129

SOUTH AFRICA'S STRATEGY OF DESTABILISATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE ZIMBABWE CASE.

BY D. CHIMANIKIRE

UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE
DEPARTMENTS OF
ECONOMICS
LAW
POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

Paper 2

*SOUTH AFRICA'S STRATEGY OF DESTABILISATION IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE ZIMBABWE CASE*

by

D Chimanikire
Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR SERIES

SEMINAR ON
SOUTHERN AFRICAN
RESPONSES TO IMPERIALISM

HARARE
22-24 APRIL 1987

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR SERIES

DISCUSSION PAPERS

1.   Apartheid and Militarism in Southern Africa: The Zimbabwe Experience

Apartheid in South Africa is internationally notorious as a system of
national oppression, racial discrimination, and extreme repression.
Black people in South Africa are classified into three 'racial groups' -
Africans, the so called Coloured (i.e. people of mixed racial descent)
and Asians (predominantly of Indian origin). Although the particular forms
of racial discrimination to which these groups are subject differ slightly,
the racist system has for many years placed them all in conditions of
brutal oppression. Black people in South Africa have no effective
political rights and no freedom of movement. The official state policy
denies that Africans are even South Africans. The State machinery
is totally dominated by whites. Blacks may not own land in the 87%
of the country deemed to be 'white South Africa'. They may not choose
freely where to live, where to work, or where to send their children
to school. On grounds of their 'race', blacks are denied access to
a wide range of facilities and amenities available to whites. Taken
together, all the oppressive measures of apartheid have produced a
situation in which most of the wealth of South Africa is in the hands
of four - and - a half million whites, while the overwhelming majority
of the 25 million blacks in South Africa live in poverty.[1]

All this is known : it has been exhaustively catalogued in numerous
publications, and we shall not dwell on it in this paper. Rather our
concern is how to understand the development and operation of the racist
apartheid system in the form of destabilisation in Zimbabwe and the
measures Zimbabwe is prepared to take in order to do away with the
apartheid system in South Africa. The paper argues that without the

eradication of apartheid in South Africa there will be no peace
in the Southern African region.

In the last few years South Africa's destabilization policy has
received increasing attention and so there might be the impression
that the apartheid state's destabilization policy is of recent
veritage. In fact, the destabilization policy is at least ten
years old, if one takes note of Pretoria's 1975/76 invation of
and debacle in Angola when it, together with the U.S.A., unsuccess-
fully tried to defeat MPLA and ensure a UNITA/FNLA government
in Angola by the time of Angola's Independence in November 1975.
Further, if one takes into account Pretoria's economic, political
and military support of rebel Rhodesia, its illegal occupation
of Namibia (in which South Africa's mandate was terminated by
the U.N. General Assembly in 1966, where in South Africa's was
proclaimed to be in illegal occupation by the U.N. Security Council
in 1969, and the International Court of Justice declared, South
Africa to be in illegal occupation of Namibia and confirmed the
Security Council's 1969 call for its withdrawal), then clearly
South Africa's regional destablisation policy goes back to the mid -
1960s. But it goes back even further in time if one takes a
continental view of destablisation. because of South Africa'
military and economic support for the Tshombe secession ir tanga
in 1961 which line of action continued with support for the iafra
secession during 1967-70.[2]

II.   THE APARTHEID STATE IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION: An Overview.

The interventions by the apartheid state in the Southern African
region - in the form of military incursions, assassinations economic
destabilisation, offers of economic 'co-operation' through a
'constellation of states', and proposed land cessions - are a
large part of the daily news of this region.[3] Yet they should
all be seen as particular tactics in a relatively coherent regional
strategy developed under the Botha regime. In part, this should
be understood as an aspect of the Total Strategy of the regime,
and in part in the context of the history and specific dynamic
of regional policy.

