tactics of destabilization and for its long-held strategy of dealing directly, at the highest possible level, with black African governments. The ANC has suffered a severe setback. SWAPO has also lost ground, physically in the cease-fire zone in southern Angola, and politically since it fears that the diplomatic initiative will run out of steam, leaving South Africa more entrenched in Namibia than ever.

The Soviet Union too has registered a setback, more pronounced perhaps in Angola (where it had placed new weaponry—and thus its credibility—on the line in 1983)

than in Mozambique. The Front Line states, as a group, have had to genuflect, with varying degrees of grace, to the regional superpower. Further afield, liberal and radical supporters of southern African liberation movements have been stunned and confused, while right-wingers have denounced what they believe is a sellout of pro-Western resistance forces in Mozambique and Angola. The other members of the Western "Contact Group" that has played a leading role since 1977 in the Namibian negotiations—Britain, France, West Germany, and Canada—have had to sit on the fence as their fifth partner, the United States, conducts a nimble if nervous diplomacy. The results so far have strengthened the credibility of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker's policy of "constructive engagement."

It has been South Africa rather than the United States, however, which has provided the dynamic force behind these remarkable events. And South Africa's achievement should be set in its historical context as part of a long-term strategy of reaching outward into Africa and establishing dialogue and detente with black states.

The Historical Backdrop

In a sense, the story begins with the police killings of unarmed black protesters at Sharpeville in 1960, which ushered in a period of domestic unrest and increasing international rejection of South Africa. The government initially responded by turning inward and focusing on what has been called by analysts of the period "the politics of security."

By the time B.J. Vorster became prime minister in 1966, internal violence had been brought under control and white confidence restored. Vorster undertook to rebuild South Africa's foreign relations, with particular attention to the goal of rapprochement with the rest of

Africa. In 1967 diplomatic links were established with Malawi, still the only internationally recognized African country to have such relations with South Africa. Two years later came the renegotiation of the 1909 customs union agreement with the former British High Commission Territories of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Meanwhile, nonpolitical (sometimes semi-clandestine) functional links with black-ruled states were on the rise. In 1970, South Africa offered nonaggression pacts to neighboring black states; these agreements would have inter alia denied facilities to anti-Pretoria dissident movements, but there were no takers.

In September 1974, Vorster reportedly met with the presidents of Senegal and the Ivory Coast during a trip to the latter country. This was followed by a February 1975 meeting with Liberia's president in Monrovia. Later in the same year, Vorster had a highly publicized summit meeting with President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and the two countries made a joint effort to resolve the Rhodesian war. Their Rhodesian peace initiative collapsed (owing mainly to intransigence on the part of the Smith regime), and South Africa's ill-fated military intervention in the Angolan civil war was condemned by black African states. By the end of 1975, Pretoria found itself back in the laager, at least as far as aboveboard connections with black Africa were concerned.

Seeing itself alone against the world and the target of a "total onslaught" orchestrated by the Soviet Union, Pretoria countered beginning in 1981 with its own "total strategy." Prime Minister P.W. Botha, much influenced by the military men he had brought with him into the inner circles of government from his 14 years as minister of defense (and by Israeli regional strategy under Prime Minister Menachem Begin), launched a systematic policy of destabilization against his neighbors. The aim was to enfeeble the ANC and SWAPO and strengthen South Africa's military, political, and economic hegemony over the region.

The subtle, behind-the-scenes diplomacy that had characterized South Africa's previous dealings with African countries was swept away, and Foreign Minister Pik Botha and his team of skilled diplomats were sidelined. Washington's privately communicated words of concern and caution were overridden as the military proceeded to occupy parts of southern Angola, raid Lesotho and Mozambique in retaliation for ANC operations believed to have been launched from bases in these countries, and provide various forms of support and encouragement to dissident movements in states perceived to be contributing to the "destabilization" of South Africa or Namibia. Pretoria stopped short, however, of toppling any governments in the region.

