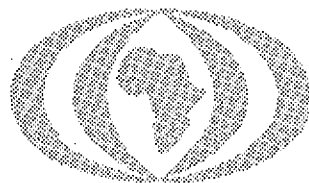


**THE NEUTRAL OPTION
AND SUB-CONTINENTAL SOLIDARITY
A Consideration of Foreign Minister Pik Botha's
Zürich Statement of 7 March 1979**

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Contents

Introduction	page 1
South Africa and the West :	
The Love-Hate Dualism	1
The Neutral Option in South African Foreign Policy	6
Southern Africa Rediscovered	9
Conclusion	10
Notes	11

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INTRODUCTION

Mr Pik Botha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 7 March 1979, told the Swiss-South African Association in Zurich that the Republic "will have to give serious consideration to the desirability of adopting a neutral position in the struggle between East and West." South Africa's "sole commitment", he suggested, "ought to be towards security and advancement of our own Southern African region." This included the achievement of stability, the strengthening of mutual trust among leaders and nations of the region, and "the establishment of a sub-continental solidarity which could form the basis for cooperation in important spheres of life." ¹

The Foreign Minister's statement was made at a time when South Africa's relations with the West had reached a new low point, as the Namibian peace initiative appeared deadlocked. The next day the Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, accused the five Western powers of bad faith by allegedly breaking their agreements with South Africa on the Namibian peace plan. ² When Sir David Scott, the British ambassador to South Africa, subsequently denied the Prime Minister's charge of Western bad faith, Mr Pik Botha weighed in with the assertion that the British representative had apparently forgotten that South Africa was no longer a British colony.

The advocacy of a neutral position in South Africa's foreign relations is not new. It represents one of several typical South African responses in its complex and often confusing love-hate relationship with the West. ³ It also underlines the reactive, *ad hoc* nature of South African foreign policy. In the past, the propagation of a neutral position seemed more of an impulsive reaction to Western pressure than a considered response.

Mr Pik Botha's emphasis on South Africa's role as an African power is nothing new either. This has been a recurring theme ever since one of his predecessors, Mr Eric Louw ⁴, in the 1950's began accepting, albeit grudgingly, the inevitable demise of the colonial order in Africa.

The reminder to Britain that South Africa is a sovereign state, is a mere restatement of an assertion commonly used by the Malan government when responding to British criticism of its domestic policies. While this kind of statement might well have served some purpose in the early post-Smuts days, it seems hardly relevant after 30 years of National Party rule.

SOUTH AFRICA AND THE WEST : THE LOVE-HATE DUALISM

The fluctuating fortunes of South Africa's post-war relationship with the West makes for an intriguing study. General Smuts' commitment to the West, and the Commonwealth in particular, was never in any doubt. Even Dr Malan's National Party government, despite its advocacy of neutrality in World War II, quickly declared its commitment to the West in the event of an East-West war. The Nationalist government sought to give tangible proof of its professed allegiance to the West by *inter alia* showing an eagerness to join NATO, participating in the Berlin airlift and Korean war, endeavouring to involve Western powers in an African defence alliance,

concluding the Simonstown Agreement, and introducing drastic domestic measures against "communist subversion". (Admittedly, considerations other than allegiance to the West influenced these decisions.) In fact, the principal feature of Nationalist foreign policy ever since 1948 has been its strong pro-western and anti-communist orientation. Within the wider western community, the Commonwealth (specifically the old, white former dominions) constituted an inner circle with which South Africa had particularly close links.

Ideally, South Africa viewed its ties with the West as a kind of "family association". White South Africans descended from Western Europe and shared western values. White South Africa represented an outpost of what was popularly described as "Western European Christian civilization". As such the country was seen entitled to western support and encouragement in fulfilling its role (or calling) in the world.