III.   CONDITIONS GIVING RISE TO THE TOTAL STRATEGY

From 1978 to 1984 South Africa's domestic and regional policies
were consistently oriented around a coherent strategic vision
of the conditions necessary to ensure the survival of apartheid.
Known as the Total Strategy, this involved a complex mix of domestic
"reform" and regional intervention. Clearly the Total Strategy
was a direct response to four developments of the early 1970s:

a)   the reemergence, after nearly a decade of political quiescence,
      of the new forms of organised, large-scale black opposition.
      The bloody suppression of the 1976 Soweto uprising clearly
      indicated that the apartheid state could not continue in
      the old way and that some form of change was essential to
      its survival.

b)   The onset of a deep recession. All the leading business

people insisted that the easing of restrictions on the bability
and training of black labour, in order to permit its more
productive employment in more highly capital-intensive forms
of production, was essential to any economic recovery.

c)   The defeat of Portuguese colonialism and the independence
of Angola and Mozambique under socialist governments, followed
by the debacle of the first South African invasion of Angola
in 1975-76, the humiliating withdrawal of the South African
army, and the collapse of Pretoria's "detente" initiative,
all showed the need for a new vision of South Africa's
regional role.

d)   The growing international condemnation of South Africa and
its isolation from its major allies - embodied in the U.S.
vote for a mandatory arms embargo and demand for "one person,
one vote" in 1977, together with the growing threat of sanctions-
showed the need for a dramatic improvement in image.[4]

In 1977, the Department of Defence had argued that South Africa
faced a "total onslaught". It advocated the mobilization of
the full range of resources at the disposal of the state in order
to preserve the "free enterprise system".[5] This was the total
Strategy, and it was a strategic shift away from the cruder forms
of apartheid. It sought to restructure specific aspects of apartheid
capitalism in order to preserve its basic parameters, to defuse
developing mass unrest, and to reduce South Africa's international
isolation. And the Total Strategy had both domestic and regional
components.

The regional component of the Total Strategy rested on an attempt

to internanationalize the problems confronting the apartheid
state. Its strategists argued that the source of instability
and conflict, both within South Africa and across the entire
region, was neither apartheid nor colonialism but external inter-
vention. Elaborate theories of a "total onslaught" against South
Africa, orchestrated by the Soviet Union but sometimes including
the Carter Administration and even the CIA, were proposed.

The fundamental objective of South African policy was now defined
as the creation of a Constellation fo Southern African states
(CONSAS). Recognizing that apartheid was a barrier to formal
alliances with neighbouring states, part of this tactic involved
raising the specter of "Marxism" in order to generate a counter-
strategy. Pretoria argued therefore that all the states in the
region faced a common "Marxist" enemy, and that they could not
rely on the Western powers for support. It proposed "regional
solutions" to this allegedly "regional problem". By so doing,
South Africa hoped that its international isolation could be
eroded through a transformation of regional relations.

Over and above its primary objective of forging a "Constellation
of States", the Total Strategy pursued five related regional
objectives. In brief, these are:

1. Ensuring that neighbouring states would refrain from actively
   supporting the armed struggles led by SWAPO in Namibia and
   ANC in South Africa, and obliging them to act as virtual
   policing agents for South Africa by prohibiting political
   activity by South African and Namibian refugees in their

territory.

2. Ensuring that "Soviet-bloc powers" (including Cuba) would gain neither a political nor military foothold anywhere in the region. Pretoria objected even to any state establishing normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

3. Strengthening existing regional ties, as noted above.

4. Ensuring that "black states" in the region would not support calls for mandatory sanctions against South Africa and that they shield South Africa from such sanctions.

5. inducing moderation in the "heady anti-South African rhetoric" of the region.[6]

IV   CONSAS COLLAPSES

The Botha's dream of Consas was naive, because it was built on two false assumptions: first that Muzorewa would win an election in Zimbabwe, and second that the majority - ruled neighboures shared the fear of a communist onslaught.

We should note here that Zimbabwe was the keystone to any regional grouping. The Frontline states (FLS) and the Botha's apartheid regime unveiled their plans in 1979 on the assumption that their side would win in Zimbabwe. The first shock to Pretoria was the massive ZANU-PF victory in Zimbabwe on 4 March 1980. On 4 April Robert Mugabe took Zimbabwe into FLS and SAD C rather than CONSAS. The second shock was when all three other non-FLS members also joined SADCC. This meant that Apartheid was seen as more evil than Socialism.