There is no doubt that the strategy has worked—helped, of course, by a range of natural disasters (drought, cyclone, flood), the world recession, and the inept economic policies of the targeted states. Bolstered by Prime Minister Botha's impressive victory in the November 1983 constitutional referendum, which revealed a lower ceiling on the strength of Afrikanerdom's right wing than had been previously feared, Pretoria has now moved with enthusiasm into the second phase of what *The Economist* calls its "thump-and-

talk" strategy. A tour of the region will help illuminate the dimensions and success of the strategy and provide some tentative pointers for the future.

1. Mozambique

The signing of a "nonaggression and good neighborliness" pact by President Samora Machel and Prime Minister Botha on the banks of the Nkomati River on March 16, 1984 was a signal triumph for South Africa. For both sides, the most important parts of the agreement are the security clauses which pledge an end to South African assistance to the dissident *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (MNR) and a considerable curbing of ANC activities in Mozambique (see "The MNR" by Colin Legum in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 16, July 15, 1983). A joint commission to implement the security agreement was established. As a gesture of goodwill, South Africa agreed to close down the MNR radio station that had been operating from the Transvaal. The Mozambique government, on its part, raided the homes of several prominent ANC members in Maputo on March 24-25, confiscating weapons and making four arrests.

Even so, there are likely to be difficulties in administering the security agreement, since each party may be asking the other for more than it can deliver. The South African government has a list of ANC activists it wants removed from Maputo, the most important being Joe Slovo, a white Johannesburg lawyer who it believes is the ANC's military mastermind, while the Mozambicans want 3,000 MNR activists and supporters repatriated from South Africa. The common border is porous and neither the MNR nor the ANC has shown any intention of playing by the new rules.

Mozambique is also interested in a range of economic benefits that it perceives to be part of the Nkomati package—the revival of trade, renewed use of Maputo's port, increased sales of hydroelectric power from the Cabora Bassa dam to South Africa, and the revival of South African tourism. Implementation will depend not only on how well the security arrangements go, but also on the developmental and budgetary aid that Mozambique so desperately needs.

The Nkomati Accord, while not quite a southern "Camp David," was accorded the drama and symbolism of an elaborate signing ceremony, with Machel, in field marshal's uniform, shaking hands and exchanging gold pens with Botha. Why did one of Africa's most revolutionary states, born of a long guerrilla struggle and imbued with strong Marxist beliefs, conduct such an about-face? The short answer is that Machel had no alternative. Virtually every known natural and man-made disaster has struck Mozambique: drought, cyclone, flood, botched social and economic policies, a chronic shortage of skilled manpower (ever since the Portuguese left en masse at independence in 1975), a drop in world prices for the country's agricultural exports, and a cancerous armed rebellion, backed by South Africa, that threatened the survival of the government. (See "Why Mozambique Sued for Peace," p. 3.)

Before turning to the South African option, Machel sought help from a range of other sources. He went to Moscow in early 1983 to talk to his Soviet friends, but

they replied that they could afford no more than they were already giving (arms, heavy machinery, fuel, and some food). An October 1983 tour of Western Europe was a personal triumph, but produced little of substance. Portugal, the former colonial power, was ready in principle to play the lead role in Mozambique's rehabilitation, but is cash-short itself. The Cubans were a possibility, but South Africa made it very clear that it would not permit a Cuban presence on terrain so close to its own.

That left the United States. Relations had reached rock bottom shortly after President Reagan took office, when four members of the U.S. Embassy in Maputo were expelled as alleged spies. The Mozambicans give much of the credit for the warming of relations in the past two years to the personal diplomacy of Frank Wisner, Crocker's principal deputy. The improvement has been symbolized by the return of U.S. representation in the country to ambassadorial status and the appointment of an experienced Portuguese-speaking career officer to the post; meanwhile, Mozambique's first-ever ambassador the United States has taken up his duties in Washington. But aid from the United States had a price. Maputo would have to mend its fences with South Africa (in effect, loosen its ties with Moscow) before any administration could get Congress to lift the ban imposed on aid to Mozambique in 1976. The *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO), the ruling party, debated and agonized over its limited choices and finally decided to open a serious dialogue with South Africa.

