

SOUTHERN AFRICA: CONFLICT OR COOPERATION

by
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I. INTRODUCTION

Eight years ago this month Prime Minister Vorster declared that southern Africa had come to the crossroads, that a choice had to be made between peace on one hand or an escalation of strife on the other.¹ Probably no country in the region has deliberately opted for an escalation of strife. However, there is no clear-cut commitment to cooperation and peace either, and the region may well be drifting toward mounting confrontation and violence and perhaps chaos. Even though powerful forces are at work, here and abroad, to promote such catastrophic course, it must not be accepted as inevitable or pre-ordained.

The present paper is based on the premise that South Africa's long term interests are best served by strengthening the economic ties with its neighbours. The first part deals with aspects of instability in southern Africa. The second part highlights factors promoting economic interdependence and cooperation in the region. Lastly, a number of thoughts and suggestions concerning a constructive relationship with neighbouring countries are presented.

II. TENSIONS IN THE REGION

Political and economic tensions in southern Africa are growing and armed conflict shows no sign of abating. Although the regime of Mr. Ian Smith has been toppled since Mr. Vorster's 1974 Senate speech, peace and prosperity in Zimbabwe seem more remote now than ever. The regimes in Luanda, Maputo and Maseru are threatened by guerrilla forces, and the conflict along the northern border of South West Africa/Namibia is continuing. South African armed forces have struck at ANC (African National Congress) bases in Maputo (March 1980) and this is deemed necessary in Pretoria.* Economic and administrative disarray is spreading in the region.

The popular accusation that the plight of these countries is the direct result of deliberate South African "destabilization" overlooks the elementary fact that destabilization assumes an earlier state of stability. For southern Africa this is an untenable assumption because the economic and social policies pursued by most African states do not come to grips with their demographic, economic, ethnic and other realities. Ethnic strife, ideological zeal and inept administration, more than anything else, erode the very basis of material wealth and political stability in countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola and Mozambique. Some aspects of this self-destabilization are dealt with below.

Economic Problems of Neighbouring Countries

In common with most other black African countries, South Africa's neighbours are experiencing growing economic difficulties and, arising from these, mounting internal tensions. Basically these economic difficulties stem from the imbalance between unbridled population increase and the popular demand for education, health services, housing, employment and rising living standards generally. At the current average growth rate of 2.7 percent a year, the populations of the region will double within 26 years. The Zambian population (3.1% per annum) will double in less than 23 years and that of Zimbabwe (3.3% per annum) in 21 years.

The most serious imbalance is between population and food supplies. The State interference in agricultural matters, notably marketing and price determination, in the name of socialism and justice, has resulted in decline almost everywhere but particularly in Angola and Mozambique. Drought presently aggravates these man-made difficulties. Increasing quantities of food have to be imported either from South Africa or from outside the region. According to the magazine *African Business*, writing in 1980, Botswana, Lesotho Swaziland were until recently South Africa's sole food export outlets. "Today, its black African customers include Zambia which has ordered 250,000 tons of maize and Mozambique (150,000 tons of maize and 50,000 tons of wheat). Kenya is taking 128,000 tons (via Mozambique), Zimbabwe is buying up to 100,000 tons this year. Zaire, Malawi, Angola, the Ivory Coast, Mauritius and Tanzania are reportedly among South Africa's grain purchasers . . ."²

High birth rates in conjunction with declining death rates mean that the share of children and young people is large relative to the economically active population and thus, imposes a heavy burden in respect of education and other social services. All African economies are highly vulnerable to fluctuating overseas demands for their few agricultural or mineral exports and they have been severely hit by world recession and rising oil prices. Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland are all in financial straits. Botswana's cash position earlier in 1982 reportedly was so bad that the government was unable to meet car allowance payments, and the Minister of Finance described the economic outlook as "grim." According to experts in Maseru, Lesotho's financial affairs were "chaotic," yet the country was borrowing R52 million (approximately 48.6 million dollars U.S.) for the construction of an international airport.³ External public debt everywhere has risen considerably between 1970 and 1980: nine-fold in the case of Lesotho, three-fold in Zambia and Zimbabwe, five-fold in Malawi, a little more in Tanzania. Expressed in months of import coverage, gross international currency reserves in 1980 had dwindled to almost nothing.⁴

The pursuit of socialist ideology seriously impedes economic progress and largely accounts for the growing shortages of food, consumer goods, spare parts and so forth in Angola and Mozambique.

The *Zambian economy too is in utter disorder*. A crucial question for the future of southern Africa revolves around Zimbabwe's attempt to move toward a one-party state and "scientific socialism based on Marxist-Leninist principles" with all the paraphernalia of ownership of the means of production in "the grip of the peasantry, the proletariat and the state."⁵ The measures already introduced so far — high minimum wages, a clamp on salaries beyond Z\$20,000 a year, laws preventing the dismissal of workers, an artificially high exchange rate, etc. — have seriously diminished business confidence and not much will be needed to bring about its total collapse.

