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SOUTHERN AFRICA UNDER THREAT*

The nine majority-ruled states of southern Africa--Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe--entered 1982 facing two threats: a threat of economic crisis, and a threat of destabilisation from the Republic of South Africa. Both problems have roots in the historical development of a regional economy dominated by South Africa. The countries to its north rely on trade for their prosperity, and are ill-prepared for the shocks of world recession. They are to varying degrees vulnerable to South Africa's recent escalation of economic pressure and military attack.

The first reaction of the majority-ruled states has been to seek a united position, through the formation of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) to co-ordinate efforts for economic development and to reduce economic dependence on South Africa. The reaction of the West has been to offer support to SADCC, but at the same time to adopt a policy of conciliation towards South Africa. This conciliation has not restrained South Africa and appears to have encouraged even more aggressive actions against its neighbours. Firm pressure is needed if the majority-ruled states are to prosper. The alternative is poverty, disorder, and the opportunity for foreign intervention.

The Individual States

The nine countries have a combined population of almost sixty million people. They vary in population from Swaziland's half-million people to eighteen million in Tanzania, and in area from Lesotho--about the size of Wales--to Angola, over twice the size of France. In the region as a whole, national income per head is about one-thirtieth (3½ percent) of that in industrialised countries. Four of the countries are on the United Nations' list of least developed countries.

European colonialism as practised in southern Africa embodied very few recognisably Western political principles: its judiciaries were hardly independent, and its officers notably undemocratic and individualistic in their rule. Not surprisingly, the incoming independent governments had a wide range of ideology. Tanzania and Zambia moved, in a constitutional process, to a one-party state, considerable state involvement in the economy and a socialist commitment to boost the income of the poor; both countries have experienced major difficulties of

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implementation. Botswana remained a multi-party democracy, using its new-found mineral wealth to expand social services rapidly. Malawi, Lesotho, and Swaziland were similarly committed to private enterprise but moved, each in a different way and to varying extents, to more authoritarian forms of government. Malawi was noted for close relations with South Africa, successful encouragement of small master farmers, and widespread suppression of opposition to the Life President.

At the other extreme from Malawi are the states that achieved their independence after a guerilla war had radicalised the nationalist movement. The governments of Mozambique, Angola, and Zimbabwe share a Marxist vocabulary, a commitment to state planning, and a desire for socialist transformation--in the judgement that capitalism in Africa has favoured transnational companies and elites rather than the mass of the people. Mozambique and Angola faced shattered economies, disrupted by sabotage and the rapid withdrawal of Portuguese settlers who had held most of the skilled jobs. Immediate state involvement was essential to avoid collapse, and great problems remain--compounded in Angola by the continuing South African military aggression and the activities of rebels. Close ties have been maintained with the Eastern European countries which provided assistance during the struggle for independence. On the other hand, the new Zimbabwe government inherited large-scale commerical agriculture and industry, depressed but still able to function; the government has sought to maintain these sectors while reforms are undertaken and a more gradual transition to socialism is attempted.

TABLE

Member States of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference

	Population (million)	Area (000 km^2)	GNP per head 1979 (US dollars)
Tanzania	18.0	945	260
Mozambique	10.2	783	250
Zimbabwe	7.1	391	470
Angola	6.9	1,247	440
Malawi	5.8	118	200
Zambia	5.6	753	500
Lesotho	1.3	30	340
Botswana	0.9	570	720
Swaziland	0.5	17	650

The Economic Threat

As the region entered 1982, it faced severe economic problems. Real income per head in the region feel at least 10 percent between 1978 and 1981. Governments had to reduce development programmes and cut key services as revenue fell. The conflicting demands of the growing urban population for cheap food and of farmers for adequate crop prices were exacerbated. In several countries severe shortages of food occurred in the shops. There were political repercussions: higher prices, exaggerated expectations, and failed promises led to popular discontent. This often met with an authoritarian response, with restrictions on personal liberties and freedom of expression.