It seems to be a characteristic of Machel and his party that once a decision is made, even though it may constitute a 180-degree turn, it is implemented with gusto. FRELIMO officials stress that the movement has been at war for 20 years, first against the Portuguese, then against the Rhodesians, and finally against South Africa. The time has come, they argue, for peace and stability—even if the price is supping with the devil. They also emphasize that they have not sold out their revolutionary principles or the ANC. The Nkomati Accord, they say, is not an international treaty since Mozambique does not, and while apartheid remains will not, have diplomatic relations with South Africa. Mozambique will continue to give diplomatic and political recognition to the ANC and the movement will be allowed to maintain offices in Maputo. A week before the signing of the accord, Maputo radio explained the seeming contradictions: "One does not sign a nonaggression pact with one's friends . . . as long as apartheid exists, Mozambique cannot have friendly relations with South Africa, but we can have, and we intend to have, good neighborly relations with South Africa. One can choose one's friends, but not one's neighbors."

Machel was careful to consult with his Front Line neighbors at all stages of the turnaround, and has been adept at mitigating the damage perceived to be done to the pan-African crusade against apartheid. The ANC, which rightly views the pact as a serious setback to its capacity to wage guerrilla and sabotage campaigns against South Africa, has been less understanding. The Soviet ambassador, making the best of a situation generally interpreted as a setback, made a diplomatic speech of "understanding and solidarity" after it was

Why Mozambique Sued for Peace

A broadcast by Maputo radio on February 3, 1984 cited a "document drawn up by the council of ministers and distributed to embassies in Maputo [on February 2] asking for renegotiation of Mozambique's \$1.4 billion debt to the West." The document listed damages that had resulted from South Africa's "global strategy of reducing commercial and economic relations with Mozambique." The items included:

- A loss of \$2.6 billion since the 1978 cancellation by South Africa of an accord originally signed with Portugal 50 years earlier under which 60 percent of the wages of Mozambican miners working in South Africa had been paid to Lisbon in gold at the official rate, well below the free market price.

- A further loss of \$568 million since independence in 1975 through the reduction of the number of Mozambicans working in South Africa's mines, seriously swelling the ranks of the unemployed in Mozambique. Before independence there were about 120,000 Mozambican miners in South Africa; that figure is now around 45,000.

- The progressive reduction of South African use of the port of Maputo. In 1973, Maputo handled 6.8 million tons of South African exports and imports. By 1979 the tonnage had declined to 4.3 million a year, and by 1983 to an estimated 1.1 million tons.

- Direct attacks by the South African armed forces and by the dissident MNR cost the country \$333 million in 1982 and 1983, a figure roughly equivalent to the total value of Mozambique's exports for those two years. The total cost of "South African aggression and economic destabilization," according to the government, was almost \$4 billion, three times Mozambique's total indebtedness to the West.

- Destruction attributed directly to the depredations of the MNR includes: 500 primary and 86 secondary schools, 130 communal villages, and 900 rural shops.

Implicitly recognizing that Mozambique is bound by geography, history, and transport infrastructure to South Africa, the document concluded that the dialogue with South Africa "opens the possibility of economic and stable relations, safety and equality, and mutual benefit, and the principle of noninterference in each other's internal affairs."

clear that President Machel was determined to establish a new relationship with South Africa. (See "New Trends in Soviet Policy Toward Africa" by David E. Albright in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 27, April 29, 1984.)

2. Zimbabwe

Although Zimbabwe's uneasy relationship with its powerful southern neighbor has not changed in any visible way since the "talk" phase of Pretoria's regional policy began, the sudden spurt of dialogue and pact-signing in the region has sent tremors of anxiety through Harare. Zimbabwean officials are concerned about pressure from opposite poles—from the Organization of African Unity (particularly its more radical members) in search of new external bases for the liberation cause in

South Africa, and from a South Africa flushed with success in Mozambique pressing for a similar nonaggression accord with Zimbabwe. Neither of these fears seems likely to materialize in the immediate future, but that does not prevent officials in Harare from worrying all the same.