The West failed to reciprocate and in effect tried to push South Africa to arm's length since the early 1950's. There were essentially two alienating factors: *first*, South Africa's domestic policy of apartheid, and *second*, the liquidation of Western colonialism in Africa. Dr Malan made no secret of the disdain with which he viewed the course of events: "One finds in the world today, and especially in England, that there is a sickly sentimentality in regard to the black man." ⁵

Mr Eric Louw, by contrast, came to accept the inevitability of decolonisation and stated in March 1957 that South Africa must "accept its future role in Africa as a vocation and must in all respects play its full part as an African power". At the same time, however, South Africa could become a "permanent link between the Western nations on the one hand and the population of Africa south of the Sahara on the other." ⁶

South Africa's attempt to bridge the gap between the declining and ascending orders in Africa by keeping one foot in each, patently failed. Independent Africa would have no truck with white-ruled South Africa, while the West saw South Africa not as a link with Africa but an obstacle. The painful realisation of the West's dissociative attitude was well captured in Dr Verwoerd's lament (with a familiar ring) in March 1960 that the world was afflicted by a "psychosis" which emphasised only blacks' rights and freedoms. There was "an abdication of the white guardian nations, and an abandonment of the white people in Africa"; the Western powers were evidently prepared to forsake the whites to "appease" the so-called uncommitted states. ⁷

Western reaction to Sharpeville and the Security Council's resolutions calling for arms embargoes against South Africa in 1963 and 1964 - implemented by, among others, the United States and Britain - further underlined South Africa's growing alienation from the West. Dr Verwoerd acknowledged that there was no chance of the West admitting South Africa to any alliance. He would in any case not be prepared to pay the price of admission which, he said, amounted to abandoning white supremacy. Rather than submit to the demands of other nations in respect to its racial

policy, South Africa would resort to isolation: "In isolation in the sphere of our colour policy lies our strength," he confidently asserted. 8

Towards the latter half of the 1960's, with South Africa's domestic base secured and white confidence restored after the unsettled early 1960's, the government embarked on its outward policy - the very antithesis of isolation. This was not simply an African policy but a "broad-based attempt by the South African government to improve its international status and position." 9 The major thrust was, however, directed at Africa.

South Africa's hopes of improving its relations with the West through the outward policy, fitted in with the Republic's stated commitment to the West. This found expression in, for example, defining South Africa's military efforts in terms of a wider Western interest; stressing its strategic importance and reliability as an ally to the West, and offering its military facilities to them. 10 On the other hand - and here the dualism emerges clearly - there were open doubts about the West. Thus, by the late 1960's it was openly and officially being questioned whether South Africa should maintain its traditional alignment with the West. South Africa began to focus increasingly on powers in the southern hemisphere, leading to the idea of a South Atlantic Treaty Organisation. South Africa accordingly began strengthening its diplomatic and military ties with Latin America. In addition, relations with Israel were being extended. 11 This shift in South African foreign policy was not simply designed to impress the West; it was also "a form of reinsurance" should the West continue to shun the Republic. 12

The initial successes of South Africa's overtures to Africa probably contributed to a notable improvement in South Africa's relations with the West, particularly the United States. This, in turn, encouraged South Africa to rely on Western, again specifically American, support in its invasion of Angola in 1975/76. Here South Africa miscalculated badly and in the end had no option but to withdraw its forces from Angola. America's failure to support South Africa in Angola caused bitter resentment and the Republic's trust in the West reached an all-time low. Mr Vorster (in January 1976) observed that Angola had confirmed a lesson previously learnt, viz. that when it came to the worst, South Africa stood alone. 13 (If the government had long been aware of the West's unreliability, should it then not have been more careful in relying on the West in Angola?) Since South Africa believed the West had shirked its duty in Angola, 14 Mr Vorster not unexpectedly suggested that the Republic should, in effect, involve itself with the "Fifth World", i.e. other "pariah" states. 15 A new South African theme which emerged in the wake of Angola, was a pronounced opposition to great power intervention in Southern Africa. 16

When the Ford Administration began involving itself actively in the search for peace in Southern Africa in mid-1976, South Africa seemingly abandoned its opposition to great power intervention and took the American moves as a sign that the West "had at last woken up". 17 South Africa then in fact called for Western action to counteract communism in Southern Africa and to make a positive contribution towards resolving the problems

of Rhodesia and Namibia.¹⁸ Dr Hilgard Muller, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, called for a massive peace offensive in Southern Africa, involving South Africa, Rhodesia, neighbouring black states, as well as the United States and other Western powers.¹⁹