Part of the explanation of economic crisis was misguided government policy. Unwieldy and lethargic bureaucracies burgeoned, and rash promises were made. However, the individual countries of the region have followed widely differing strategies, and this very diversity makes it clear that the roots of many of the problems lie outside the national economies. Countries with policies as varied as Mozambique and Malawi have experienced similar difficulties. To take an example, the World Bank has criticised Zambian policies--but argues that at least two-thirds of the dramatic fall in Zambia's national income per head in the 1970s was unavoidable, whatever policy the government had followed.

The immediate problem for Zambia was the combined effect of falling copper prices and rising import prices: a ton of copper in 1978 bought less than half the imports it bought in 1974, and by 1982 probably less than a third. The whole region (in common with most of Africa) has been undermined in the 1970s by this problem of deteriorating terms of trade and shortage of foreign currency to buy imports. Between 1970 and 1979 Malawi's terms of trade declined by one-third, Mozambique's by 17 percent. Only Angola (with oil) and Botswana (with diamonds) saw significant improvement over the period, and even they faced problems later--Botswana's income from diamonds in 1981 was 40 percent less than expected.

One reason for these trade problems was the recession in the West. Another was the rise of oil prices, which also exacerbated the inflation already taking place in the prices of manufactured goods imported from industrialised countries. The effect can be seen in Tanzania, where it was compounded by a fall in the volume of goods exported. Oil alone takes up at least 40 percent of Tanzania's import bill; as a result little foreign exchange could be allocated elsewhere, leading to frequent shortages of other imports, including imported inputs and spares for Tanzania's own industry. In 1981 the industrial sector was working at only 35 percent of capacity, compared with

70 percent in 1977. The effect rippled throughout the economy: in September 1981, 1,100 workers at the Musoma Textile Mill had to be laid off for lack of diesel to supply electricity.

The Common Inheritance

These shocks produced by the world economy are serious because the region relies heavily on trade. Most countries are exporters of crops or minerals, which generate few opportunities for wider linked economic activity. Zimbabwe is an exception as it has a major industrial base, founded on supplying the Central African Federation (which included Zambia and Malawi on considerably less favourable terms than Zimbabwe) and recently expanded behind the protection of sanctions. Mozambique and Tanzania have also developed some industry, but otherwise the region is little industrialised and depends heavily on trade to obtain a wide range of essential goods. This orientation to the outside world is just one part of a common inheritance.

During the nineteenth century the dominant imperial power, Britain, created a regional economy around the mining, commercial, and agricultural axis of South Africa and Rhodesia. Railway lines pushed out from the Republic of South Africa--east to Swaziland and the Mozambique port of Maputo; north through Botswana to Zimbabwe and the copper mines of Zambia and Zäire; northwest to Namibia. Up the railway line came supplies, missionaries, and colonial officers (landed at Cape Town); down it went African workers, minerals, and cattle. Even out of the reach of the railway South Africa's mines recruited workers from Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and as far as Tanzania. British companies had their branch offices for southern Africa in Cape Town or Johannesburg; as capital was generated around the South African mines, South African mining companies themselves became active to the north. A far-reaching dependent hinterland was developed.

The colonies to the north were tied into this system to differing extents. The metropolitan powers maintained their own more direct links with their colonies, with European settlers in some parts, and feeder railways leading to ports in Tanzania, Mozambique, Namibia, and Angola. In the extreme north, particularly in Tanzania, the influence of the South African system was weak; close to South Africa, it was overwhelming--the colonial administration for Botswana was even based at a town inside South Africa.

Britain's colonies became independent during the 1960s; Zimbabwe and the Portuguese colonies a decade later after prolonged anti-colonial wars. The new governments distanced themselves politically from South Africa, in view of the apartheid and South Africa's support for Portugal and the Smith regime in

Rhodesia. These political changes were accompanied by a degree of economic reorientation. The area supplying migrant labour contracted inwards, so that by 1981 only countries bordering South Africa sent large numbers. As sanctions were imposed on Rhodesia, Zambia redirected its trade away from the south to the new railway built to the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam. South Africa's manufacturers failed to achieve their goal of becoming the dominant suppliers of industrial goods to Africa.