Objectively speaking, South Africa has already achieved most of its policy goals in Zimbabwe. It has known for some time that Prime Minister Robert Mugabe is as good as his word when he says that he is not helping the ANC. Zimbabwean security officials (usually white) have regular meetings with their South African counterparts, either at the border or in South Africa. There is a "hot-line" arrangement for emergencies. South Africa has a large trade mission in Harare headed by a senior Department of Foreign Affairs diplomat; although not recognized as such, the mission performs many of the functions of a normal embassy, including political reporting. The economic hold on Zimbabwe is powerful and can easily be tightened, as a petrol squeeze during Christmas 1982 demonstrated.

Even so, Zimbabwe remains a thorn in South Africa's side. Pretoria resents the steady flow of anti-apartheid rhetoric that comes from the officially-controlled media in Harare, rhetoric that the Botha government claims "verbally destabilizes" South Africa. It resents Prime Minister Mugabe's refusal to deal at a ministerial level—as Mozambique, Angola, and all the other Front Line states do. It resents Mugabe himself. "The South Africans, rationally, can get along with Mugabe," said a Western diplomat in Harare recently, "but emotionally they would like to get rid of him."

This uneasiness about Mugabe has led Pretoria to invest in a little destabilization insurance through low-level support for the "Super-ZAPU" dissidents in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland. Diplomatic and government sources in Harare assess South African support to consist of occasional assignments of arms, cash, and vehicles for dissidents, as well as assistance for the insurgents' "Radio Truth," which broadcasts regularly to Zimbabwe in Shona, Sindebele, and English from the Transvaal.

3. Angola/Namibia

This is the most complex and uncertain part of the new black and white dialogue in southern Africa. It is also the most difficult for South Africa because, unlike the relationships with Zimbabwe and Mozambique, potentially high costs and risks are involved whichever way the present scenario turns out. There are three phases in the scenario:

The first phase is a military disengagement in southern Angola in which South African forces are to withdraw to the Namibian side of the border. An accord drawn up by the Angolan and South African governments, meeting in Lusaka in mid-February under the chairmanship of President Kaunda, established a Joint Monitoring Commission to implement the withdrawal. The South African withdrawal from Angola, which is to take place in four stages, is going more slowly than anticipated and has been complicated by groups of SWAPO insurgents continuing to infiltrate through or

around the disengagement area into Namibia. But well-sourced reports of Angolan and South African forces jointly clashing with SWAPO suggest that a measure of trust has been established between the two former enemies. SWAPO's president, Sam Nujoma, has said that he will abide by the cease-fire in Angola but stresses that the struggle will continue inside Namibia until a parallel cease-fire between South Africa and SWAPO is negotiated and signed.

Likewise, Jonas Savimbi, whose *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) forces have been fighting a guerrilla war against the Luanda government since 1975 (see "The Politics of Survival: UNITA in Angola" by John A. Marcum in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 8, February 18, 1983), has agreed not to interfere in the disengagement zone, but makes it clear that UNITA's war against the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) government will continue. In a March 30 news conference in his "provisional capital" of Jamba, Savimbi warned that if UNITA were not accommodated in the Namibia negotiations, regional peace and stability would not be secured: "If the Cubans are sent packing from Angola, Namibia shall henceforth be free . . . However, as long as MPLA fears UNITA, the Cubans will not leave Angola. Therefore, the independence of Namibia depends upon a direct dialogue between UNITA and MPLA." Meanwhile, the United States, through a small team based in Windhoek, is playing an as-needed mediating role in the relationship between the South African and Angolan forces.

The second phase involves a complicated and delicate set of negotiations in which U.S. diplomacy again comes into play. Two hard decisions will have to be made, one by Angola and the other by South Africa. President José Eduardo dos Santos will have to decide whether he can dispense with the bulk of the Cuban combat forces and Prime Minister Botha will have to bite the bullet on the Namibian independence issue.