Administrative and managerial inefficiency contribute significantly to the economic problems of neighbouring and other African states. For example, it was reported in September 1982 that Zambian officials had travelled to Dar es Salaam in a bid to clear a six-year backlog of thousands of tons of imported goods destined for Zambia.⁶ About 100,000 tons of Zambian copper were believed to be stranded along the 1,800 km Tazara line.⁷

There is every reason to assume that the economic difficulties of African countries will worsen rather than improve in the foreseeable future. Apart from the growing imbalance between population and resources, the main problems must be sought in: the largely ideologically motivated bureaucratic interference in economic activities, the clashes between traditional values and practices and the requirements of a modern economic and administrative system and the relatively low priority which economic matters receive as compared with political considerations.

Neighbouring Countries' Efforts to Disengage from South Africa

Any state towering over its neighbours economically, politically and militarily is likely to be distrusted and resented by the weaker countries. If, as in the case of southern Africa, the trauma of colonial heritage and issues of racial domination are superimposed on such relationship, it is not surprising that feelings of animosity prevail in some quarters. Politicians in neighbouring countries like to capitalize on their geographical location next to South Africa, with its unfavourable image abroad, by soliciting sympathy and financial support from well-off overseas countries and from international organizations. By arguing that they need help to lessen their dependence on South Africa, they attract funds which might not have come their way in a different geographical context. Their rhetoric naturally does not endear these countries to the South African electorate.

Genuine efforts on the part of neighbouring countries to reduce their economic dependence on South Africa must, nonetheless, be recognized as a legitimate attempt to safe-guard their freedom of maneuver in the shadow of the predominant regional power. Whereas anti-South African sentiments clearly are a strong motivating element in the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) composed of nine neighbouring and more distant states, it

must be noted that the official pronouncements of the grouping are usually restrained so as not to antagonize South Africa. The declared objective of these states, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania, is to promote the economic development of member states through cooperation in solving common problems in transport and communications, finance, food supplies, combatting diseases, industrization and energy policies, research, etc. It can be argued that South Africa should welcome progress with this endeavour.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that tensions to result from the division of the region into two opposing groupings — SADCC on the one hand and CONSAS, the Constellation of Southern African States, under South African leadership, on the other. An interesting aspect is the membership of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in both SADCC and the Southern African Customs Union grouped around South Africa. Lesotho and Swaziland also belong to the Rand Monetary Area.

Western Attitudes

The attitudes of the major Western powers is no doubt an element exacerbating tensions in the region. While fighting for a share of the lucrative South African market, they also wish to obtain the goodwill of the black states by emphasizing that they are on the side of the black states in fighting "apartheid." The Western powers are well aware that closer economic ties between the black states in the region and South Africa could do more to promote the economic progress of these states than handouts of financial aid but are unable to propagate openly such ties.

Obviously, the responsible Western powers are anxious to have peace and stability in southern Africa. However, it has to be recognized that their double track approach to South Africa and its neighbours, respectively, tends to heighten tensions by encouraging an unyielding attitude among the latter groups, thereby promoting a siege mentality among South Africans. Speaking in Switzerland in May 1981, Mr. Denis Etheredge of the Anglo American Corporation stated that the Western nations have "an important part to play in finding a compromise for survival in Southern Africa," and went on to observe that many of these states "have been dishonest in that they have publicly encouraged the South in their enmity towards South Africa while privately bemoaning the fact that these states are an enormous burden and are heading for economic disaster."⁸

The Role of the USSR

The extent to which the Soviet Union is responsible for tension and instability in southern Africa is a point of debate. Western observers tend to assume that South Africa's internal policies, more than anything else, pave the way for Soviet influence and penetration. For its part, the South Africa government is convinced that it is high on the list of Soviet priorities as control of South Africa would auto-

matically mean control over the whole region and would enable the USSR to deny the West access to vital raw materials and sea lanes. To this end, the "ultimate aim," of the Soviet Union, in the words of the 1982 Defence White paper, "is to overthrow the present body politic in the RSA and to replace it with a Marxist orientated form of government . . ."⁹ According to the White Paper "[t]he establishment of Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique as Marxist satellites . . . leaves RSA as the last stronghold of the West of Africa."¹⁰ Clearly, not all analysts would endorse the description of Zambia and Zimbabwe as Marxist satellites. The White Paper is undoubtedly correct, however, in stressing the importance of a Soviet support for the South West Africans Peoples Organization (SWAPO) and the ANC, as well as its role in "creating unrest and exploiting this situation, and by making use of surrogate forces such as the Cubans."¹¹ It would, of course, be wrong to lay all blame for regional instability at the door of Soviet machinations for, as indicated above, the self-destablizing behaviour of countries in the region would sufficiently account for food shortages, transport bottle-necks, inter-ethnic conflict, and other afflictions. Naturally, however, these problems are compounded by Soviet activities.