Lesotho, although totally surrounded by South Africa, had been

moving steadily away from it politically; for example, in 1978,
Lesotho hosted an UN anti-apartheid seminar and opened warm relations
with Mozambique. Malawi, the only majority-ruled state in Africa
to have diplomatic links with Pretoria, had sharply cut the number
of migrant miners going to South Africa, reduced its purchases
from South Africa (from 41 per cent of total imports in 1979
to 32 per cent in 1981), and was quietly building better links
with its neighbours.

Swaziland too, was moving away; it gave tacit agreement for ANC
guerrillas to pass from Mozambique through Swaziland to South
Africa, and became more critical of apartheid. On 6 April 1981
it hosted a meeting of the heads of Mozambique, Botswana, and
Lesotho which issued a comminique denouncing 'attempts by south
Africa to destabilize her neighbouring black-ruled states'.[7]

Thus none of the neighbouring states were willing to be seen
consorting with apartheid and the bantustans, and all supported
delinking. With its CONSAS plans undermined, the Apartheid regime
appeared unsure of its immediate regional objectives, and during
the second phase - from mid-1980 to the end of 1981 - it lashed
out in a fairly indiscriminate way. Direct military action,
and indirect aggression through puppet groups, was taken against
Angola, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe.' In Namibia, a "dual
track" strategy sought to build the "Internal settlement" under
the DTA, while escalating military attacks against SWAPO bases
in Angola in order to weaken it militarily and politically.

Compared with what was to follow, however, the destabilization measures taken up until end of 1981 were relatively mild. By early 1982 Pretoria seemed to have recovered from the "loss of Rhodesia" and had worked out its immediate regional objectively more precisely. South Africa now divided the states of the region into three broad categories and used a different mix of tactics against each. More conservative states, such as Swaziland and Malawi, were seen as real or potential collaborators and offered concessions in order to encourage them to deepen their ties with Pretoria, or as rewards for "good behaviour".

The second category of regional states identified by Pretoria were those considered unfriendly to South Africa but vulnerable to pressure, such as Lesotho and Zimbabwe; the third encompassed those whose political systems and development strategies were seen as a direct threat to Pretoria's interests, particularly Mozambique and Angola. Both groups were singled out for intensified and sustained military and economic destabilization.[8]

Limitations of space prohibit a discussion of the sustained and vicious assault on the countries of Southern Africa that has taken place from mid-1980 up to the present moment. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the Zimbabwe Experience, bearing in mind that economic, military and political methods most commonly used by South Africa against neighbouring states are normally grouped together under the heading of 'destabilization'.

Destabilization represents the "outward move" of the militarized state even while it continues to suppress and opress the majority

of South Africans and indeed destabilization is the perfect

linkage between the apartheid state's domestic and forein policies.[9]

V.   Zimbabwe Experience

At the centre of the region both politically and geographically,
Zimbabwe was the biggest threat to South African hegemony. Robert
Mugabe's joint policies of Socialism and reconciliation raised
the threat of a prosperous multiracial state which would challenge
South Africa's Apartheid policy. Zimbabwe is also critical to
SADCC because it is literally the hub of regional transport and
would be thus be central in re-directing traffic away from South
Africa.

In order to prevent the Southern African States from becoming
economically independent from South Africa, the apartheid regime
used the following methods in brief to destabilize Zimbabwe and
other Southern African black states:

-   disinformation, (e.g. hundreds of letters and anti-government
    leaflets sent to Zimbabwe in 1983 and 1984)

-   long-term invasion/occupation (e.g. Namibia since 1966 and
    Angola since 1975-76).