Hopes for this phase of the scenario are based on the benefits it offers both sides. For Angola there will be the removal of the South African Defense Force (SADF) beyond the Orange River border with Namibia, a cutoff of aid to Savimbi, the prospect of a new and friendly black state next door in Namibia, diplomatic relations with the United States with the prospect of aid to follow, and an opportunity to rebuild a shattered economy with Western help. For South Africa, there will be an end to the monetary and human cost of protecting Namibia; a removal of a major bone of contention in its relations with the West, Africa, and the international community; and an opportunity to concentrate its time and resources on pressing domestic concerns.

There is also, however, a debit side. Can Angola contain Savimbi without Cuban support? Is South Africa ready to accept the seeming certainty of a SWAPO victory in a free Namibian election? President dos Santos' sudden visit to Havana in March, his first in four years, suggests that Angola is edging toward a decision. The communique issued at the end of his meetings with President Fidel Castro reiterated the four conditions for a Cuban withdrawal that have been stated several times

Prime Minister Botha on Namibia, 1984

(Extracts from an address to Parliament, January 31, 1984)

... South Africa has never regarded South West Africa [Namibia] as an integral part of its territory [and] has done everything in its power to develop South West Africa and to ensure that its people are able to go about their daily lives in circumstances of peace and security. During the current financial year, for example, South Africa had made direct and indirect assistance available to the territory amounting to about R560 million [\$450 million]. This does not include the R400 to R500 million [\$320 million to \$400 million] which South Africa has spent during the current financial year on the security and protection of the people of South West Africa. Moreover, South African guarantees for South West African loans, internally and abroad, up to March 31, 1984 will be on the order of R690 million [\$550 million]. In the event of a South West African default, this guarantee carries the possible implication of South Africa paying interest, equal to double the capital owing, should investors insist upon South Africa honoring the full investment terms . . .

Our determination [to protect South West Africa against terrorist attacks] has exacted a heavy price—in material, in international condemnation, and in the lives of our young men . . . it goes without saying that South Africa will not continue to bear this heavy burden if it seems that the continued presence of our forces does not enjoy the wholehearted support of the people of South West Africa. It must be clearly understood that we will not impose ourselves on others. We will not protect those who do not desire our protection.

Can South Africa be expected to continue to bear this burden under circumstances where we do not claim sovereignty over territory, where we are exposed to criticism from the internal parties of South West Africa, where we are severely condemned by the West, and where the United Nations has threatened us with enforcement measures?

Although South Africa has never shied away from the use of arms when such action has been unavoi-

able, it has never believed that there can be any long-term military solution to the problems of southern Africa . . . South Africa was able to announce, during the [UN] Secretary-General's visit to Cape Town last year, that all the outstanding obstacles of the implementation of a settlement based on Resolution 435 had been resolved, with the exception of the continuing presence of the Cubans in Angola . . . The fact that this last remaining obstacle has not yet been removed can also not be laid at South Africa's door . . .

[On January 26, 1984] I informed [the Multi-Party Conference] that the interests of South Africa were of paramount importance to me and, if there is to be a choice between the interests of South Africa and the interests of South West Africa, I will give priority to the interests of South Africa. I also said that South Africa is no longer prepared to shoulder the tremendous financial burden of South West Africa alone. I believe that the leaders of South West Africa who came to see me are now under no illusion about my government's determination to resolve this matter one way or another and as soon as possible . . . It is up to the political leaders of South West Africa to decide what they are going to do and to do so with urgency . . .