Armed Conflicts

The armed conflicts within the region are as much the cause of tension as its consequence, though the difference between cause and effect is not always easy to determine. Certainly, guerrilla warfare on their soil is hindering progress and stability in SWA/Nambia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Lesotho, and affects neighbouring Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland and Botswana. No Soviet support is given to the resistance movements in Angola and Mozambique, UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) and the Mozambique National Resistance respectively, and none to the Lesotho Basotho Congress Party's Liberation Army (BCP). Soviet aid to Mr. Joshua Nkomo's ZIPRA (the military wing of ZAPU, the Zimbabwe African People's Union) appears to have been discontinued.

South Africa is widely accused of deliberately destabilizing its neighbours economically and militarily in order to keep them weak and dependent and to deter them from granting base and other facilities to the ANC. In so far as there is truth in these allegations, and it is difficult to establish, one is faced with a chicken-and-egg situation. There would, for example, be no armed incursions into Angola if it were not for the activity of SWAPO from Angolan soil. Nor would there have been the raids on Matola in Mozambique or on Maseru without the extensive ANC presence there.

The foregoing outline of aspects of regional tension leads to four deductions:

1. there are numerous factors creating tension — not just one;
2. some of these factors are deep-rooted and will require prolonged efforts to eliminate;

3. some of them must be sought within South Africa, some in neighbouring countries, some in international economic conditions, and some in the power struggle of the super powers; and,
4. a strategy to remove or to lessen tensions will be correspondingly complex and will call for international cooperation over a broad spectrum.

III. THE ECONOMIC BASIS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

The following section is concerned with the economic preconditions for peaceful and mutually beneficial ties between South Africa and its neighbours, serving mainly as background for the discussion of certain policy implications in the last part of this paper.

Communalities

Due to physical circumstances and historical accident, the countries of southern Africa have a great deal in common. This includes features such as geology, topography, climate, soil, fauna, flora, parasites, insect and other pests, human and animal diseases, nutritional problems, population factors, social problems and economic structures. Locust swarms, epizootic diseases or parasites do not stop at national boundaries and generally have to be combatted by international efforts. Cooperation in finding solutions for common problems, in sharing technical data and avoiding duplication of research, is called for by reason if not by necessity.

A factor not always sufficiently appreciated is the extent to which the countries of the region, except Angola and Mozambique, are bound together by their common heritage of past British rule with its legacy of British legal, administrative, commercial, cultural and other practices and traditions and, notably, the English language. Equally well known and inadequately appreciated is the fact that virtually all indigenous black languages belong to the closely-knit family of Bantu languages and their common cultural background. The countries also have many of the important agricultural and mineral products in common. To name but a few, more or less at random.

diamonds	— South Africa, SWA/Namibia and Botswana
coal	— South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland and Zimbabwe
copper	— South Africa, SWA/Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe,
maize	— South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi,
millet	— Angola, Zimbabwe and Zambia,
sugar	— South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Malawi,
cattle	— South Africa, SWA/Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia.

These and many other important products compete with each other only to a limited extent on international markets. More important is the fact that with a few exceptions there is no significant scope for

exchanging the foremost primary products between the countries of the region. Attention will be given below to intra-regional trade and other economic relations.

South Africa — The Pre-eminent Regional Power

South Africa is by far the most industrialized and diversified economy in Africa, dwarfing its neighbours in respect of energy production, transport moved, goods produced, research and development, and so on. No one is more aware of this than African leaders. On a continent where most economies are in serious difficulties while outside aid is decreasing, the South African economy could provide powerful growth impulses for neighbouring states and help to shield them against the worst ravages of hunger, disease and social instability which are increasingly afflicting Africa.

If this sounds like empty rhetoric, it should be recalled that even at present the South African economy directly employs well over 300,000 black workers from neighbouring states, provides food and consumer as well as capital goods to these states, carries a significant portion of their overseas trade, and accounts for the presence in the region of overseas corporations with expertise and resources which would hardly be attracted by the small markets of the neighbouring states.