-   attempted assassinations of Prime Ministers and senior government/
    party members (e.g. 13 December 1981 bomb attack on ZANU
    HQ in Harare),

-   assassinations/murders of liberation movement leaders and
    other personnel (e.g. Maseru, Harare, Maputo, Lusaka, Gaborone
    during 1981-1983),

-   attacks on oil installations and routes (e.g. in Mozambique,

Angola, and Lesotho since 1980),

- attacks on military installations (e.g. Inkomo Barracks and Thornhill Air Base in Zimbabwe 16 August, 1981 and July 25, 1982 respectively),

- Training, supplying, directing surrogate armies in neighbouring states (e.g. UNITA in Angola, MNR in Mozambique, LLA in Lesotho and Super-ZAPU in Zimbabwe),

- attacks on transport routes (e.g. closures of the Benguela Railway in Angola, the Zimbabwe-Maputo line, the Malawi-Nacala line, the Malawi-Beira line, and attacks on the Zimbabwe-Beira road/rail line, during 1975-1980),

- port/border inspection of cargo, harassment of transport personnel (e.g. for Zimbabwe and Zambia 1986),

- limiting the use of South African railways, for example by manipulating the availability of railway wagons, (done to Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia).

- Restrictions on migrant labour, (done to Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Lesotho threaned).

- Border closures and restrictions, (done to all immediate neighbours: Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique).

- Curbing imports from neighbouring states. (done to Zimbabwe, and Swaziland).

- Regulating the export of goods to black states, especially 'food and oil' (don to Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique. Zambia and Zimbabwe).

- Restricting South African tourists (done to Lesotho and Swaziland).

- Violating the customs union agreement (done to all three

other members: Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland)[10]

VI.   The following are details of selected incidents mentioned above:

-   The first incident occured on 3 August 1981. Joe Gqabi,
    representative of the ANC in Zimbabwe was assassinated outside
    his Harare house. The murder weapon was never found. Later
    it emerged that Gqabi had been targetted by the South Africans
    and eliminated by a squad sent into Zimbabwe to do the job.
-   The next incident in the sequence occurred on 16 August 1981.
    A series of massive explosions ripped through the armoury
    at Inkomo Barracks near Harare destroying $36 million worth
    of armaments. This was done by South African Agents.
-   On 18 December 1981, a ten-to-fifteen kologram bomb exploded
    on the roof of the ZANU PF headquarters at 88 Manica Road,
    Harare. This was aimed at the ZANU leadership.

-   On 23rd July 1982, six tourists - two Americans, two Australians
    and two Britons were abducted by bandits on the road from
    Bulawayo to Victoria Falls. This was to undermine Zimbabwe's
    tourist industry.

-   25th July, a quarter of Zimbabwe's air force planes were
    sabotaged on the ground at the Thornhill base near Gweru
    in the centre of the country by South Africa.

-   Intelligence analysis around 1982 defined the strategic
    intentions of the bandits in three phases. The first phase
    was to recover cached weapons not yet located by the government,
    and to train and arm recruits. Phase two was to attack
    isolated economic targets such as white commercial farms,

stores etc. Phase three was to attack police stations, army posts and security force patrols with the objective of making Matabeleland ungovernable. This had the support fo South Africa.

- Two other weapons, non-lethal but nevertheless destabilizing, which South Africa uses against Zimbabwe are propaganda and disinformation. Zimbabwean monitors first picked up a new station called Radio Truth on 15 March 1983, no long after the South Africans were known to have become involved with Super-Zapu. The new clandestine station broadcast initially in Ndebele and Shona at 7 AM and 7.30 PM daily. Reception was poor and a change of frequency in June brought with it the introduction of broadcasts in English at 6.30 AM and 7 PM. But reception remained poor. A further frequency change improved the quality of the reception of broadcasts in English but the reception in Ndebele and Shona remained of a poor quality - the transimitter was located near Johannesburg at the Meyerton Studios of SABC.

- The South African campaign of disinformation against Zimbabwe has teen affected in a number of ways, especially through unsolocited publications and circulars, a number of them mailed from Swiss Cottage in London, and attacks on individuals through anonymous letters. The earliest ease of disinformation was detected soon after independence when publications were distributed claiming the formation of a new party, Super-Zanu, in which members of the existing Zanu leadership were said to be prominent.