I can see a possibility that we are entering a new era of realism in southern Africa . . . South Africa is a major force in the region and has no intention of apologizing for its economic, industrial, and military strength . . . [W]e are making a genuine effort to offer our immediate neighbors and other nations in Africa a reasonable opportunity for negotiated mechanisms to bridge our political differences in order to make possible mutually beneficial cooperation. South Africa's strength is manifest. So is our determination to offer a reasonable and preferable alternative to war and destruction . . . We offer treaties, food, trade, expertise, and energy. We offer peace and cooperation . . . Southern Africa stands at the crossroads between confrontation and peace . . .

in the past: the unilateral removal of all SADF personnel from Angola, the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978 setting forth procedures for Namibia's transition to independence, an end to all outside aggression against Angola, and a halt to aid for UNITA. Of these conditions, the problem of Savimbi looms largest. A reconciliation between UNITA and the MPLA (i.e. a coalition government in Luanda) would clearly be preferable. In his previously cited March 30 news conference, Savimbi offered to form a government of national unity with the Luanda regime, but warned that if his offer were rejected he would carry his guerrilla war into Angola's cities. A coalition seems unlikely, however, given the internal frailties of the MPLA and the chasm of mistrust between the MPLA and Savimbi.

An outright defeat of UNITA is an unlikely prospect in

view of the movement's current military strength and strong ethnic backing among the Ovimbundu (who make up roughly 40 percent of the total population of the country) in southeastern Angola. One possibility given increasing credence is a stalemate, with the guerrilla war continuing but not on a level that directly threatens the government. According to at least one school of thought in Luanda, a UNITA deprived of South African support and with hostile black states at its rear (Zambia and a newly-independent Namibia) would gradually wither away, especially if improving economic conditions strengthen popular support for the government.

Pretoria similarly appears to be moving closer to a decision. The relationship with the Angolans in the Joint Monitoring Commission, which consists of five senior of-

ficers and three companies of soldiers from each side, has encouraged the doves in the South African government and helped to mollify some of the military hawks who opposed the disengagement. The release of Herman Toivo ja Toivo, one of the founders of SWAPO, after 16 years of imprisonment on Robben Island is another straw in the wind. Press speculation that Toivo's release was a tactic to divide SWAPO by setting up a challenge to Nujoma's leadership misreads the South African mentality. In freeing Toivo, the government is acting from a position of strength; it is signalling its confidence and intentions to the other parties in the negotiating process.

The third phase of the Angolan-Namibian saga, assuming the second stage is brought to a successful conclusion, will be the implementation of the UN plan for Namibia's decolonization and independence. As envisioned by the Western Contact Group, a cease-fire in Namibia will be followed by the arrival of a multinational United Nations military force that, together with a contingent of South African police and civilians, will supervise a seven-month period of preparation culminating in the election of a constituent assembly. The task of the constituent assembly will be to write a constitution around a set of principles agreed to by South Africa and the Contact Group. Namibia will then become formally independent. During this process, Cuban troops will leave Angola as South Africa pulls its forces out of Namibia.

Although this sequence has been agreed to by all participants, some are less happy about it than others. Moreover, the Soviet Union, an interested party rather than a direct player, is clearly concerned over recent developments with regard to Angola. As military pressure from South Africa and UNITA increased in late 1983, the USSR stepped up arms shipments to Angola. In November 1983, the Soviet Union protested South Africa's regional destabilization policy in an unprecedented face-to-face meeting with South African officials at the United Nations in New York, and underscored its position more strongly in a January 5, 1984 TASS statement that demanded an end to "direct and indirect" South African "aggression" against Angola, called for the withdrawal of South African troops from that country, and warned that "aggression cannot be left unpunished."

With the announcement of the South African-Angolan disengagement talks, these expressions of Soviet diplomatic support for Angola were given differing interpretations by Moscow and Luanda. Soviet spokesmen asserted that the November warning to Pretoria had been made at Angola's request. Angola took the position that the warning had been a Soviet initiative, and argued that in any case it had had little effect, since it was followed in just over a week by "Operation Askari," one of South Africa's largest incursions into Angola.

More recently, the Soviets, while continuing to criticize the United States and South Africa, have sought to avoid the appearance of conflict with African wishes for Namibia. An article in *Pravda* on March 5, 1984, for instance, stated that the "Soviet Union does not pursue any aims in southern Africa that would run against the

aspirations of the Africans, particularly against their desire to see the Namibian question settled as soon as possible."