South Africa's 1980 per capita income of \$2,290 was about eight times as much as that of Mozambique, four times that of Zambia, and about three and one-half times as high as that of Zimbabwe. Compared with the region as a whole, South Africa accounts for:

- 77 per cent of the total GNP (1980)¹²
- 77 per cent of the electricity generated (1980)
- 84 per cent of the telephones installed (1977)
- 97 per cent of the coal mined in the region (1980)
- 98 per cent of the iron ore mined (1980)
- 82 per cent of the chrome mined (1978)
- 70 per cent of the maize grown (1980)
- 87 per cent of the wheat grown (1980)
- 67 per cent of the sugar cane produced (1979)
- 39 per cent of the cattle stock (1980)
- 80 per cent of the sheep flock (1980)

In a recent analysis of the world's economic regions, South Africa is grouped together with North America, the Soviet Union and Australia as a region with "plentiful" raw materials and "high" levels of technological know-how.¹³ It is only natural that the influences radiating from this economic powerhouse can be felt throughout sub-Saharan Africa but especially southern Africa. A few pertinent aspects may be briefly pointed out.

Regional Economic Interaction

The 301,700 foreign blacks in registered employment in June 1981 came mostly from neighbouring countries. The amount of money

sent or taken back to their countries of origin may be in the region of R314 million (about 293 million dollars U.S.) in respect of 1980. The number of workers (1981) and estimated remittances (1980) for the more important sending countries were as follows:¹⁴

	workers	million	million U.S.
Lesotho	150,422	R153.2	\$143
Mozambique	59,391	66.6	\$ 62
Botswana	29,169	32.0	\$29.9
Malawi	30,602	30.7	\$28.7
Zimbabwe	16,965	15.4	\$14.4
Swaziland	13,418	13.2	\$12.3

Due to economic as well as political considerations, the foreign component of the South African mine labour force has shrunk considerably in recent years — from 52.3 per cent in 1964 to 27.0 per cent in 1981. The ominous implications of this trend for the countries concerned may be gauged from the fact that more than six times as many workers from Lesotho are employed in South Africa than in their own country. In the case of Botswana, Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, too, their share of workers in South Africa is substantial compared with their own national labour forces, though the difference is not as striking as for Lesotho.

South Africa's flourishing trade with the large majority of African countries is restrained far more by their lack of foreign exchange than by political considerations. While a significant part of this trade is conducted via third countries, preliminary figures for 1981 show exports to Africa of R1,037.9 million (969.3 million dollars U.S.) and imports of R317.4 million (296.4 million dollars U.S.). To this must be added exports to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland which are in the region of \$1,000 million a year.

Imports from South Africa account for about 90 per cent of Botswana's and Swaziland's total imports and 95 per cent for Lesotho. In 1981, South Africa was Zimbabwe's foremost trading partner, supplying 27.5 per cent of its total imports and buying 21.5 per cent of its exports. Thirty-seven and three-tenths per cent of Malawi's 1980 imports came from South Africa as did 15.7 per cent of Zambia's. Grain exports to African countries have already been mentioned above.

Another form of trade between South Africa and its neighbours is electric power. In 1981, Escom exported 2216 GW/hr or 2.1 per cent of its output, with two-thirds of that going to Bophuthatswana and other independent national states.¹⁵ However, South Africa is not only exporting power, including 235 GW/hr to Mozambique, but is also importing up to 1,424 MW annually from that country's Cabora Bassa scheme. The outlines of a regional power grid already exist which, together with the rail network, could play a similar role for southern Africa as did the iron and steel industries in Western Europe after World War II.

No less than eight of the fourteen southern African states are landlocked and, as a consequence, international transport routes to

sea ports play a critical role in the region. Without exaggeration one may say that the South African railways' administration does more than any other organization to keep the various economies going. About 70 per cent of Zambia's rail cargo, half being mineral exports, moves through South Africa.¹⁶ At least 60 per cent of Malawi's exports go through South Africa, much of it by road.¹⁷ Intra-regional cooperation with respect to the many practical details of rail and other traffic has a significant potential for promoting economic development.

Other important aspects of economic interaction between South Africa and nearby states can be referred to only in passing: the Southern African Customs Union, the Rand Monetary Area, South African investment in mining, manufacturing and agriculture, joint marketing overseas of agricultural products,¹⁸ and research and other expert technical services provided by public as well as private sector organizations in South Africa. Yet even this brief review leads to three fundamental conclusions. Although well known to every reasonably informed South African, they yet seem to have remarkably little influence on policy making in both public and private sectors.

Firstly, South Africa towers over nearby, as well as more distant, African states economically (and militarily) so much that for the foreseeable future South Africa has nothing to fear from them individually or collectively. Secondly, South Africa's economy is interlinked so closely with the other economies in the region that rupture of these ties would wreak enormous damage, though far less to South Africa than to other economies. Thirdly, even though African leaders, notably those of neighbouring states, are well aware of these facts, their actions and above all their public utterances generally fail to reflect such awareness.

In light of these considerations it can be contended that South Africa's external policies vis-a-vis its neighbours and the rest of the world should be based more on the constructive than on the coercive and destructive potential of its economy. Some implications of such policies are outlined below.