On the other hand, Mr P.W. Botha, the Minister of Defence, seemed sceptical of any rapprochement between South Africa and the West, and in October 1976 he raised the question of whether South Africa should not take a more neutral stand in the struggle between the major powers.²⁰ He professed very little faith in the "timorous Western world which is so captivated by the soft music of détente from Moscow." For him, there could be no question of submitting to the demands of a weak and divided West.²¹ Mr Vorster had, shortly thereafter, come to much the same conclusion and, in his extremely gloomy 1977 New Year message, stated that South Africa would have to stand alone in the event of a communist onslaught. The West, he believed, had concluded that the Third World could only be weaned from the Marxists by acceding to all their wishes.²²

The ascendancy of the Carter Administration in no small way encouraged South Africa's dissociative moves from the West. Mr P.W. Botha in January 1977 expanded on his suggestion that South Africa should adopt a more neutral position. Because of the way the West had behaved towards the Republic, they could no longer take South African support for granted in the event of an East-West conflict.²³ South Africa should in fact "choose to live dangerously", he proposed.²⁴ Dr C.P. Mulder, the Minister of Information, added that South Africa could decide to "sail under a different flag" because of negative Western attitudes.²⁵ His allusion to the Chinese proverb "my enemy's enemy is my friend",²⁶ was taken as a clear reference to China. The thoughts of Dr. Mulder were, not unexpectedly, vehemently slapped down by China,²⁷ but this did not prevent others from expounding the same theme. Mr Vorster's encounter with Vice-president Walter Mondale in Vienna in May 1977 appeared to underscore the need for alternative allies.

Despite this new "adventurism" in South Africa's foreign policy thinking, the government was careful not to burn the bridges to the West. South Africa's role as a reliable Western ally was again stressed: the West was reminded of South Africa's support in two world wars, Berlin and Korea,²⁸ while government spokesmen also tried hard to convince the West of the Republic's importance in the struggle against Marxism.²⁹ Such statements were interspersed with hopeful assertions that the West was beginning to recognise South Africa's strategic importance. In addition, the West's role in finding peaceful settlements in Rhodesia and Namibia was acknowledged.³⁰

A positive Western response to these overtures was unlikely; for one thing, appeals to Western sentiment based on services rendered over three decades ago, seemed in vain in a world bearing little resemblance to those times. The Biko incident and the October 1977 bannings effectively ruled out any conciliatory Western reaction. The West gave South African hopes of a rapprochement a further jolt by supporting the Security Council's mandatory arms embargo in November 1977. Coming as it did during the 1977 general election campaign, the harder Western line against South Africa gave a new edge to anti-Western sentiments. Mr Vorster probably made the ultimate assertion with his conclusion that the end result of United States pressure on South Africa "would be exactly the same as if it were subverted by the Marxists. In the one case, it will come about as the result of brute force. In the other case, it will be strangulation with finesse."³¹ The very old notion of the world demanding that South Africa commits "national suicide"³² gained new currency. What was seen at stake was white South Africa's very survival -- something which was

simply not negotiable.³³ Government ministers also revived the idea that South Africa should side with the Fifth World, in opposing communism and super-power domination.³⁴ The notion of resisting great power overlordship of course fitted in well with non-aligned vocabulary.

It was not merely the election atmosphere which sharpened the tone of South African pronouncements on relations with the West. Ever since Mr Pik Botha became Minister of Foreign Affairs in April 1977, South African diplomacy had assumed a combative new style. No doubt well suited to his domestic audience, Mr Botha's style is unfortunately strongly reminiscent of Mr Eric Louw's, of which the diplomatic results were, at best, very dubious.³⁵

The point to which South Africa's relations with the West had sunk by the end of 1977, was well illustrated in Mr Pik Botha's words to Newsweek in December: "I wish the United States would stay completely out of this area. I think we would have been nearer a solution to our problems by now if they had not entered this arena at all."³⁶

