

SARDC SPECIAL REPORTS

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PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE REGION: SOUTHERN AFRICA'S DILEMMA

The seminar on "Peace and Security in the Southern African Region", held in Harare in March, had two objectives. The first was to assess, politically and economically, the future relationships between a non-racial democratic South Africa and the southern African region. The second objective was to look at the political and economic prospects for southern Africa in a changing international environment.

The participants at the seminar included the liberation movements, the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), Embassies of the United States, the Russian Federation and India, Christians for Liberation in southern Africa, Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Zimbabwe Ministries of Finance and Industry, and prominent figures like Professor Hasu Patel of the University of Zimbabwe.

This report is a summary of the seminar proceedings; views of participants are not presented verbatim but as a distillation of the main themes of the papers presented and discussions which followed.

The changes in eastern Europe and the end of the cold war have tended to isolate southern Africa and reduce its relevance to the international community. The east bloc has disintegrated and most of the eastern countries are preoccupied with internal political and economic issues. This has also led to the change in these countries' foreign policy towards southern Africa as demonstrated by the 'establishment of trade links between South Africa and eastern European countries'. The decline of Soviet power may not necessarily lead to international peace but could result in more conflicts than now exist.

Peace was categorised in military and non-military terms by Professor Patel. There is need for social peace without strikes and demonstrations, psychological peace with no threats, and economic peace which guarantees mainly food security, employment and housing.

In the political sense the conflicts in southern Africa have been centred on issues concerning white domination and majority liberation. These triggered the destabilization strategy by the Pretoria regime, events in economic and political issues regarding race, religion, class, ethnicity, and the developments in South Africa since February 1990.

By adopting the policy of destabilization the aims of the Pretoria regime were that South Africa wanted to 'smash the stability of the Frontline States and blunt the development of SADCC while simultaneously striking at the ANC and its host nations'. In that situation southern Africa had to react, but how? How much potential had the region for joint military action?

Southern African countries have given moral and diplomatic support neighbours directly affected by South African aggression, Angola and Mozambique. Regional forces were not deployed. The presence of Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) in Mozambique is primarily for transport security.

To further aggravate the establishment of regional security is the military weakness of the Frontline countries. A combination of regional troops is outnumbered by the South African forces alone. In addition, severe economic problems faced by some of the countries such as Zambia and Tanzania limits their participation in regional security issues.

Major positive developments have taken place in southern Africa recently vis-a-vis the independence of Namibia in 1989, the 1991 multi-party elections in Zambia, political reforms in South Africa since February 1990, the ceasefire agreement in Angola and the possibility of another ceasefire agreement in Mozambique in the near future.

Alongside these political changes, the major concern now is the South Africa-versus-Southern Africa situation. Since the unveiling of President F.W. de Klerk's reform programme the country has a role in the region's prosperity in a post-apartheid situation.

Internally, President de Klerk may be pursuing a double agenda as regards to violence and negotiations which have serious repercussions for southern Africa in particular and Africa in general. The rightwing resistance needs more serious attention because of its potential to spill over into the region.

In military terms the South African Defence Force (SADF) is a major threat considering its potential of nuclear power, the large number of its forces which is approximately 636 000, and its heavy armoury.

This aspect is in sharp focus aggravated when it comes to integrating SADF with the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) of the PAC, Umkhonto-we-Sizwe of the ANC and the homelands forces in the course of negotiations, and ultimately the integration of these combined forces into the region. Foreign interests in the region could aggravate the situation.

In a post-apartheid era the labour issue must also be looked into regarding migrant workers. South African nationals will need jobs currently being held by foreigners, especially those from neighbouring countries who then would have to absorb the defunct labour force resulting in social insecurity. There is an obvious potential for social tension if economic redistribution is exercised, and if it is not.

Not only pertaining to the region alone but also to the international community is environmental degradation and the AIDS epidemic, which has serious implications, both economically and politically.

In the economic sphere southern Africa has seen regional efforts in the establishment of institutions like the Preferential Trade Area (PTA), Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and the Frontline States (FLS). Originally these were meant to strengthen regional economic cooperation and to reduce dependence on South Africa, but now the emphasis includes how to cope with the changing political situation.

More than a decade after its formation SADCC is still a "gentlemen's" agreement between member states although a recent proposal calls for it to become a formal organisation by treaty in August 1992. The organisation has concentrated on creating the development infrastructure for closer regional cooperation.

Some sectors for coordination of SADCC projects are weaker than others. For example, Tanzania as a member of the organisation was given responsibility for the industrial sector yet the country itself has little industry in the true sense. Some projects in the region have also been based on bilateral arrangements thus defeating the whole purpose of regional cooperation.

Already at this stage there is the question of recolonisation in the economic sense and the fear of South Africa's regional domination in a post-apartheid environment. South African investment, and an influence on the policies of the countries involved, must be considered.

In general terms southern Africa has a wide range of solutions at its disposal, some of which have already been adopted. Where independence has been achieved reconciliation has proved popular in a post-independence era as evidenced by the Zimbabwe experience. Regional preference for conflict resolution and peace processes demands serious attention as in the case of Angola and Mozambique, also forgetting the fact that the presence of peace may also be unpeaceful for some time to come.

Economically the region would improve through the strengthening of regional institutions like SADCC and coordination of development efforts. (SARDC)

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