IV. REGIONAL COOPERATION AS A CONERSTONE OF EXTERNAL POLICY

South Africa's relations with neighbouring states are mainly determined by four factors: black African attitudes toward the prevailing order in this country, the somewhat ambivalent Western attitudes towards South and southern Africa, the economic climate in Africa and the world at large, and, the critical and overriding factor, of South Africa's perception of its security requirements. Others such as commercial interests, national pride or historical bonds, also play a role but in the present context we need only examine the first four.

South Africa's Perceptions of Security Requirements

The international hostility and ostracism which South Africa has experienced ever since the end of World War II has engendered a state of mind which foreigners like to refer to as the "laager mentality" or even as paranoia. The fairness of this description and the nature of the threats facing South Africa cannot be discussed here. A few observations regarding the security aspect of South African relations with neighbouring states are called for, however.

Spokesmen for the South African government have often expressed the wish for peaceful, normal relations with neighbouring states and for these states to be prosperous and stable. Non-aggression pacts have been offered repeatedly by Prime Minister Botha and his ministers. The fact that no notice of such offers appears to be taken by neighbouring countries, tends to harden public opinion in South Africa. The fundamental cause of tension between South Africa and its neighbours is these states' support for the ANC, Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), SWAPO and other hostile forces. This is seen as a direct threat to the RSA. It should not cause surprise if South Africa, like every other state, feels entitled to safeguard its existence to the best of its ability.

In a recent article Dr. Peter Vale of the South African Institute of International Affairs has suggested that "an energetic debate in policy-making circles" over regional policy is being conducted along "hawk/dove" lines.¹⁹ According to Vale the hawks argue that South Africa's security is best served by keeping neighbouring states weak and cowed, whereas the doves believe that South Africa's interests are best promoted by encouraging stability and economic growth which, in turn, will stimulate foreign investment in the region and "will make other states in the region more economically beholden to South Africa." Whatever the validity of this assessment, the head of the SA Defence Force, General C.L. Viljoen, clearly expressed a realistic viewpoint speaking at Tzaneen in August 1982. He is reported to have said that economic disruption and political instability in neighbouring black states could only be to South Africa's detriment. "Hunger is a great destabilizing factor . . . Unfortunately we cannot survive in isolation . . . We cannot cut ourselves off from the rest of Africa, especially not from southern Africa."²⁰

Whereas South Africa is genuinely concerned over what it perceives as a hostile build-up in neighbouring countries, it is nonetheless accused of destabilizing these countries. In view of the self-destabilizing forces at work in African countries these accusations are widely accepted as plausible in the outside world, as is the concomitant claim that South Africa is posing a threat to world peace. While even well-disposed outsiders are increasingly prepared to lend an ear to these allegations, many South Africans view with equanimity, if not satisfaction, how their country's position vis-a-vis black Africa appears to become increasingly similar to that of Israel vis-a-vis the Arab world. All this tends to heighten tension, and it must not be overlooked that

in a world full of nuclear and other means of destruction, regional conflicts such as this will not necessarily remain localized. Ultimately political accommodation will have to occur.

Considerations such as these obviously weaken the impact of South Africa's argument that it is defending Western interests in Africa and stabilizing the southern part of the continent by providing food, employment, transport and so forth for its neighbours. This consequence may be shrugged off in the belief that "the West" cannot be relied upon anyway. However, while bearing in mind that South Africa is assiduously, and at some expense, wooing opinion leaders, particularly in the business and finance fields, in Western countries, more thought could profitably be given to the image the country wishes to project to the outside world. It would no doubt be in South Africa's interest to project the image of a strong and responsible regional power seeking to be associated with prosperous and well-disposed neighbours on the basis of mutual trust and respect for the other partners' sensitivities. Even if achieved only imperfectly, this image would serve South Africa better than the one its enemies seek to impose on it — that of a reckless, heavy-booted destabilizer of its innocent neighbours. In the final analysis, South Africa's desire to fulfill its security requirements will probably be best served if it can be demonstrated that South Africa's own continued prosperity and stability and that of its neighbouring states are inseparable. As Henry Kissinger has pointed out in Pretoria in September 1982: "The best way to keep Soviet influence out of this region is first to ameliorate and then to eliminate the conditions which facilitate its entry."²¹ Above all this entails improving people's living conditions in the broadest sense.

Black African Attitudes Toward South Africa

There is no need to describe the stream of invective and condemnation which black Africa's leaders and media pour onto South Africa. Apart from genuine feelings of personal offence aroused in black Africa by South Africa's racial policies, the country has served for many years as a foremost factor keeping the Organization of African Unity together. Many other psychological factors also play a role, among them the universal dislike which individuals and nations tend to harbour against those upon whom they are dependent.