South African pronouncements on relations with the West in the first half of 1978 were cast in much the same mould. The West was, among other things, charged with seeking South Africa's destruction,³⁷ posing a danger to any moderate African leader,³⁸ facilitating Soviet penetration of Africa³⁹ and undermining South Africa's *détente* efforts with black Africa.⁴⁰ The West's motives were highly suspect; their policy towards South Africa was not based on morality, but "their consciences are soaked in the oil barrels of Nigeria", Mr P.W. Botha suggested.⁴¹ The advocacy of a neutral position⁴² and an association with the Fifth World⁴³ inevitably re-emerged. In addition, there were defiant statements that South Africa would "go it alone" against a "deadly Marxist challenge to the whole of Southern Africa."⁴⁴ The West was portrayed as weak-kneed and incapable of standing up to Marxist expansionism in Africa.⁴⁵ In what appears a rather paradoxical statement, Mr Vorster in June 1978 told the West: "This is a country that asks nothing from you except that you leave it alone."⁴⁶

This, however, is only the one side of the picture, viz. the "hate" or dissociative element in the dualism. The "love" or associative stance was typically expressed through statements reminding the West of South Africa's past sacrifices and present importance and reliability in the cause of the "free world".⁴⁷ Mr Vorster even appealed to the West to "make sure that South Africa does not fall prey to the Marxist onslaught", in the West's own interests.⁴⁸ America and Britain were thus urged to co-operate with those leaders who sought peace in Southern Africa.⁴⁹ Such pronouncements make Mr Vorster's June 1978 statement all the more paradoxical.

When the prospects for co-operation with the West improved towards the end of 1978, South African pronouncements had a more conciliatory tone. While on the one hand questioning the sincerity of the West's commitment to world peace, Mr P.W. Botha could, on the other, tell South Africans that "we must rely on the West and the free world, in whose defence we stand, to grant us our rightful place in the galaxy of nations."⁵⁰ The visit of the five Western foreign ministers in October and the subsequent Namibia accord inspired a new South African confidence in them.⁵¹

Like so often in the past, the new-found faith in the West was short-lived, thus falling into the cyclical pattern of high and low points in South Africa's tangled relationship with the West. The latest low point was prompted by what South Africa considered the West's breach of faith over Namibia, leading to the recent verbal exchanges.

THE NEUTRAL OPTION IN SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY

In view of the definite correlation, over a number of years, between suggestions of a neutral stance and the state of South Africa's relations with the West, there is an obvious temptation to see Mr Pik Botha's latest reference to this possibility as simply the product of yet another bad phase in the relationship. On the other hand, Mr Botha said the Prime Minister had approved of his "new" line. In addition, there was press speculation that South Africa had formulated a blueprint for a new policy in Southern Africa.⁵² (Emphasis on links with Africa was of course the other main ingredient of the Foreign Minister's statement.)

Assuming then that Mr Pik Botha's statement is more than an expression of annoyance or an implied threat to the West to reconsider its stance *vis à vis* South Africa, the possibilities and implications of a neutral position can next be considered.

One interpretation of a neutral position is a status, recognised in international law, in terms of which a state does not participate in a war and accepts certain rights and obligations *vis à vis* the belligerents.⁵³ This may well be an element of the government's latest thinking, viz. that South Africa would, in the event of a war between East and West, not participate on either side and formally declare itself neutral.

Probably the more relevant interpretation of Mr Pik Botha's statement is that South Africa should become a non-aligned state in the great power rivalry. This position, also called neutrality, means that the state refuses to commit itself to an alliance with either power bloc. A non-aligned state would then, theoretically, enjoy greater freedom of action in pursuing its national interests. It can manoeuvre between the two opposing poles and in a sense play them off against each other since both would presumably seek its favour.⁵⁴

Whereas most so-called non-aligned states today enjoy some measure of acceptance from East and West and, of course, from within the non-aligned group, and are in a position to be "courted" by East and West, South Africa is faced with hostility from both opposing poles as well as from the non-aligned group. If South Africa were therefore to become a "non-aligned" state, it would not be one in the traditional sense of the word: its "non-alignment" would not be based on its acceptability to the two opposing power blocs and the non-aligned nations, but instead on its unacceptability.

The non-aligned states have aligned themselves in an association or movement which, through its regular conferences, attempts to formulate common political strategies. The chances of South Africa's admission are effectively nil, since a basic tenet of non-alignment has always been the eradication of racialism and colonialism. Paradoxically, therefore, the non-aligned states seek to remove the very cause of South Africa's contemplated neutralism. South Africa would undoubtedly find a rapprochement with the non-aligned group incomparably more difficult than with the West.