- The disinformation campaign was stepped up in 1983 after
the creation of Super-Zapu. Prominent politicians, diplomatic
missions and individuals received a series of letters which
purported to originate from a "Joe Moyo", said to be a member
of the ZPRA high command.

- Fuel is another weapon South Africa has used to destabilize
Zimbabwe. The rehabilitation of the Beira to Mutare oil
pipeline, owned by the British transnational company Lonrho
and closed during the UDI years, was a major post-independence
priority. The reopening of the line was technically feasible
by the end of 1981 but on 29 October the railway bridge
over Pungwe river, which also carries the pipeline, was
damaged in a sabotage attack and the road bridge was totally
destroyed. In December 1982 Zimbabwe suffered an acute
fuel shortage which almost brought the country to a standstill
and resulted in queues at petrol stations that stretched
for many kilometres.

- Much the cheapest route to the sea for Zimbabwe is through
Chicualacula, in the extreme south-east, to Maputo. This
was subjected to continous attack until the MNR closed it
down completely on 20 August 1984. Thus, through its surrogates
and through direct action, Pretoria forced Zimbabwe and
other land-locked countries to return to almost total dep dence
on South Africa's trade routes. But Zimbabwe's response
in committing troops to secure the Beira route obviously
surprised Pretoria. And in the second half of 1985, faced
with the prospect of the Chicualacula route reopening by

by Mid-1986 if security improved along the line, South Africa introduced a new tactic. This was a two-tier tariff structure, offering lower contract rates than those published. The new contract rates undercut the previous Chicualacuala charges on four of Zimbabwe's main bulk exports - asbestors, tobacco, ferrochrome and steel. The message was obvious. Even if Chicualacuala was reopened it would be more costly to return to the traditional Mozambique routes than to use South Africa. Not only was this a way of further destabilizing Mozambique by denying it foreign currency earnings but it also exerted pressure on the Mugabe government.

- The vulnerability of Zimbabwe and other land-locked countries in the region was further demonstrated within a year of independence. First, South African Railways began to extend the turnaround time for railway wagons, claiming there was excessive demand for rail transport. Loading per day, particularly of diesel tankers, were reduced. Then, in April 1981, South Africa withdrew 25 locomotives loaned to the previous government of Rhodesia. It did this on so little notice that the Zimbabwe transport network was under severe strain for some time, forcing the loss of orders and stockpiling of maize, steel, sugar for several weeks. Lost export earnings were estimated at Z$7 million a week.[11]

- South Africa's destabilization in the first six years of independence cost Zimbabwe millions of dollars in additional import and export tariff, lost orders, property destroyed by bandits, discouraged investment and tourism. Beyond

that there was the cost of military operations against the
bandits at home, the cost of guarding the Beira route and
in July 1985, the deployment of fighting units in Mozambique
for a joint offensive against the MNR.

CONCLUSION

VII   WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM?

More than six years after the independence of Zimbabwe and the
founding of SADCC, the war for the control of Southern Africa
has dramatically intensified. On military, political and economic
fronts, Pretoria is asserting its claim to be a regional power.
But also in replay SADCC is struggling to reduce its economic
dependence on South Africa. So far the war is a costly draw.
Pretoria has prevented the neighbours delinking and has forced
them into economic decline, but it has failed to draw them back
completely into the fold. Destabilization now costs the SADCC
states more than $4500 million per year.[12] These aggressive
activities constitute a growing threat to peace which cannot
be confined to this region or even this continent; it is an inter-
national problem. There should be a continuing effort to expose
the irrationality and hypocrisy of Western financial and technical
resources being used to shore up a regime which is engaged in
destroying economies which these same countries are helping to
develop. Today's wanton military aggression can be seen to underline
two related factors:

(a) That the South African regime has adopted state terrorism
     as a policy. That is bound to lead to a dangerous security

situation in the region, because the victims of such a policy will have to defend themselves.

