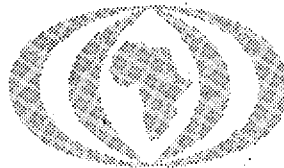


WHAT DO WE THINK?
A Survey of White Opinion on Foreign Policy Issues

Deon Geldenhuys

OCCASIONAL PAPER

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It should be noted that any opinions expressed in this article are the responsibility of the author and not of the Institute.

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P R E F A C E

A proper study of international relations must include attention to the formulation of foreign policy, i.e. the difficult question of how the foreign policies of governments are made, and not only be concerned with the content of policy. Obviously the answers, insofar as they can be ascertained, will differ from country to country. Likewise, the influence of public opinion in the making of foreign policy will vary from country to country, but it is in any case an important element which has to be taken into account.

In the case of South Africa very little has been written about how the Government's foreign policy is made, and the South African Institute of International Affairs therefore considered that there was a need to devote particular attention to this question. Over the past two years it has been the subject of a research project conducted mainly by Dr Deon Geldenhuys who was, until July 1981, Assistant Director (in charge of Research) of the Institute. He is now an Associate Professor of Political Science at the Rand Afrikaans University, but has continued his work on this subject, with the assistance of the Institute.

As an essential part of this research project, the Institute commissioned a survey of public opinion, which was conducted in February 1982, and which is the first survey exclusively devoted to foreign affairs to be undertaken in the Republic. The results of that survey are now being published in this report, in which Dr Geldenhuys analyses and assesses those results. In his Introduction he explains how the survey was conducted and mentions inter alia its limitations, especially the fact that it was limited to white opinion. Although there were particular reasons on this occasion to limit the survey to Whites, it is hoped that in the future it will be possible to conduct more broadly-based surveys.

The results of the research project on foreign policy formulation as a whole will appear in a book by Dr Geldenhuys, to be published under the auspices of the Institute in the second half of 1983.

The Institute is greatly indebted to Deon Geldenhuys for his work in evaluating the results of the survey. The perceptiveness and clarity of his analysis serve to highlight for the reader the main features of current white attitudes on foreign policy issues. The clear evidence that certain widely and strongly held attitudes exist among the white public may be disturbing to many and encouraging to others. But in any case the implications need to be examined seriously by political leaders and other concerned South Africans of all political persuasions.

JOHN BARRATT
DIRECTOR GENERAL, SAILA

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INTRODUCTION

Of the numerous environmental factors shaping a state's foreign policy, the role of domestic public opinion is probably one of the most difficult to define. Studies of foreign policy-making abound with references to the problem and the general public is said to be ill-informed and not sufficiently articulate to prescribe specific policies. Further, it is sometimes considered doubtful whether the public can be "educated" to play a constructive role in foreign policy-making.

Questions have also been raised about the rationality or wisdom of public opinion. Walter Lippmann, for example, stated that "the unhappy truth is that the prevailing public opinion has been destructively wrong at the critical junctures." (1) Lord Strang's contention that the government is in a better position than the public to protect the state's national interests (2) captures the essence of the numerous reservations about the role of public opinion in foreign policy-making.

However, having recognised the difficulties, the fact remains that public opinion does have an important bearing on the formation of foreign policy. Of course, the impact may vary from state to state - not least because some governments are more receptive than others to public opinion in policy-making generally - and from issue to issue. Barring major foreign policy issues, such as war or similar serious inter-state conflict, public opinion is far less concerned with foreign policy matters than with immediate domestic issues.

A prerequisite for an assessment of the impact of public opinion on foreign policy formulation, is some knowledge of the content of public opinion in the realm of foreign affairs, which is the object of the present study. The opinion under consideration is that of the white South African public. Since public opinion can be measured fairly reliably, it is far easier to determine its substance than to judge its actual impact on foreign policy-making. Although the latter concern falls outside the scope of this study, it will feature in a separate and more comprehensive study of South Africa's foreign policy formulation. (3) The survey on which this paper is based, was undertaken as part of that larger study, in which it will again be included and developed.