South Africa is not the only state which, on the one hand, wishes to identify with the West but is being kept at arm's length, while on the other hand remains unacceptable to the East and also to the non-aligned group. There are in fact a number of other "pariah" states in essentially the same position. This immediately raises the possibility of a new kind of "non-aligned" grouping, based on a fundamentally different premise. 55 A club of outcast or "pariah" nations is, as mentioned, an idea that has in the past been floated by government spokesmen.

The "Fifth World" option is one that has to be treated with caution. *First*, it can be questioned whether other "pariahs" would wish to associate themselves closely with South Africa, given the latter's universally condemned racial policy. *Second*, a "pariah" relationship can be very insecure. Where "pariahhood" is the product of alienation from the West, such a "pariah" may well wish to restore its links with the West. Aligning itself with other "Western" outcasts might complicate the return to the fold. Once respectability is regained, the "pariah" loses this status, for example, Portugal, Spain, and Greece. If, on the other hand, a "Fifth World" composed of a number of states wielding considerable economic power, possessing significant reserves of raw materials and capable of acting internationally on a relatively cohesive basis, were to emerge, it might well become a force to be reckoned with in international politics. The formation of such an alignment, it must be emphasised, cannot be taken for granted; even if it were formed, South Africa's admission is not a foregone conclusion.

If South Africa's suggested "neutralism" did not crystallise into a "pariah" association, the country could demonstrate a more independent line in foreign policy by a series of symbolic actions, for example, official exposition of the neutralism concept; an even more assertive and aggressive diplomatic style *vis à vis* the West; the establishment or upgrading of diplomatic links with non-Western states; expansion of trade, scientific, cultural and other ties with non-Western states; and declaring Simonstown and other military facilities available to all "friendly" powers.

In the final analysis, South Africa should be guided by a very fundamental consideration, viz. its national interests. It is very doubtful if resort to "non-alignment", whether of the "pariah" variety or simply in the form of a diplomatic state of mind, would in any significant way lessen international pressures on South Africa or increase its freedom of action internationally in any meaningful way. The Western powers are unlikely to adopt a softer line towards a "non-aligned" South Africa. In this regard it should be borne in mind that the Republic's relationship with the West is already very asymmetric: the West is much further divorced from South Africa than *vice versa*. The West may, conceivably, view a South African renunciation of its Western alignment as merely formalising a situation which might well have developed in any case; they may even welcome the formal loss of an embarrassing ally, for it may enhance their credibility in the Third World.

Assuming that "neutralism" would not involve a deliberate South African attempt to curtail its extensive economic ties with the West (although it may well entail extending economic links with non-Western powers), the West's remaining economic stake in the Republic, together with

the demands of their relations with the Third World, UN demands, considerations of great power politics and domestic factors, are bound to compel Western powers to continue involving themselves with Southern Africa and the Republic in particular.

From South Africa's point of view, it could be argued that it is in the Republic's interests to encourage a Western role in Southern Africa in an attempt to prevent further Soviet intervention in a situation of escalating conflict. (The Soviet Union is certainly not going to be inhibited in its African adventures by a switch in South African foreign policy.) There seems to be no alternative intermediary to the West in the present Southern African conflict areas; there is no conceivable "pariah" contact group (or "gang of five") which could mediate between South Africa and the UN, and South Africa and African states.

This reasoning does not mean that South Africa should simply acquiesce in the present state of relations with the West. The role of a timid, unwanted "step-child" of the West simply does not become a state of South Africa's physical capabilities. South Africa should acknowledge that the West can play a positive role in the sub-continent; that it needs to co-operate with the West in specific areas; and that the South African economy is closely linked with the West. When its interests therefore demand it, South Africa ought to co-operate with the West on the same basis as it would with any other grouping. It should be a pragmatic, self-interested relationship, stripped of any lingering, misplaced sentiments of special affinity. South Africa should, in short, approach the West with a healthy scepticism. It is indeed, as George Washington had said, "folly for one nation to look for disinterested favours from another".