(b) In order to guarantee peace and security in the region, the international community should take immediate steps to isolate the South African regime by imposing comprehensive and mandatory economic sanctions.[13]

The demand for sanctions must be viewed in the context both of destabilization and Western support for the apartheid regime. Those opposed to sanctions argue that they will hurt the neighbouring states. Undoubtedly this is true. But if it accelerated the downfall of apartheid, it would be well worth the additional cost. It is in this light that Zimbabwe would like to see "The Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa" implemented which calls inter alia for the strickest enforcement of the mandatory arms embargo against South Africa, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 418 and 558.[14]

Zimbabwe believes therefore that the imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions on the apartheid regime would enlarge the prospects of an orderly transition to social, economic and political justice in South Africa and peace and stability in the Southern Africa region as a whole.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress (South Africa)
CONSAS	Constellation of Southern African States
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
FLS	Front Line States
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front
MNR	Mozambique National Resistance
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
PAC	Pan-African Congress
PF	Patriotic Front]
PF-ZAPU	Patriotic Front - Zimbabwe African People's Union
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SADF	South African Defence Force
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation (Namibia)
UANC	United African National Council (Zimbabwe)
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwean African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutional Army.

Bibliography

1. Robert Davies, Dan O'Meara and Sipho Dhlamini, The Struggle for South Africa, (Zed Books Ltd; London, 1985).

2. Patel, H.H., 'South Africa's Destabilization Policy', Review of International Affairs, October 20, 1986, Belgrade, p.8.

3. R. Davies, D. O'Meara and S. Dhlamini, op.cit. p. 42. See also Phyllis Johnson and David Martin (Eds.), Destructive Engagement, (Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1986) p. 43.

4. Dan O'meara, 'Destabilization in Southern Africa: Total Strategy in Total Disarray', Monthly Review/ April 1986. pp. 52-3.

5. White Paper on Defense. Dept. of Defence, Cape Town, 1977.

6. Dan O'meara, op. cit, pp. 55-56.

7. Joseph Hanlon, Apartheid's Second Front, South Africa's War Against Its Neighbours, (The Chaucer Press, Suffolk. 1986), p. 39.

8. Dan O'meara, op. cit. pp. 58-9.

9. Patel, H.H. op.cit. p. 9.

10. Ibid. p.9

11. P. Johnson and D. Martin, op.cit. Chap. 2. pp. 43-72.

12. Joseph Hanlon, Beggar Your Neighbours, (James Curry, Indiana Universiti Press, 1986). p. 259.

13. 'Zimbabwe News', Vol. 17, No. 6. June 1986. p. 2.

14. Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on Southern Africa : Mission To South Africa, The Commonwealth Report .Published by Penguin Books. 1986 pp. 142-145.

OTHER WORKS USED IN PREPARATION OF THIS PAPER

Coker, C. 'South Africa: A new military role in Southern Africa
1969-82' SURVIVAL (1983), XXV, 59-67.

Frankel, P.H. Pretoria's Praetorians: Civil - Military Relations in South
Africa (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984).

Haetman, H-R. South African War Machine. (Johannesburg, Central News
Agency, 1985).

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).

Jaster, R.S. A Regional Security Role for Africa's Frontline States:
Experience and Prospects (London, The Institute of Strategic Studies,
Adelphi Paper 180, 1983).

Jenkins, S. 'The great evasion : South Africa: A survey', The Economist
(21 June 1980), 3-30.

-       'The survival ethic : South Africa: A Survey', The Economist
        (19 Sept. 1981), 3-18.

-       'Destabilization in Southern Africa', The Economist (16 July 1983),
        15-20, 23-4, 27-8.

-       'America and South Africa', The Economist (30 March 1985), 17-34.

Pheke, M. Apartheid: the story o a Dispossessed people. (Marian Books,
Lond. 1984).

Omond, R. The Apartheid Handbook - A Guide to South Africa's Everyday
Racial Policies (Penguine Books, Suffolk, 1986).

Uhling. M.(Ed. Apartheid in 'r sis (The Chaucer Press. 1986)