Yet the region remains heavily dependent on South Africa. South Africa's ports and railways carry exports from as far as Zambia and Zäire, and South Africa is often the source of essential supplies such as food and fertiliser as well as luxury items. Small immediate neighbours rely on the Republic for almost all their imports. In 1980, South Africa was the largest trading partner of Mozambique and Malawi, and it took a quarter of Zimbabwe's exports in the year up to July 1981. Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland are in a common customs union with South Africa: the revenue-sharing formula of the customs union allows them more income than they would obtain if they set up their own customs tariff, and this is revenue it would be hard to forego. The economic power of South Africa itself creates obstacles to development within the region: its advanced capitalist sector, with large markets and considerable government subsidy and export incentives (especially for agriculture), can produce goods much more cheaply than any such plants in neighbouring countries.

Economically, the countries do not, in fact, form an integrated region. Developed for trade with South Africa and the outside world, they exchange very little with each other: Zambia sent less than 2 percent of its 1979 exports to other sub-Saharan African countries. There is a corresponding shortage of transport links, and the existing routes are often not operated to full capacity--some countries lack the necessary imports to maintain railways fully, and the crucial Zimbabwe and Mozambique railways had very few skilled black staff at independence, and have suffered from the flight of skilled white workers.

This lack of skills is another colonial imposition. Colonial powers, concerned with cheap administration, a supply of unskilled labour, and agricultural production, neglected more than rudimentary education. In Zambia at independence there were less than one hundred graduates; in Mozambique 90 percent of the population was illiterate and there were only 20 black Mozambican students at the university. In Botswana, 70 percent of government posts requiring graduates were still held by expatriates at the end of the 1970s. The newly independent governments met the shortage by a great expansion of schooling --the number of secondary school students doubled in the first ten years of independence in Tanzania, tripled in Swaziland,

and rose to more than six times in Botswana. But technical skills remain in short supply.

The Regional Response

The governments of the region have their own national economic policies to deal both with long-term transformation and the short-term crises. But inevitably the common problems bequeathed by history lead to similar approaches and needs. One need is for Western technology.

Some countries have a relatively open door to foreign investors; other impose conditions, for example that countries should enter into joint venture companies with state corporations. But all recognise their need for Western technology, and recognise too that Western companies require a reasonable profit if they are to co-operate. This applies to socialist governments as much as the others: the president of Gulf Oil recently told the U.S. Congress that the government of Angola has a "responsive and supportive" attitude towards foreign business.

The countries of the region have, however, gone beyond mere similarities of approach in national policies. In 1980, after two years of preparation, the nine states held the first summit meeting of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). Its ambitious aims acknowledged the common inheritance and sought to transform it. "It is necessary," they declared, "to liberate our economies from their dependence on the Republic of South Africa, to overcome the imposed economic fragmentation and to co-ordinate our efforts towards regional and national economic development."

SADCC proceeded to map out areas which would benefit from regional co-operation, including food security, industry, energy, agricultural research, and animal health. The highest priority was given to transport and communications, for which a permanent commission was established to examine existing national plans and bring forward projects linking SADCC members. International support was evidently necessary if a major transformation was to be achieved. In November 1980 project outlines were presented to a conference of international financing agencies and industrial and oil-producing states. Six-hundred and fifty million dollars was promised for projects put forward by SADCC--although much of this had, in fact, already been assigned to the projects in earlier negotiations with the individual states. By the review conference in Malawi a year later, more than half these projects were under way.

Economic co-operation in Africa does not have a history of success. Most recently, in December 1981, eighteen eastern or southern African states failed to agree over the establishment of a preferential trade agreement. SADCC too has moved slowly in some areas. The enormous difficulties of communication and staff shortages--not least because the same officials must tackle pressing national problems--will inevitably limit the effectiveness and speed of action of SADCC.