To assess the content of white public opinion on foreign policy matters, the survey first set out to establish how informed the adult white population was concerning foreign affairs. Secondly, opinion on a number of salient foreign policy issues was measured, enabling the respondents' threat perceptions and their "hawkish/dovish" inclinations to be assessed. Finally, the survey investigated correlations between opinion on external matters and certain contentious domestic political issues. These are aspects which have received scant attention from scholars of South African foreign policy.

1. SURVEY METHOD

The survey was conducted by Market and Opinion Surveys (Pty) Ltd (M & M) by means of a self-completion questionnaire (see annexure) sent to approximately 2 400 members of M & M's nationally representative white consumer panel. Issue can be taken with the fact that the survey was confined to white respondents, but the restriction to a white panel only can be justified on some grounds. South Africa's foreign policy-making is the exclusive preserve of the white elite, just as political power is monopolised by them. It can, therefore, be argued that insofar as foreign policy makers take cognisance of domestic public opinion, they would primarily consider white opinion. The opinion of Blacks - including Coloured and Indian opinion - carries much less weight than white opinion. Nevertheless it cannot be completely ignored by the policy makers; for one thing, the link between external opinion on South Africa's domestic politics and local black opinion is perfectly obvious.

Ideally, the work should have included black respondents; for a comparison between white and black opinion on these issues may have led to revealing findings. This is an area which merits the attention of scholars.

Questionnaires were sent out by M & M on 12 February 1982, and the bulk of the 1 999 responses was received within four weeks. Because the survey also probed the respondents' party political affiliations, it should be remembered that the exercise took place prior to the split in the National Party and the subsequent emergence of the Conservative Party.

The composition of the sample according to the respondents' sex, age, home language and household income was as follows:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Total</u>	1 999	100
Male	969	48,5
Female	1 030	51,5
Afrikaans	1 152	57,6
English	847	42,3
<u>Age:</u> 16 - 24 years	471	23,5
25 - 34 years	439	22,0
35 - 49 years	511	25,5
50 years or older	578	29,0
<u>Household Income</u>		
Under R 399 p.m.	117	5,9
R 400 - R1 099 p.m.	693	34,7
R1 100 - R1 799 p.m.	609	30,5
R1 800 p. m. or more	571	28,6
Unknown	9	0,3

2. MAGGIE VERSUS MASIRE : WHAT THE WHITE PUBLIC KNOWS

Knowledge of public policy issues is not a prerequisite for holding an opinion thereon. However, the more knowledgeable a person is, the better the chance that the related opinion will be relatively sound or balanced. In the case of policy-makers, the level of knowledge is a crucial variable determining the quality of decisions. Therefore it cannot be expected that the general public will have anything approximating the policy-makers' knowledge of foreign policy issues. For one thing, the man in the street simply does not have access to the same specialised sources of information. It follows that, in measuring the public's knowledge, questions have to remain general and factual.

In this survey, the respondents were asked to provide the names of eight prominent public figures in South Africa and abroad; the (then) Director-General of the South African Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, the South African Minister of Defence, the President of Botswana, the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, the President of Mozambique, the President of France, the Prime Minister of New Zealand and the Prime Minister of Britain.

In a second question, the respondents were asked what UN Security Council resolution 435 dealt with; a third asked what the abbreviations ANC and SWAPO stood for; and the final question read: "Does America allow South Africa to buy military weapons from her?"

The respondents appeared to be reasonably well informed. Forty-eight per cent correctly identified 6, or more, of the public figures. A further 41,1% correctly named between 3 and 5 of the personalities, the best known of whom was Mrs Margaret Thatcher : nearly 95% of the respondents knew that she was the British Prime Minister. The next best known was the Zimbabwean Prime Minister, Mr Robert Mugabe, who was correctly named by 88,2%; followed by President Samora Machel of Mozambique with 74,6%.