South Africa also has reservations about the sequence, particularly the third phase when the United Nations becomes directly involved. In Windhoek, an intensive new effort to bring together a broad coalition of the major "internal" parties is being orchestrated with Sean Cleary, assistant director of the office of the administrator-general for Namibia (and former minister in the South African Embassy in Washington), as conductor and Fanuel Kozonguizi, the first president of the South West Africa National Union (SWANU) and a former adviser to the assassinated Herero leader, Chief Clemens Kapuuo, as leader. This grouping, known as the Multi-Party Conference (MPC), includes parties ranging from the right-wing National Party through the moderate Democratic Turnhalle Alliance to SWANU and the SWAPO-Democrats. Cleary's objective is to reach a consensus on the future of the territory, especially its constitution, and then invite SWAPO to join the MPC's deliberations. If the strategy were to be successful, there would be no need for the UN to become involved. If, on the other hand, the effort to draw in SWAPO fails, there will at least be a unified and potentially powerful internal grouping to fight SWAPO in elections or whatever comes next.

It is against this background that South Africa proposed on March 11 that "all those involved in the current conflict in South West Africa/Angola," including South Africa, the Angolan government, UNITA, SWAPO, and the MPC, hold a conference to thrash out their problems. The offer was obviously a trial balloon which had little chance of flying (SWAPO and Angola rejected it immediately), but it was another reminder that Namibia's independence would be much easier for South Africa to swallow if the UN could be by-passed. The move, which took the United States by surprise, also showed that Pretoria is protective of its new role as regional superpower and (again like Israel) intends to keep as many of the cards in its hands as possible.

4. Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland

South Africa's relations with these smaller border states, all former British trusteeship territories, have always been relatively stable and manageable. The BLS states, as they are commonly known, are even more economically dependent on South Africa than their larger black neighbors. All three are members of the Southern Africa Customs Union, send large numbers of migrant workers to South Africa, and depend heavily on South African ports and railways for their trade. (Indeed, Lesotho is an enclave within South Africa and relies totally on Pretoria's goodwill for access to the outside world.) The BLS regard themselves as part of the African community of nations, however, and are full members of the Organization of African Unity and the Front Line states grouping. None of the three has diplomatic relations with South Africa, although official dealings with Pretoria are commonplace and occur at the highest levels.

Swaziland has traditionally been closest to South

Africa and, shortly after the signing of the Nkomati Accord, it was revealed that the Swazi and South African governments had signed a similar nonaggression pact in 1982. Discussions are currently going on between Botswana and Pretoria, and it will be no surprise if another nonaggression pact is the end product.

Lesotho is the odd man out. South Africa's relationship with the tiny, mountainous kingdom has been a bumpy one. Prime Minister (Chief) Leabua Jonathan, a tough autocrat who has ruled the country since independence in 1966, was originally seen in Pretoria as the ideal client leader: conservative, pragmatic, and pliant. For many years, Jonathan appeared to fit the bill, but in the late 1970s he adopted a much more independent line in foreign policy, including attendance at the 1979 meeting of the nonaligned states in Havana. As a result, he found himself on the receiving end of Pretoria's strong-arm tactics. These have included cross-border raids, military support for his political opponents, and temporary slow-downs of traffic across his borders. These moves brought Jonathan to heel with the result that some prominent ANC refugees have been expelled from Lesotho and an uneasy truce now exists between the two countries. South African pressure on Jonathan to join the "nonaggression club" can be expected to intensify.

Summing Up

The game is not yet over. A successful disengagement by South African and Angolan forces in southern Angola could lead to a successful parallel withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and South African forces from Namibia. This in turn could lead to a successful implementation of the UN plan and end with an internationally recognized independent Namibia. But that's a lot of "coulds" and much more water will have to flow under many more diplomatic bridges—including the U.S. election in November—before we will have any certainty as to the outcome. All that can be said now is that most of the players involved in the game appear to think that this is the best chance yet. They also agree that U.S. diplomacy is vital and should be given credit.