Nevertheless, two aspects give hope for SADCC strength. The first is that, faced with countries of very different economic orientation, SADCC has not sought any fundamental integration of economic policies such as a preferential trade agreement would have encouraged. Instead, it has limited itself to identifying specific projects and programmes of benefit to all the participants.

Secondly, the member states have a strong political commitment to SADCC. The initiative for the organisation grew out of the political collaboration of the frontline states in support of the liberation movements in colonial Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. The value of economic independence was and is hammered home by the Rhodesian and South African military strategy of attacking roads, bridges, railways, and pipelines in neighbouring countries. Commitment to SADCC also enables the member states to demonstrate practically their shared repugnance at the white minority rule and institutionalised racism they fought in their own varied struggles for independence. With SADCC of such importance to member states, it is unlikely that they will allow it to lose momentum.

If progress is to be made in the development of the region, the support of the world community is needed. The initial international goodwill displayed at the 1980 Maputo conference has to be translated into financial backing. By the end of 1981, some \$273 million had been committed--only 15 percent of the cost of the transport and communications projects. Perhaps the most serious gap in funding was for the railway and port systems centred on Maputo and Beira in Mozambique; very little of the \$580 million needed had materialised. Damaged during the war whilst the borders with Zimbabwe were closed, by 1981 these systems were again handling a quarter of Zimbabwe's trade. They could be much more useful--to Zimbabwe, Malawi, Swaziland, Botswana, Zambia, and even Zäire. Lack of funding had complex causes: one was Mozambique's unwillingness to join international agencies such as the World Bank or to sign the Lomé Convention, which would give access to EEC funds. Yet the EEC, a strong supporter of SADCC, was less than helpful in its insistence on the "Berlin clause" in the Lomé Convention. The clause, which incorporates the West German interpretation of the status of Berlin and was rejected by Mozambique in line with its long-standing ally East Germany, was apparently not found necessary in EEC agreements with European socialist countries. More sustained and more sensitive support is now needed if the West is to fulfil its promises.

South Africa in the Region

It has been South Africa's long-standing policy to preserve the structure of dependence of the countries to the north; its proposals to absorb Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland were only abandoned in the 1960s. A scheme for a "Constellation of Southern African States" was launched with much fanfare in 1979, partly a counter to plans for SADCC. Large scale financial support was held out to any African country that would agree to open contact with South Africa. Where governments avoided open contact, South Africa was prepared for informal arrangements, and gave every encouragement to its businessmen to explore markets and investment to the north.

The collapse of the Portuguese empire, the victory of ZANU-PF in the Zimbabwe elections, and the escalating war in Namibia appear to have caused a major change in the way South Africa set about creating dependence. The formal stance of correct relations with neighbouring countries remained, but much more active intervention was planned. Economic pressure was to be applied to recalcitrant governments; where necessary, the previous goals of stability and economic penetration of countries to the north were to be abandoned in favour of undermining radical governments and dividing and weakening their countries.

Initially, the prime target was Angola, where the coming to power of the nationalist and Marxist MPLA was met by a direct but unsuccessful South African invasion. Angola is the base for the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO; perhaps just as important in South African eyes, it is potentially a powerful state, with a large population, considerable agricultural opportunities, and secure government income from its oilfields. This potential is undermined, however, by a constant war in the south against South African troops, themselves illegally based in Namibia in defiance of a ruling of the International Court of Justice. South African-sponsored and supplied UNITA guerrillas appear to have limited local support, but continue to creat havoc. Estimates of the number of Angolans who have fled their homes range from 450,000 to twice that figure. The bulk of Angola's foreign earnings go to defence and food imports (after two years of drought). South Africa has also used Namibia as a base for raids on western Zambia and even Botswana--one little-publicised consequence was the suspension of government health services in one of the poorest and most remote areas of Botswana, east of the Okavango River.