Nearly 73% of the respondents knew that General Magnus Malan was the South African Minister of Defence, although 6% still associated the previous incumbent, Mr P.W. Botha, with the post. Mr Robert Muldoon was identified as the Prime Minister of New Zealand by roughly 70% of the respondents; and President Francois Mitterand, of France, by 56,3%. Just over 40% were able to name the (then) Director-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, Dr Brand Fourie. The least well known was the President of Botswana, Dr Quett Masire, known to a mere 5,5% of the respondents. About twice as many gave the name of President Lucas Mangope, who is the President of the "independent" homeland of Bophuthatswana.

The fact that foreign leaders, like Thatcher, Mugabe, Machel and Muldoon are well known to the South African public, can be explained by their prominence in the Republic's external environment, becoming almost household names. Mrs Thatcher, of course, has the added distinction of being Britain's first woman Premier - in itself a highly newsworthy feature.

Dr Fourie's poor rating was something of a surprise, considering that he

received a good deal of media exposure over the Namibian issue. That President Masire was virtually unknown was probably related to his lack of prominence in South Africa's regional environment, as opposed to Mr Mugabe or President Machel. It is also safe to assume that the white public do not regard Botswana as a threat to South Africa's security, in contrast to Mr Mugabe and as we shall see, President Machel.

The incorrect naming of President Mangope as Botswana's head of state seems to indicate that a sizeable proportion of the white public were confusing Botswana with Bophuthatswana, the "independent" former homeland.

In response to the question, "What does UN Security Council resolution 435 deal with?", just over three-fifths of the respondents correctly related it to the SWA/Namibia issue. Over a third failed to answer or admitted that they did not know the answer.

A higher proportion of respondents knew what the abbreviations ANC and SWAPO stood for; 77,5% knew the African National Congress, while a further 12,9% used "Council" instead of "Congress". The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) was equally well-known, with 87,1% of the respondents answering correctly.

The respondents were then asked whether the United States was willing to sell South Africa weapons for military purposes. Two-thirds correctly indicated that the USA was not, whereas 28% thought such sales were permitted.

Taking the four questions together, the survey revealed that men were generally better informed than women. No similarly distinct trend emerged with regard to two other variables, viz. language (Afrikaans and English) and party political preferences.

Too much should not be read into the relatively high level of correct responses to the four questions. They were all simple and dealt with matters of immediate relevance to South Africa. Perhaps these results only serve to confirm the generalisation that the public is only well informed on foreign policy issues which are of direct concern and/or heavily publicised.

3. CARRY A BIG STICK IN A DANGEROUS WORLD :
THE WHITE PUBLIC'S THREAT PERCEPTIONS

More important, and certainly more interesting, is an analysis of public perceptions. This part of the questionnaire was designed to measure particularly the respondents' threat perceptions, and their views on ways of combating such perceived threats. Focusing on these features seems well justified in view of the South African government's preoccupation with a "Total Onslaught" and the need for an antidote called a "Total National Strategy".

3.1 The "Threat" that can never be taken too seriously

"Communism", in Pretoria's view, is the dominant force in the external onslaught on South Africa. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to react to the following statement: "The communist threat against the country is exaggerated by the government". Four response options were given, producing the following distribution:*

	<u>%</u>		<u>%</u>
Definitely agree	5,2	Inclined to disagree	35,1
Inclined to agree	<u>13,2</u>	Definitely disagree	<u>44,8</u>
	18,4		79,9

A breakdown of these figures by language, sex and party political loyalties, provides some revealing findings.**

		<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
Afrikaans speakers	(1 152)	11,9	86,6
English speakers	(847)	27,2	71,1
Males	(969)	23,4	75,4
Females	(1 030)	13,5	84,3

* The very small "no response" percentages are not indicated in any of the tables in this paper, but they can be calculated from the figures given.

** Where the term "agree(d)" is used, it refers in all cases to the combination of the response options "definitely agree" and "inclined to agree". Similarly the term "disagree(d)" refers to the combination of "definitely disagree" and "inclined to disagree".

