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The current and future roles of different military forces in S.A.

South Africa has arrived at a crucial juncture in its history. There is a very real possibility that soon we will be witnessing the establishment of a democracy in our country. To reach this point, we have had to struggle long and hard. The African National Congress is proud that our efforts and sacrifices have at last brought hope of a better future to the vast majority of our people. We are aware of the fact that, even though there is optimism that the negotiation process is gaining momentum, the road ahead is not going to be an easy one. There are many obstacles to be cleared away, and we are fully cognisant of attempts by anti-democratic forces bent on destroying any possibility of the negotiation process succeeding.

If we are to ensure that the advances we have made are not reversed, it is imperative that we identify the potential threats to this process. This is a responsibility facing all South Africans, not just the ANC.

Historically, one of the greatest threats to democracy has been the armed forces. In South Africa, this threat has never been more significant than it is presently. This is precisely why we need to be clear and firm on our position regarding the current and future role of the military.

The history of this country has always been characterised by conflict. This conflict has itself been, for the most part, characterised by violence. The culture of violence that is so rife in our country has to be the responsibility of the apartheid state. It is also an indisputable fact that the brunt of this violence has been borne by the black masses of our country. The apartheid regime, in order to defend the ideology of racism and more particularly the material gain accrued by means of this ideology, has over the years built up a formidable military force, the South African Defence Force. The SADF has come to represent one of the worst features of apartheid South Africa. For the masses of this country, the SADF is synonymous with their brutalisation and oppression. The SADF enjoys no moral and political legitimacy in the eyes of the oppressed.

The SADF has evolved into an extension of the Nationalist Party. Far from being an impartial state apparatus that is accountable to parliament, the SADF has engaged in activities designed to bolster apartheid and destroy any threat to its continued existence. Within the SADF are some of the most reactionary right-wing elements, the very same individuals who operate the hit squads, who killed innocent civilians in the Frontline states under the pretext of looking for terrorists, who massacred our people in the townships and who continue to engage in attempts to destabilise the peace process.

If the SADF is not brought under the control of a legitimate civilian

authority soon, there is a strong possibility that it could play a major role in disrupting the negotiation process.

History has taught us that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Thus the apartheid legacy has also had the effect of generating armed opposition to it. Historically, the most effective and consistent armed opposition to apartheid has been Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK).

MK has always had and continues to enjoy the moral and political legitimacy that is absent in the SADF and Bantustan armies. For the oppressed and exploited masses of this country, MK has and continues to represent the noblest aspirations of our struggle to eliminate racism and economic deprivation.

MK has contributed significantly towards forcing the regime to the negotiating table. It has also contributed immensely in strengthening the ANC and defending the organisation when it was under political and military attack from the regime. The state has failed miserably in its attempts to destroy MK. MK is a reality, and that reality will never be wished away by those who want to monopolise a future defence force.

It is inconceivable that MK will not play a significant role now and in the future. It is also inevitable that there are other armed forces which have claimed a place in the political arena. Historically these forces have been insignificant; suffice to say that they do exist and that those who are genuinely interested in the liberation of this country will have a role to play. Thus, historically there have only been two major players in the military field: MK and SADF. It is these two armed forces which will play a decisive role in the formation of a new defence force.

Politics within this country has undergone a significant change over the past two years. There has been a significant revival of the extreme right. The upsurge of right-wing politics within certain quarters of the white community has also given rise to numerous reactionary armed groups. These elements have clearly exposed themselves as glorified right-wing terrorists who have to be curtailed before they inflict more indiscriminate violence upon our communities. They will have no role to play during a transitional period or in the future.

The position of the ANC regarding MK is clear, MK will not be immobilised, neither will we allow a situation to develop whereby our forces are dispersed. In terms of our political perspective, we have identified negotiations as the dominant form of struggle.

We have never detracted from our position that we will not abandon other forms of struggle, rather we will create a situation whereby we will strengthen the negotiation process through the employment of different forms of struggle. We would be politically irresponsible if we abandoned the elements of struggle

which would ensure that our negotiation position succeeds.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, we are fully committed to the agreements reached with the regime as regards the suspension of armed action.