In the east, South Africa maintains the Mozambique Resistance Movement (MRM), protégés of Ian Smith and the Portuguese secret police before him, whose guerrillas and mercenaries have caused considerable disruption and suffering in parts of central and western Mozambique. Mozambique government forces have captured minutes of a meeting in November 1980 between MRM leaders and a South African colonel named Niekerk, at which Niekerk complained about the cost of supplying men by parachute drop and drew up their sabotage programme for 1981.

The South African army has itself raided Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, to carry out assassinations. In May 1981, the South African prime minister, asked whether he would regard a Zimbabwe office of the banned African National Congress of South Africa as a legitimate target for attack, replied, "Offices are the beginning of action against neighbouring countries . . . we will deal with it in the way we find proper." Three months later the ANC representative in Salisbury was killed. South Africa has placed growing pressure on the government of Swaziland to remove ANC members and curtail their activities, after South African raids on ANC houses in Manzini. The South African government has also turned a blind eye to guerrillas of the Lesotho opposition movement, who launched attacks from South African territory throughout 1981 and proclaim opposition to the ANC as well as to the Lesotho government.

Economic Destabilisation

South Africa's intention of preserving the economic dependence of the region is apparent from the selection of targets for military action. The last three months of 1981 gave a particularly clear picture. The regular constant attacks on Angola were augmented by sabotage at its oil refinery. The Benguela railway through Angola was, as usual, a target of repeated sabotage; this has the added effect of directing Zambia's copper exports to South African ports. On 14 October a white man carrying notebooks written in English was killed when a Mozambique army patrol surprised an MRM sabotage team on the railway and oil pipeline to Zimbabwe. Shortly afterwards the railway was damaged and a bridge carrying the pipeline was destroyed. As the Blantyre Conference of SADCC began in November, the navigation aids in the entrance channel of Beira port were destroyed. The SADCC states drew their conclusions:

> *It would be impossible for us to pass over in silence South Africa's aggressive actions in pursuance of a policy of economic destabilisation directed against SADCC member states. We can only see these acts as a direct response to the growing success of regional transport rehabilitation.*

Continued economic dependence means that South Africa need not rely on military means to exert pressure. For many years oil companies refused, on South African government instructions, to fill Botswana's oil storage tanks, which had been built with West German aid. During 1981 South Africa delayed the movement of petroleum and fertiliser to at least five of the SADCC states, including Malawi, at times and in ways disruptive to agriculture and transport. 1981 also saw a succession of moves aimed at Zimbabwe. South Africa gave notice that it would unilaterally terminate its preferential trade agreement with Zimbabwe, which it was calculated would lead to the loss of 6,500 industrial jobs, particularly in the politically sensitive area around Bulawayo. It also instituted an immediate withdrawal of permits for Zimbabweans to seek work in South Africa, and a series of transport squeezes, including the withdrawal of 24 loaned locomotives in April, just as transport requirements met a peak with a huge maize harvest. Towards the end of the year the locomotives were restored and there were suggestions that South Africa would reconsider its attitude to the trade agreement--the advantages of co-operation with South Africa were being driven home to the Zimbabwe government. In another example of the approach, a South African official was in Malawi a month after the 1981 SADCC Conference there, offering $2 million for development projects.

The frontline states inevitably root their attitude towards South Africa in a long-term perspective. They have identified dependence on South Africa as a major stumbling block to their own economic development. But the breaking down of dependence and building a new economic region will clearly take time, and requires peaceful conditions. A hugh task of reconstruction remains in the states debilitated by a decade of war. Likewise, their economic links with South Africa are so strong that a sudden break would have severe effects on their own economies. Economic crisis in practice forced an increase in African imports from South Africa in 1980. South Africa's neighbours for the most part support the imposition of economic sanctions on South Africa by the world community, but, as Robert Mugabe said in June 1981, it would be senseless for Zimbabwe to pretend it could join such an embargo. "We hope that South Africa will recognise that we have left an area, economics and trade, where relations can be harmonious."