Many South Africans cannot comprehend the reasoning applied by certain African leaders who ceaselessly attack South Africa and call for punitive international action to bring the country to its knees, thereby destroying the very economy on which their own countries rely when faced by food shortages or other afflictions. The respect for South Africa's economic and other powers held by these leaders may be so great that sanctions, boycotts and similar actions are not actually expected to succeed. Rather, they trust in the eroding effects of time and population growth inside South Africa to reverse the present power structure.

A few pertinent facts may be noted. Firstly, the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969 which expressly recognized South Africa as "an independent, sovereign State . . . more highly developed and richer than any other nation in Africa"²² is still the basic official document determining African policy toward South Africa. Secondly, symbolism plays a far more important role in African politics than has so far been acknowledged in South African policy toward Africa. Thirdly, it is too often overlooked that being "nice" alone does not earn respect in international politics; in African politics in particular a show of strength seems to impress more than civility.

Western Attitudes Toward South and Southern Africa

South and southern Africa is an area of vital, though not foremost, importance to the leading Western powers, namely, the United States, Britain, France and Germany. Should South Africa begin to play the catalytic role for which it seems destined by its economic size, diversity and dynamism, the aforesaid Western countries would welcome the economic progress and political stability which would result throughout the region. Unfortunately, in the eyes of the Western countries, South Africa's role tends to be negative and an embarrassment, if not a real danger, to their interests. More particularly:

- South Africa's domestic policies are believed to entail an acute threat to peace and stability not only within the country but for the region as a whole and, possibly, even the world at large;
- South Africa's policies are seen as actually promoting Soviet penetration of southern Africa rather than fending it off;
- South Africa is believed to be deliberately destabilizing neighbouring countries; and,
- South Africans are assumed to see their country's importance for the West in an unrealistically favourable light.

Furthermore, the following can also be observed:

- The West is at least as much interested in the rest of Africa — of which South Africa's neighbours are perceived as an integral part — as in South Africa, and does not want to be forced into a position where it has to choose between white and black Africa;
- The West is keenly interested in progress and stability in neighbouring countries as is shown by its support for SADCC;
- The West is at least equally anxious that peace and development should prevail in South Africa and is looking to that country to create the constitutional and socio-economic order most likely to bring this about; and,
- The West is facing mounting problems of its own — the world economic situation, the state of the Western alliance and its relations with the Eastern bloc, the permanent crisis in the Middle East, tensions in the Far East and Latin America, not to mention domestic issues of a social, political, economic and military nature which leaves correspondingly little energy and resources to spare for southern Africa.

Against this background, South Africa could credibly present itself as an invaluable corner post of Western policy in Africa by demonstrating its will and ability to play a responsible and constructive role as the pre-eminent regional power in the sub-continent. Achieving success would require several steps:

- demonstrable meaningful progress towards a domestic order broadly accepted by all population groups;
- convincing evidence that South Africa is doing its best to promote prosperity and stability in neighbouring countries, notably a helpful attitude toward the positive objectives of SADC: and,
- meaningful efforts to achieve a closer rapport with the important Western powers and to convince them that substantial Western participation in South Africa's economy is in their best interests, not merely commercially but because it promotes peaceful structural change in South Africa and thereby strengthens South Africa as a stabilizing element within Africa.

Economic Circumstances

Needless to say, the current world economic recession detrimentally affects all efforts to accelerate developments in southern Africa by diminishing both the demand for the region's outputs and the availability of financial resources from industrial countries. This also holds true for investment funds and technical assistance from South Africa which, in any case, must give priority to the needs of its own less developed population groups and the independent and autonomous national states over other countries within the region.

At the same time the major Western countries have an abiding economic interest in the region which, taken as a whole and for the foreseeable future, offers greater potential as a trading partner and a field of investment than the rest of black Africa with the possible exception of Nigeria. France, for instance, is showing growing interest in its commercial relations with South Africa which, in 1981, surpassed those with the five top francophone African countries.

Elements of a Positive South African Approach

The foregoing review of factors which determine South Africa's relations with neighbouring states has shown that efforts to place these relations on a better footing face a number of obstacles, yet, better relations are favoured by many of the prevailing conditions and interests. This further strengthens the contention that South Africa's external relations should be based on the constructive potential of its economy in the regional context rather than on its coercive and destructive capabilities.

A number of suggestions which result from this position are outlined below in the hope that they will stimulate further thought.

1. Attitudes are of Crucial Importance

— Efforts should be made to convince South African blacks, notably organizations such as the National African Federation Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC), that South Africa seeks mutually beneficial cooperation with neighbouring states rather than domination and sectional interest.²³ Without such support at home, even well-intentioned regional schemes inevitably arouse suspicion abroad (black support by itself naturally will not suffice to allay suspicion).