On the other hand, South Africa has to accept that a common anti-communism is no viable basis for a close relationship with the West; that Western interests preclude a close political or military relationship with the Republic and that Western economic links with South Africa are becoming increasingly politicised; that the Republic's raw materials constitute no guarantee for Western support; that, in the final analysis, a white-ruled South Africa is not a defensible proposition for the West and ultimately expendable.

South Africa needs to take stock, in a sober and calculated fashion, of its foreign relations, accept the facts of international life (however unpalatable) and cease to bewail them in public, lambast the West for its stand or plead with the West to reconsider its attitude towards South Africa. By continually bemoaning the international political realities of the day, South Africa merely underlines the discrepancy between its domestic political values - as manifested in its racial policy - and the new post-war international morality in which racial discrimination is, above all, anathema. There can be no chance of South Africa retreating into a grand Verwoerdian isolation with regard to its racial policy; such a "convent" approach would be simply unrealistic, given the prevailing international and domestic political climate.

South Africa also needs to rethink what shows up as a somewhat naïve judgment of international diplomacy. South African spokesmen seem to believe that diplomacy is conducted strictly according to the "Queensberry rules". When it becomes clear that it simply does not work that way, South Africa professes extreme disillusionment. Such a virginal attitude seems

rather paradoxical, considering that a well-publicised ground rule of South Africa's information effort used to be that "no rules apply".⁵⁶

Another aspect of South Africa's conduct of foreign relations, which merits review, is the present phenomenon that foreign relations is fair game to virtually all government politicians. This partly accounts for the often conflicting and emotive pronouncements. While it may well be a rewarding domestic political ploy, foreign affairs is an area of such importance and sensitivity that it deserves elevation above party politicking.

SOUTHERN AFRICA REDISCOVERED

While on the one hand dissociating itself from the West, South Africa on the other apparently hopes to associate more closely with its black neighbours. The fact that these two strategies were proposed in the same statement, tends to suggest that there is a linkage. If the implied assumption is that South Africa could enhance its relations with Africa by distancing itself from the West, it would appear a fallacious premise. The failure of past South African attempts at rapprochement with Africa was not the result of its links with the West, but its domestic policy. It is, therefore, unlikely that "neutralism" would improve South Africa's relationship with Africa if the domestic political *status quo* remains intact. On the other hand, it has to be conceded that specific circumstances might produce some rapprochement, for example, economic considerations and fears of Marxist expansionism. Whether such factors constitute grounds for any enduring relationship is very doubtful.

In his Zurich speech, Mr Pik Botha envisaged "the establishment of a sub-continental solidarity which could form the basis for co-operation in important spheres of life". Visions of a Southern African bloc or commonwealth have been expressed by government spokesmen in the past, but these have failed to materialise. The prospects for a comprehensive alignment of Southern African states do not seem particularly promising today either.

First, a new grouping would presumably include South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland (BLS), independent (and perhaps also non-independent) homelands, independent Namibia and Zimbabwe, and hopefully also Zambia, and even Zaire and Mocambique in the longer run. In its potential composition lies the association's first major problem. The chances of BLS, not to mention black states farther afield, formally associating with non-recognised independent former homelands, appear remote since that could imply *de facto* recognition of an independence vehemently denied. The involvement of non-independent homelands could also cause problems, since their presence might be construed by black states as implied recognition of the balkanisation of the Republic - something anathema to black Africa. The participation of a Namibia and a Zimbabwe not recognised by the international community could also deter other black states from joining. Particularly Botswana and Zambia, two of the front-line states actively involved in the Rhodesian and Namibian issues, are unlikely to join any grouping which includes a non-recognised Namibia and Zimbabwe. This would particularly be the case if the suggested association was perceived as a South African foreign policy strategy designed to offset a failure of the West's Namibian and Rhodesian initiatives. It can furthermore be questioned whether an

independent Zimbabwe, even if it were internationally unrecognised, would wish to associate with non-recognised, former homelands in a South African designed (and dominated) grouping, since that could well undermine its efforts to gain recognition in black Africa. Depending on the political complexion of the government, this situation might even apply to an independent, internationally non-recognised Namibia. To overcome such objections, South Africa could perhaps consider excluding former homelands from formal membership of a Southern African association. Instead, they could be given some form of indirect membership, or South Africa could conclude bilateral agreements with them on similar lines as the wider multilateral agreement.