Given the unacceptable levels of violence directed against our communities, which is also directed at destroying our organisation, we will commit MK to assisting our people to assert their right to self-protection.

Simultaneously, we are fully aware that MK will of necessity have to play a significant role in any future defence force.

Traditionally, MK by its very nature, has trained as a guerilla army. This was logical and necessary if we were to significantly engage the enemy in combat. The political situation has changed significantly. The balance of power has changed radically. MK has to be creative and adapt accordingly. We have embarked on a programme of converting our army into a professional regular force. We are ready to be part of a defence force which will reflect the new, democratic, non-racist and non-sexist South Africa.

It is clear that any future defence force will have to be negotiated and ultimately be established by a democratically elected parliament. We will also insist that, during this transistional phase, all security forces come under the control of an interim authority. The SADF will not be allowed to remain outside this process.

Given that the SADF has played and continue to play a negative role in creating a climate conducive to negotiations, we have to insist on certain minimum standards of conduct. We are calling upon the SADF to accept a code of conduct which will allow it to play a more positive and constructive role. There is ample evidence of the clandestine activities of elements within the SADF who have and continue to play a pivotal role in instigating political violence. These elements have to be exposed and disbanded.

It is common knowledge that the SADF employs foreign mercenaries in its ranks - for instance, 32 Battalion, 31 Battalion and elements of Renamo. These forces have to be disbanded and personnel repatriated to their countries of origin. In addition, the use of Askaris, front companies, religious and educational institutions to further the aims of the SADF and the regime must stop immediately. Finally, the SADF has to engage in a process of confidence building in its relations with the black community. If this is not done, it will make it more difficult for the SADF to play a meaningful role in the negotiations for a future defence force.

The great historical lie of so-called self-determination for certain sections

of the black community has been exposed forever. We are pleased that some of the Bantustans have recently assumed a progressive character. We will engage these progressive elements and continue to assist and encourage positive developments in these regions.

There are still many pockets of reaction which do not see the wood for the trees and continue to live under the false impression that they can maintain their privileged position indefinitely. If they were astute, they would recognise that ultimately their interests would best be served by recognising the necessity of a democratic future.

With regard to the armed forces in these regions, there can be only one position - all those forces which are serious about constructively participating in the formation of a new defence force must be drawn into that process.

It is an absolute necessity to discuss a future defence force. Our starting point has to be that it must reflect the reality of the new South Africa we are all striving for.

We have to define the nature of a new defence force. This process will look at the following points:

- * The need to define the objectives of a new defence force. This will involve an assessment of the changed balance of forces regionally and internally, and requires a rational approach to a revised threat analysis.
- * The threat analysis will then define the necessary force levels of a new defence force. We can expect a radical cut in the force level primarily due to the fact that the traditional threat analysis as perceived by the present South African government was based on false ideological motives.
- * The relationship between the military and civilian authority. Any future military force will have to subject itself to the rule of law and the authority of parliament.
- * There will be no compulsory military conscription. A new defence force will be a professional volunteer force.
- * A policy of affirmative action is necessary. Historically, black soldiers have been disadvantaged in relation to issues such as promotion, etc. The new force will have to reflect the composition of a new society.
- * There will have to be a substantial reduction of military bureaucracies. There will have to be rationalisation of defence expenditure and expensive, unnecessary military programmes.

There have been various debates as to how to proceed with the creation of a new defence force. This debate is tainted according to which political position one holds. Partisanship will inevitably surface during any discussion related to a new military establishment.

We would be naive to ignore the experience of other countries that have had to

establish a new force from previously antagonistic military groupings. We will draw upon those experiences but at the end of the day we will have to rely on our own experiences and reality.

There are basically three possible scenarios which can emerge in relation to the creation of a future defence force:

- * Total demobilisation of armed forces and their fresh recruitment into the new force.
- * A negotiated intergration of all armed forces in order to ensure that the transformation does create a new force representative of a democratic society.
- * The absorbtion of all armed forces including MK into the SADF.

Support for any one option depends entirely on where each group positions itself on the political spectrum. For our part, we are presently inclined towards the second option.

Having stated that, it must be clear that there are numerous technical considerations which need to be thrashed out through constructive negotiation between the major players.