— High priority should be accorded to symbolic gestures aimed at convincing black leaders at home and abroad of the sincerity of South Africa's desire to promote stability and prosperity in the region. A formal Pretoria Declaration, announced with due ceremony, concerning South Africa's attitudes and goals, both regionally and continentally, would considerably strengthen the hand of black states favouring closer contacts with South Africa.²⁴

— The sometimes tense atmosphere between South Africa and neighbouring states will ease if South Africans avoid patronizing references to the shortcomings and economic dependence on South Africa of these states; they well aware of their own problems.

2. The Role of the Business Community

Through its support of organizations like the Urban Foundation or the South Africa Foundation, the South African business community proves that it takes its social responsibilities seriously. No comparable effort is thus far being made concerning South Africa's relationship with Africa beyond its borders. However, business with its numerous international contacts could unobtrusively help to project an image of South Africa as a helpful and honest partner in development. A great deal is, in fact, being done by business with regard to advice and other areas in neighbouring countries. In view of the public sector's limited manpower resources, business could play a more purposive role in regional issues. As for NAFCOC's extensive contacts with business in neighbouring countries, the Chamber should be actively involved and more note be taken of its pioneering work in promoting intra-regional cooperation.²⁵

3. Cooperation with Western Interests

Western business organizations, banking institutions and bodies such as the World Bank affiliates, the IDA (International Development Association) and the IFC (International Finance Corporation) are well aware that South Africa possesses substantial technical, managerial, financial and other expertise appropriate to African conditions. The extent to which they actually utilize this expertise in African development projects is, however, limited by the political stigma attached to South Africa.

Because of the growing problems of most African states, new opportunities could gradually open up for South Africa if explored with due discretion. The proposed Development Bank for Southern

Africa, the Small Business Development Corporation or other organs of confederal economic cooperation could fulfill useful functions in bringing together South African know-how and Western financial and other resources in joint ventures with neighbouring states. For years South African business interests have been cooperating with European, American and Japanese interests in EDESA, the Corporation for Economic Development for Equatorial and Southern Africa.

4. The Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference

A great deal of scepticism prevails in South Africa vis-a-vis SADCC — sometimes referred to as 'counter-constellation' which unites nine southern and East African countries in an effort to promote their development and lessen their dependence on South Africa. The nine clearly face enormous problems but South Africa stands to gain rather than lose if they succeed in moving toward their goals with respect to development. South Africa should welcome their efforts and, within reasonable bounds, actively support them, because of the following reasons:

- Firstly, it is in South Africa's interest to have prosperous and stable neighbours. There is little scope for trade with impoverished countries but the more a country develops the more it has to exchange.
- Secondly, economic progress will breed technical expertise and administrative sophistication in South Africa's neighbours which will make them more equal and responsible partners in any grouping of states which may emerge.
- Thirdly, the present unequal levels of economic development would pose substantial problems in a closer economic grouping encompassing South Africa and neighbouring states. The prospects for a successful, closer union can improve only to the extent that the less developed countries attain higher levels of production and income.²⁶

5. Practical Cooperation

Due to economic as well as political factors it is unlikely that formal economic integration between South Africa and its neighbours will come about in the near future.²⁷ Experience elsewhere shows that economic development and harmonious inter-state relations can be promoted far more effectively by cooperation in respect of common problems and needs than by attempts to create common markets or other advanced forms of integration. For instance, regional cooperation in southern Africa is feasible and desirable in respect to water and power schemes, river systems, transport, meteorology, control of contagious diseases and animal pests, veterinary services, phyto-sanitary control, standardization of building materials, packaging materials and the like, and specialized training and research. The Anglo American Corporation's Woodlot project in Lesotho is an example of an aid project "using the power thrust that is more readily found in private enterprise than in bureaucratic development offices."²⁸ Mean-

while, it should be noted that the spirit of practical cooperation would not be promoted by using South Africa's food surpluses as a tactical weapon to exert pressure on needy African countries. As in the case of mineral sales to overseas markets, South Africa should be a reliable partner who will not be the first to use trade for short-term political ends.

V. CONCLUSION

The question posed in the title of this paper — "Southern Africa: Conflict or Cooperation?" — cannot be conclusively answered because it indeed remains an open question. In view of the problems outlined, it would be unrealistic to expect that the existing economic and other bonds between South Africa and neighbouring countries can automatically bring about a peaceful and prosperous community of states. It is, however, in South Africa's interest to promote progress and political stability in the southern African region. The potential of the South African economy provides a considerable array of means and opportunities to further these ends in a spirit of good neighbourliness. In view of the major Western nations' strategic and commercial stakes in the region, support from them is likely for such approach.