Second, it can justifiably be asked whether South Africa had first cleared its "solidarity" proposal with the black states on whose co-operation its success would depend. If not, it would seem a grave tactical error. It should be borne in mind that the mere fact of South African sponsorship of a plan such as the Foreign Minister's, is bound to produce considerable suspicion, if not hostility, in black Africa. The "new" design could, conceivably, be seen by BLS as an attempt to further consolidate and formalise their satellite status with regard to South Africa - particularly if their first knowledge of Mr. Botha's proposal came from the press. (It should be remembered that BLS have long been trying to lessen their heavy economic dependence on South Africa.) It is possible that Mr Pik Botha's ideas were first discussed with the leaders of independent and non-independent homelands (many of whom would presumably support the idea), but this is not good enough if a wider membership is contemplated.

In the end, the Foreign Minister's proposal may only produce a formal association involving South Africa and present and former homelands, and perhaps Namibia. While this may hold some mutual economic benefits, the international political benefits resulting from such a grouping would be insignificant, compared with those attached to an association embracing BLS and other black states: South African acceptance by the recognised states of Southern Africa could pave the way to wider acceptance in Africa.

Mr Botha's statement makes it abundantly clear that South Africa is looking beyond economic co-operation: he spoke of a "sub-continental solidarity which could form the basis for co-operation in important spheres of life". This immediately raises the prospect of South Africa's much coveted common front against Marxism. While some black states may well share the underlying sentiment, the reality of such a solidarity raises for them the awkward question of complicity in a South African initiated scheme which would at least implicitly buttress the Republic's political *status quo*. The envisaged solidarity could therefore easily be interpreted as an attempt to extend the frontiers of the "white garrison".

C O N C L U S I O N

In view of past trends, there seems good reason to treat Mr Pik Botha's suggestion of a neutral position with some reserve. If, however, the government this time seriously intends going beyond stylistic adjustments and is planning to embark on structural changes in South Africa's foreign relations, the proposed options need careful examination lest they too be added to the growing list of typical South African responses under pressure.

There is indeed a case to be made for lessening South Africa's Western fixation by, for example, further diversifying diplomatic and economic ties. Closer association with Africa is not only advisable but imperative. South Africa's freedom of action on the international scene is, however, severely circumscribed by the constraints imposed by its domestic policy. In the final analysis, structural changes in foreign policy cannot be considered in isolation from structural domestic policy changes.

NOTES

1. South Africa (Republic), Dept. of Foreign Affairs, Extract from speech by the honourable R. F. Botha before the Swiss-South African Association in Zurich on Wednesday, 7 March 1979.
The concept "West" presumably refers to the non-communist Western powers, while the "East" would presumably represent the communist bloc. It is in this sense that the two terms are used in the present study. At the same time it is well recognised that to talk merely of the "West" is an over-simplification, since the "West" is not a monolithic bloc and has not always acted in cohesion on Southern Africa. Since this study is concerned with a policy option based on power blocs, the concepts "East" and "West" would suffice.
2. The Citizen, 10.3.1979
3. A phrase borrowed from James Barber, who applied it to the National Party's relations with the United Kingdom. (South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945-1970. London: Oxford University Press, 1973. p.62)
4. Foreign Minister from January 1955 to December 1963
5. South Africa (Republic), House of Assembly Debates, Vol.85, 4.5.1954, col. 4495 & 4496. (Hereafter HA Deb.)
6. Quoted by Barber, J., op. cit., p.106
7. HA Deb., Vol.104, 9.3.1960, col 3013-3018
8. Quoted by Barber, J., op. cit., p.189
9. Ibid., p.23
10. See the author's paper, South Africa's Search for Security since the Second World War (Occasional Paper). Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, September 1978, p.7
11. Ibid., p.8
12. Spence, J.E., The Strategic Significance of Southern Africa. London: Royal United Service Institution, 1970. pp.28-30
13. HA Deb., Vol.60, 30.1.1976, col.375
14. Mr B.J. Vorster - The Star, 12.2.1976
15. HA Deb., Vol.61, 22.4.1976, col.5200
16. Mr J.B. Vorster - The Star, 1.6.1976
17. Dr Hilgard Muller - The Star, 15.9.1976
18. Mr B.J. Vorster and Dr H. Muller - The Star 7 & 23.5.1976 respectively
19. The Star, 15.9.1976. See also Beeld, 5.8.1976
20. The Star, 18.10.1976
21. Die Burger, 31.12.1976
22. Daily Dispatch, 2.1.1977
23. The Times (London), 28.1.1977
24. Daily Dispatch, 1.1.1977
25. Die Burger, 15.4.1977 & Rand Daily Mail, 15.4.1977