If all the pieces do indeed fall into place, there should be a lull in southern Africa, a period of adjustment and relative peace. The term relative is critical, because the following issues will remain unresolved:

(1) It seems unlikely that the various dissident movements—UNITA in Angola, the MNR in Mozambique, and Super-ZAPU and other groups in Zimbabwe—will reach acceptable compromises with the governments they oppose or that they will simply fade away. Destabilizing insurgencies will continue, with or without South African help.

(2) The ANC, though temporarily down, is far from out. It is now being forced to rethink its strategy. Mozambique's leaders, drawing a distinction between the colonial regime formerly imposed on their own country and South Africa's status as a sovereign republic, now advise the ANC against the kind of violent military struggle waged by FRELIMO against the Portuguese prior to independence, and instead advocate concentra-

tion on nonviolent political action. Will the ANC follow the game plan proffered by Maputo? Or will it embrace something like the "Black September" strategy adopted by the PLO after its defeat in Jordan in 1970? Will the existing fissures within the ANC widen under the strain and another breakaway movement take place, as happened in 1959 when Robert Sobukwe led the young radicals out of the party to form the rival Pan-Africanist Congress?

(3) Within South Africa, the Botha government's new constitutional dispensation, granting a limited political role in the central government to the country's 2.7 million Coloureds and 850,000 Indians (Asians), has failed to address the fundamental grievances of the 22 million blacks making up the majority of the population. Some observers are comparing the current mood among young blacks to the immediate pre-Soweto period of the mid-1970s. The South African government does not seem inclined to try to build bridges to the ANC, even though it clearly relishes its new dialogue with its black neighbors and has offered to release ANC President Nelson Mandela (who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964) on condition he is rusticated to the Transkei. The homeland policy, the centerpiece of grand apartheid, is enshrined in the new constitution and remains the bedrock of Pretoria's internal strategy.

(4) What happens when the Mugabes, the Machel's, the dos Santos, and the Nujomas of the Front Line states fail to meet the rapidly rising expectations of their people in the period of relative tranquility that Pax Pretoriana brings to the region?

(5) How is Moscow reassessing its options and objectives as it sees its influence reduced and replaced by that of South Africa and the United States? No dramatic moves are likely—the USSR's real priorities are elsewhere—but rather a period of watchful waiting for signs of unravelling.

If, on the other hand, the pieces of the jigsaw fail to fit into place, then the carefully wrought diplomacy could easily disintegrate. South Africa intends to maintain hegemony by talking if possible—but by more thumping if need be. Phrases such as "total onslaught" and "the Cuban threat" have faded out of the South African vocabulary to be replaced by "dialogue," "good neighborliness," and "regional cooperation," but they could quickly return if the dialogue dies out in the bush of southern Angola or along the border of Namibia.

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Contents

Foreword	v
1. The Evolution of U.S. Policy Since 1975	1
Kissinger's Lusaka Speech	1
The Carter Approach	2
Origins of Constructive Engagement	3
Crocker's Namibia Strategy	4
The Broader Regional Reach of Constructive Engagement	7
Constructive Engagement and Apartheid	9
2. Common Denominators in Current and Past Policy	12
The Centrist Consensus	12
Why, Then, Is the Public Debate So Polemical?	16
3. The Changing South African Political Landscape	19
Significance of the New Constitution	19
New Variables in White Politics	23
Black Politics in the 1980s	25
4. Soviet Interests, Objectives, and Prospects	27
5. Some Strategic Guidelines for the 1980s and Beyond	32
Give First Priority to Averting Worst-Case Scenarios	32
Keep All Lines Open	34
Do Not Yield to the Temptation to Put Numbers on the Scoreboard	35
Build Credibility With All Parties	36
6. Some Tactical Guidelines for the Mid-1980s	39
Disinvestment	39
Sanctions	40
Increasing Black Bargaining Power	42
Notes	45
About The Authors	47