Needless to say, goodwill and understanding must come from South Africa's neighbours as well. Unless there is a genuine desire for peace and cooperation on all sides, the prevailing conflicts will increasingly suck the region into the maelstrom of superpower conflict.**

Editor's notes

- * Since this paper was submitted to *Conflict Quarterly*, Pretoria has been hit by a car bombing which left several people dead and dozens wounded. The South African government launched a retaliatory air raid on ANC bases.
- ** Extensive comparative statistical data on the countries of southern Africa has been published in the African Institute's periodical, *African Insight*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1983), pp. 52-95.

Footnotes

1. Statement by the South African Prime Minister, the Hon. B.J. Vorster, in the Senate, Cape Town, on 23 October, 1974. *Southern Africa Record*, no. 1 (Johannesburg: The South African Institute of International Affairs), p. 4.
2. A. Raphael, "Africa's food fiasco," *African Business*, no. 27 (November 1980), (London: IC Magazines), p. 12.
3. N. Chandler, "Give us time to pay it back," *The Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 19 September 1982, p. 20.
4. World Bank, *World Development Report 1982* (Washington, D.C.: September 1982), p. 134.
5. Zimbabwe, Republic of, *Prime Minister addresses Justice and Peace Commission*, 6 February 1982 (Policy Statement No. 7), pp. 3, 6.
6. Agence France Presse, telex, 21 September 1982.
7. Report in confidential newsletter, August 1982.

8. D.A. Etheredge, *The Outlook for Africa South of the Equator*, Occasional Paper 3 (Johannesburg: Southern African Forum), p. 20.
9. See *Paratus*, vol. 33, no. 6 (Pretoria: South African Defence Force, June 1982), p. 20.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
12. Data based on various sources, especially *Africa at a Glance*, 1982, as well as other publications of the Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria.
13. H. Stick, "Multipolar view of world economy displaces North-South mode," *Siemens Review*, vol. 49, no. 3 (Munich: Siemens), p. 20.
14. Estimates of remittances are based on the assumption that two-thirds of cash earnings in mining and manufacturing were remitted and one-third of earnings in other sectors. 1981 figures in respect of deferred pay and remittances paid by TEBA, the recruiting arm of the Chamber of Mines, are shown in *Chamber of Mines of South Africa Newsletter* (Johannesburg, March/May 1982), p. vii (Centre section).
15. Figures from *Martin Spring's South African Newsletter* "Electricity-Special Report No. 13," no. 4 (Johannesburg, 1982).
16. *African Economic Digest*, vol. 3, no. 29 (London: MEED, 16 July 1982), p. 28.
17. *Financial Mail* (Johannesburg), 17 September 1982, p. 1399.
18. Examples of this are the marketing of Lesotho's wool and mohair through the respective South African marketing boards, the marketing of Swaziland's tobacco and citrus, and Botswana's oil, seeds and maize.
19. P. Vale, "Hawks, doves and regional strategy," *The Star* (Johannesburg), 3 September 1982, p. 14. See also Beldenhuys, D., "The Destabilization Controversy: An Analysis of a High Risk Foreign Policy Option for South Africa," in *The South African Journal of Political Science*, vol. 9, no. 2, December 1982, Pretoria, pp. 16-31.
20. "Black Africa troubles are concern of SA — Defence Chief," *The Citizen* (Johannesburg), 21 August 1982.
21. See *The Citizen* (Johannesburg), 7 September 1982, p. 15.
22. "The Lusaka Manifesto on Southern Africa," in *Southern Africa Record*, no. 2, p. 6.
23. Mr. Sam Motsuenyane, the President of the National African Federation Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC) has recently commented as follows with regard to the proposed Constellation of Southern African States: "The African response to this White South Africa — initiative has up to now remained quite negative for two important reasons. First, the constellation idea is seen to be aimed to securing 'control rather than cooperation' (Zartman). Secondly, cooperation with South Africa is regarded by Africans as implied acceptance of the much maligned and universally rejected apartheid policy." In *Foreign Powers in Africa*. Presented to the South African Institute of International Affairs Second International Outlook Conference "Foreign Powers and Africa," 6 September 1982 (roneoed), pp. 6/7.
24. G.M.E. Leistner, "South Africa, Africa and the North-South Conflict," *South African Journal of African Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Pretoria: African Institute of South Africa, 1978), pp. 103-106.
25. See: "NAFCOC forwards proposals to P.M.," *African Business* (Johannesburg: National African Federation Chamber of Commerce, February 1980), pp. 19-21; and "Call for NAFCOC to cross the borders," *African Business* (July 1982), pp. 17 and 19.
26. G.M.E. Leistner, "Towards a Regional Development Strategy for Southern Africa," *The South African Journal of Economics*, vol. 49, no. 4 (Johannesburg: The Economic Society of South Africa, 1981), pp. 354-357.
27. G. Maasdorp, "Reassessing economic ties in southern Africa," *Optima*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Johannesburg: The Anglo American Corporation), p. 125.
28. Etheredge, *op. cit.*, p. 13.