The frontline states take a similar attitude to the movement towards majority rule inside South Africa. They abhor the apartheid regime, and support the efforts of South Africans to destroy it. Away from the border, Angola and Tanzania make available land for schools, hospitals, camps, and military bases for the liberation movement. Closer in, the countries bordering South Africa provide help to refugees, but they recognise that South Africa's fearsome military might and their own need for peace preclude direct military support. They see the liberation of South Africa as an essentially different process from the anti-colonial wars, the last of which is now taking place in

Namibia. "In South Africa, the struggle will come from inside, not outside," as a Mozambican spokesman put it. The prime minister of Zimbabwe laid out his position--and his fears--in June 1981:

> *We are pledged to peace in this region and we seek no war with anybody. We want to pursue policies of peaceful co-existence with our neighbours. But South Africa is not searching for peace; it's actually itching for war. South Africa has got to make it possible for us to achieve that peace.*

The International Community

It was an early characteristic of President Reagan's foreign policy to see the whole world as a field of conflict between East and West, in which every country could be assigned to one side or the other. The initial success of SADCC shows the world is more complicated; after decades of colonial rule, Africans have no wish to be anybody's puppets. For all their political differences, the majority-ruled states have drawn the line between themselves and apartheid South Africa. Instead of joining superpower blocs outside Africa, they have called for the assistance of the whole international community in fostering the economic development of an independent region, in a genuine quest for non-alignment.

But if one trend threatens to make the early Reagan view a reality in the region, it is the increasing aggression of South Africa. Threatened or disrupted countries invite foreign intervention. The presence of foreign communist forces in southern Africa is directly related to South African actions. The Angolans have repeatedly made clear that Cuban troops will leave once there is no longer a conflict with South Africa. The visit of a Soviet naval force to Mozambique in February 1981 directly followed the South African raid into Maputo, and was accompanied by a statement by the Soviet ambassador that "if someone fights our friends, we will react accordingly." The bizarre attack on the Seychelles, apparently carried out with the participation of South African soldiers and police on leave, is a further cause of concern to Africa. It is of the utmost importance to the stability, prospects, and peace of the region that South Africa be compelled by the West to stop such interference.

The present attitude of the West towards South Africa is one of conciliation in the hope of achieving South African agreement to a settlement in Namibia. A Namibian settlement is also a prime and urgent goal of the majority-ruled states of southern Africa, promising an end to colonialism and a respite from a decade of war. For this reason they support the various initiatives of the Western Contact Group and would be most reluctant to put any potential stumbling block in the way of negotiations. They have backed SWAPO's repeated concessions to bring about a cease-fire. In the calculus of suffering, the possibility of peace in southern Africa may outweigh doubts about the details of the settlement arrangements, or the nature of the incentives the West may be offering South Africa to coax it out of its illegal occupation of Namibia.

However, it would be entirely wrong for the West to see this helpful attitude of the frontline states as reason to neglect the implications of the current policy of wooing South Africa out of Namibia. The close Western identification with South Africa will not be forgotten by Africans, whatever accommodations their governments are forced to make in order to survive. Within Namibia itself, excessive concessions to South African demands --for example, a constitution which preserves the present extraordinarily unjust allocation of land--will make the task of an incoming independent government much more difficult.

More immediately, there is no evidence that the present policy of conciliation is the right one. If it were going to be effective, some results might have been expected in South Africa during 1981: major internal reforms, militarism restrained, and an end to the policy of destabilisation. The opposite has occurred. Since the advent of the Reagan administration South Africa has been at its most belligerent. Its military and economic aggression in the region destroys the very projects that SADCC seeks to promote. Western support for SADCC is meaningless unless South Africa is restrained. The future security of southern Africa depends on a realisation by the United States that its policy of appeasing South Africa is profoundly misguided. The Seychelles hijacking provides a useful lesson. Having first released the hijackers, South Africa later decided to charge them after Western states threatened a suspension of air services to South Africa. Pressure succeeded where persuasion had failed. As Europe learned to its cost in the late 1930s, some pathological political phenomena cannot be dealt with by the normal processes of diplomatic give and take. It is in the interest of the world community to bring the appeasement of South Africa to a speedy end.

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Moonlight Figures