These considerations revolve mainly around the following issues: differences in military cultures; ideological and political differences between the various forces; the nature and levels of training; the level of and access to education of members of the forces involved, and differences in technical and logistical fields.

The extent to which the creation of a new force is successful will depend on the seriousness and good intentions of the various opposing forces.

For our part we are ready, but we will not accept any agreement which falls short of establishing a truly representative and constitutionally bound future defence force.



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The positive push of a troubled economy

If South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha is to be believed the reason for the Angola/Namibia peace accord is to be found in a newly discovered African brotherhood by Pretoria.

But to follow Botha is to be misled: the reasons are much more complex.

This EDICESA document outlines the state of the South African economy, arguing that its difficulties are key to understanding Pretoria's acceptance of Namibian independence and other regional political shifts.

No less important has been the meeting of minds between the US and USSR in so far as finding political solutions to local conflicts. The arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Kremlin has made this possible.

And the effective defeat of South Africa's troops at the Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale also forced a rethink in Pretoria.

But without the background of a problematic South African economy, Cuito Cuanavale and this new style of international diplomacy are unlikely to have pushed Pretoria to where it is now: withdrawing from Namibia.

SOUTH Africa's internal political landscape altered very little in 1988: African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela remained imprisoned, albeit more comfortably, and the fundamental impasse between the white-run state and the black majority persisted.

Internationally, though, the year saw the geopolitics of the southern African sub-continent undergoing more substantial shifts than at any other time during this decade.

As the year ended, it afforded a vista of a period in which regional military conflicts decline dramatically, and trade among the erstwhile antagonists takes a quantum leap. It promised independence for Namibia after more than a century of colonial or quasi-colonial rule, and offered respite to war-torn Angola.

Although the demise of apartheid is nowhere in sight - and this fact will continue to poison the sub-continent - it seems clear that the ground rules have changed.

Why should this shift have happened in 1988, when it has been unthinkable for so long?

If the bout of "African brotherhood" displayed by South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha in Brazzaville, capital of Congo, in December is to be taken seriously, the explanation would be somewhat folksy: it was the year in which Pretoria's Department of Foreign Affairs took up where the Voortrekkers of the last century left off. White South Africans forded the Limpopo River, and made an exploratory foray into black Africa.

But, of course, the reasons for the South African diplomatic outreach which took in Mozambique, Malawi, Egypt, the Congo and Zaire are much more deep-seated, and complex.

Diverse, but overlapping factors influenced the apparent breakthrough. One crucial phenomenon was a meeting of minds between the superpowers with regard to local conflicts. Cold War point scoring has given way to co-operative damage limitation.

The arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Kremlin has made this possible. And his man on the ground - Soviet Foreign Vice-Minister Anatoly Adamishin - has done little to conceal his role in getting the negotiating parties to put final pen to paper. No less central a figure in the Angola/Namibia negotiations than US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker confirmed the Soviet role in a recent inter-

view. As far as Pretoria is concerned, the international factor has been most influential. But, it might not have been so had South Africa not suffered such an obvious military embarrassment at the Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale. The effective defeat of its troops by Angolan and Cuban forces around Cuito toned down Pretoria's usual belligerence, thus creating a better climate for international intervention.

South Africa's new-style policy has also been strongly influenced by economic dynamics.

It has been acknowledged by Pretoria's bankers that the country is entering a period of intense fiscal pressure, caused by the maturation of foreign loans.

Still on the economic front, there are direct benefits flowing from the relinquishing of Namibia - in high territory Pretoria is said to have spent US\$5-billion - and the downgrading of increasingly expensive regional wars. The South African government urgently needs funds for its reformist "upgrading" initiatives in the townships back home - thus the time was ripe for swapping the mask of bellicosity for benevolence.

Some analysts argue that South Africa is facing a foreign debt crisis of mammoth proportions and that it is this that has been the key factor in concentrating the minds of its policy planners.

In an article headlined "Boers besieged", The Economist in November last year argued that last year and this year the country would have to repay its foreign debtors between US\$3-billion and US\$3,5-billion. In 1990-1991, Pretoria, it said, was due to repay almost US\$12-billion and that the total foreign debt was US\$30-billion.