26. The Star, 7.6.1977
27. See Rand Daily Mail, 27.4.1977 and The Star, 30.6.1977
Dr Mulder's suggestion was preceded by similar suggestions from other politicians and also academics - see The Citizen, 15.3.1977; Sunday Times, 2.4.1977; Die Burger, 13.4.1977; Die Transvaler, 14 & 16.4.1977. The debate was probably initiated by the (Nationalist) journalist, Otto Krause, who, in his column in Die Transvaler, 19.11.1975, suggested that South Africa should consider establishing an overt understanding with China. For early reaction, see Dirk Rezelman in Rand Daily Mail, 26.11.1975, and Sunday Express, 25.1.1976.
28. Mr P.W. Botha - HA Deb., Vol.11, 17.4.1978, col.4857
29. Mr B.J. Vorster - The Citizen, 23.6.1977; The Star, 2.7.1977 and Rand Daily Mail, 5.1.1977
30. Mr R.F. Botha - The Star, 10.5.1977
31. The Star, 30.9.1977
32. The notion of national suicide was mooted, admittedly in a different context, by General Hertzog in 1926. It was, however, regularly used by the Malan government in exactly the same sense as very recently.
33. See Mr R.F. Botha - The Star, 10.5.1977; Mr B.J. Vorster - The Citizen, 23.6.1977; Mr R.F. Botha - The Citizen, 16.8.1977; Dr C.P. Mulder - Rand Daily Mail, 20.8.1977
34. Mr C. Heunis, the Minister of Economic Affairs - Rand Daily Mail, 26.10.1977 and Mr P.W. Botha - The Citizen, 26.11.1977. The latter referred to nations in the Southern Hemisphere, Middle East, Far East and Southern Africa.
35. See The Star, 25.10.1977
36. Newsweek, 5.12.1977
37. Mr P.W. Botha - Sunday Times, 5.3.1978
38. Mr R.F. Botha - The Star, 8.4.1978
39. Ibid.
40. Mr P.W. Botha - Beeld, 29.6.1978
41. The Citizen, 7.4.1978
42. Mr P.W. Botha - Sunday Times, 5.3.1978
43. Mr P.W. Botha - Beeld, 29.6.1978
44. Mr B.J. Vorster - The Star, 20.6.1978
45. Ibid. and Mr P.W. Botha - Beeld, 29.6.1978
46. Natal Mercury, 1.6.1978
47. Mr P.W. Botha - The Citizen, 7.4.1978 and Mr B.J. Vorster - Natal Mercury, 1.6.1978
48. The Star, 20.6.1978
49. Mr B.J. Vorster - Die Transvaler, 29.5.1978
50. The Citizen, 28.9.1978

51. See Mr R.F. Botha - Beeld, 30.10.1978 and Mr P.W.Botha - Beeld, 9.11.1978
52. See Rand Daily Mail, 14.3.1979 and Die Transvaler, 19.3.1979
53. Plano, J.C. and Otton, R., The International Relations Dictionary. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969. p.262
54. Ibid., p.122
55. On the "pariah" concept, see Vale, P.C.J., "South Africa as a pariah international state", International Affairs Bulletin, Vol.1, No.3, 1977, pp. 121-141. Government spokesmen commonly refer to a possible grouping of outcast or "pariah" nations as the "Fourth World". Strictly speaking, it ought to be "Fifth World", since the 26 poorest nations are known as the "Fourth World".
56. See Dr C.P. Mulder - The Citizen, 20.8.1977