The Economist cited Finance Department Director-general Chris Stals as saying such payments could simply not be done. Other commentators have used this prognosis to argue that internal reform, rumours about the release of Nelson Mandela, and the foreign policy initiatives were all prompted by the need to negotiate an extension to the loan repayment deadlines.

Said David Niddie in the latest edition of Work In Progress: "In search of relief, (President) P W Botha used the opportunity of the October funeral of long-time friend and Pretoria backer, Bavarian premier Franz Joseph Strauss, to undertake a financial fishing trip among the gnomes of Switzerland... The state president acknowledged afterwards that

Botha on a financial fishing trip among Swiss gnomes

the Swiss were not that eager to offer loans. 'I would not say we came to a definite agreement. What we did was to inform them of the latest situation in Southern Africa and I think they were very much interested'."

Local analysts have argued that The Economist greatly exaggerated the extent of South Africa's debt crisis. The local magazine Finance Week pointed out that South Africa's total foreign debt was US\$22,6-billion and not the US\$30-billion claimed by the British journal. Finance Week argued that South Africa had a current account surplus large enough to repay the loans that are due by the end of this year.

But the magazine acknowledged that Pretoria did have potential problems in meeting its commitments in the 1990-91 period. "To get through without further default South Africa will need among other things, strict monetary and fiscal policies. These may well be beneficial to economic growth in the medium to long-term but in the next two or three years they make an average growth rate of 2,5 percent a year difficult to achieve. There will also have to be some more reformist political moves - a Namibia settlement would be an immense help."

The article, written before the Brazzaville agreement, turned out to be uncannily prophetic. But there were other economic factors at play that help explain the vast breadth of South Africa's diplomatic trek into Africa and the specific nature of the agreement reached with neighbours to the north and east of its borders.

Niddrie noted that a mini-boom early last year sucked in large amounts of imports, shifting the balance of payments into deficit for the first time in four years. This forced Finance Minister Barend du Plessis to enforce a cutback on imports by limiting available credit.

Despite the curbs, Pretoria was forced to draw on its foreign and gold reserves to cover the outflow of money. Niddrie noted that these fell 23 percent between December 1987 - when they were already "critically low" - and July last year. In September, Du Plessis introduced a 60 percent surcharge on imported goods as part of programme to slash imports by R1,5-billion.

Soon after Botha returned from his European travels in October, the US General Accounting Office issued a report indicating US sanctions had lost

South Africa R850-million in exports to that country. There was also a sale by US companies of R50-million in local stock and a drastic drop in exports to European trading partners. The value of trade to West Germany alone dropped by a remarkable R146-million.

These economic woes explain the specific nature of South Africa's recent accords with Mozambique and are part of the reason for safaris in Zaire and Malawi.

At a press conference after his Switzerland venture, P W Botha said he had told the bankers of the strong role that South Africa could play in developing the economies of its neighbours. They "cannot develop, cannot grow without support", he said.

After a meeting with the International Monetary Fund at the same time, at which South Africa applied for a change in status from donor nation to recipient, Du Plessis said he had noticed amongst international financiers "a softening of attitude for the development role South Africa is playing and could play in Southern Africa".

At a recent conference in Johannesburg hosted by the Institute of the Development of Alternatives for South Africa (IDASA), the director of Zimbabwe's Beira Corridor Group, Eddie Cross, noted that by the end of last year South Africa's trade with its northern neighbours would have increased by US\$300-million.

Very useful contacts were made during the Geneva/New York/Cairo/Brazzaville talks, and if Pretoria holds on to its new level of relative acceptability, the continental market could open right up. The Ivory Coast will no longer be an exception in trafficking with the money men of the southern tip.

At least some of South Africa's white decision-makers appear to be in favour of shifting South Africa's "intervention" in Africa from a military to an economic form.

Eddie Cross said they knew they could achieve "regional (economic) hegemony, and that this, while far from an ideal prospect for its neighbours, will at least allow them some form of economic life".

Trade with Africa is capable of offsetting more than twice the volume of exports lost through sanctions to West Germany and P W Botha's trips to

Malawi and Zaire were obviously designed to consolidate and expand on these outlets.

The same principle applies to the sanctions drive, set to gear up again this year. If South Africa is being seen to behave commendably in its backyard, the edge will be taken off the United States' Delums Bill, among others.

The agreements with Mozambique, on the other hand, reflect South Africa's desire to portray itself as a developing agent in the sub-continent. In September, P W Botha and Mozambique's President Joaquim Chissano signed the Songo agreement which allowed for the giant Cahora Bassa hydroelectric scheme to resume pumping electricity into South Africa. This was followed by agreements to upgrade Maputo harbour, to help build a transport road along a section of the railway line between Komatipoort and Maputo, and the opening of a new South African trade office in Maputo.

"Songo summit a stab in the back of MNR"

More crucial for the Mozambican economy was the decision in November to suspend the repatriation of Mozambican miner's from its gold mines.

The number of migrants in South Africa has dwindled from 150 000 in 1986 to around 60 000 last year. Mozambique's Minister of Labour told the Chamber of Mines during a meeting in South Africa that the repatriations had a devastating effect on the social life of Mozambicans.

This was confirmed by the Mozambican news agency, AIM, which reported that the country could lose some US\$50-million in foreign currency each year if all Mozambican miners were repatriated. That amount had been more than a third of the country's foreign exchange earnings.

These agreements had very little direct economic benefit to South Africa. The Songo agreement came soon after the state electricity company, Eskom, announced it was mothballing a number of power stations in the Eastern Transvaal because of a glut in power supplies.

Exporters do not see Maputo harbour as a major outlet nor the Mozambican market as being in any state to absorb consumer goods from South African industry.

The migrant labour agreement was welcomed by the Chamber of Mines because a number of their mines rely heavily on skilled workers from Mozambique. But the effect of the repatriations on these mines had already been offset by large scale exemptions to those mines with more than 20 percent of Mozambicans in their workforce. Miners with more than seven years experience had also been exempted from being sent home.

On the face of it, these agreements appear to be of greater benefit to South Africa's neighbours rather than to itself.

However, Hilary Joffe, finance editor of the Johannesburg-based Weekly Mail, pointed out that all of these projects in fact encourage a large degree of economic reliance on South Africa and could also be part of a wider strategy of Pretoria to undermine the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference (SADCC). Pretoria's sincerity in carrying out its commitments was thrown into doubt just one day after a ship from South Africa landed in the port of Beira in late November with a load of non-lethal military equipment for Mozambican forces guarding the powerlines out of Cahora Bassa.

Defectors from the rebel grouping, the Mozambique National Resistance movement (MNR) said in a television interview in Maputo that elements of the South African military were still covertly supporting the MNR in a bid to sabotage the rapprochement between the two countries.

Chanjunja Joao, a senior MNR officer who defected in November last year, said the rebels regarded the Songo summit as a "stab in the back" and had decided to "work to increase links with the South African military services and to condemn the attitude taken by the South African government".

Another defector, 19-year-old Isable Jorge, said that up to late November there were at least 17 "South African Boers" training rebel soldiers at a camp in the province of Manica.

The Mozambican news agency AIM argued that the obvious SA military distaste for accords explained why the MNR staged a dramatic increase in attacks on the Komatipoort-Maputo railway line and on power lines between South Africa and the capital city in October and November.

"The Mozambican analysis is that there are deep splits inside the South African establishment over Mozambique policy, with the Department of

Foreign Affairs and pragmatic business interests, on the one hand, and hardline military ideologies on the other," said AIM.

The South African Defence Force (SADF) denied the allegations, saying: "These claims are no more than a transparent attempt by elements in Mozambique to discredit both the Defence Force and South Africa, especially since no official complaint has been brought to the attention of the Defence Force though the Joint Security Commission which both

parties agreed was the correct channel to raise issues."

Similar denials have followed overwhelming evidence of continued backing of MNR by South Africa in the past and AIM's fear may be well-founded. But there is solace for the war-wracked country in the overwhelming evidence that South Africa's Foreign Ministry, backed by the Department of Finance, have been gaining the upperhand over the military hawks in the cabinet.

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