<u>Supporters of:</u>		<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
NP (National Party)	(893)	6,0	93,6
PFPP (Progressive Federal Party)	(410)	43,9	56,1
NRP (New Republic Party)	(104)	21,5	77,7
HNP (Herstigte Nasionale Party)	(112)	18,1	81,8
NCP (National Conservative Party)	(30)	7,2	89,6

The striking feature of these figures, is the correlation between threat perception and party political preferences. That National Party supporters virtually to a man believed that the government was not exaggerating the communist threat, was hardly surprising. The percentage of NCP supporters subscribing to this view, was not significantly smaller. What might be unexpected, was the margin of difference - over 10% - between NP and HNP supporters disagreeing with the statement that the government exaggerated the communist threat. Given the HNP's brand of right-wing radicalism, its followers do not take the communist threat any less seriously than National Party supporters. Perhaps their reaction to the statement can be explained in terms of the long-standing and often acrimonious HNP-NP divisions over racial policies; HNP supporters might tend to treat government pronouncements with scepticism and even distrust, because they question NP motives rather than the substance of the issue.

Moving towards the left, the proportion of those contending that the government was not exaggerating the communist threat declined. Thus 77,7% of NRP followers disputed the statement. Among the supporters of the PFPP, the party furthest to the left, just over half disagreed with the statement. By contrast, over three-quarters of the followers of each of the other four parties indicated their disagreement. PFPP supporters, therefore, appeared a good deal less receptive to the government's persistent warnings about the communist threat. Perhaps the followers of the PFPP, more than those of any other party, are concerned about the threat to security resulting from the government's racial policies.

3.2 The Threat from Across the Limpopo

In measuring the white public's perceptions of threat, Zimbabwe clearly had to be included. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the statement : "The government of Zimbabwe

constitutes a threat to South Africa's safety". The response distribution for the total sample was as follows:

Definitely agree	<u>22,7</u>	Inclined to disagree	<u>22,0</u>
Inclined to agree	<u>47,8</u>	Definitely disagree	<u>4,7</u>
	70,5		26,7

The responses of some of the sub-groups composing the sample, were instructive. Only 11,1% of English-speaking respondents definitely agreed with the statement compared with 31,2% of Afrikaans-speaking respondents. The difference between the reactions of the two language groups was, however, less pronounced when the two positive response options are counted together, as well as the negative options. When this is done, 76,7% of the Afrikaans-speakers agreed and 21,1% disagreed with the statement; for the English-speakers, the corresponding figures were 62,2% and 34,2%.

Female respondents displayed a stronger threat perception than males, with 76,2% agreeing with the statement as against 64,5%.

There was also a meaningful geographic variation in the response pattern; for example, 81% of the respondents living in the Orange Free State agreed that the Mugabe government represented a security threat, followed by 74,5% in the Transvaal, 71,2% in Natal and 64,2% in the Cape Province. Since the Transvaal borders on Zimbabwe, it was to be expected that the percentage of Transvaal respondents subscribing to the statement would be higher than the national figure (70,5%). Given that Natal abutts on another black state, which white South Africans see as hostile - i.e. Mozambique - the reaction of Natal respondents was understandable. The Free State response was rather puzzling. The province is far removed from Zimbabwe, and the local experience with neighbouring Lesotho could hardly have inspired a perception of threat. Perhaps the explanation lies in the conservative political orientation of the Free State, which might influence it to take a negative view of black-ruled states, particularly one politically and ideologically so openly antagonistic towards South Africa's domestic political order.

Turning to other features based on household income levels, there was no meaningful variation in the response patterns of high, upper middle, lower

middle and low income groups*; agreement that the Zimbabwean government threatened South Africa's security ranged between 66,2% and 74,2%.

Although the Zimbabwean threat was in some cases viewed differently from the communist threat when correlated with party political sympathies, consider the following table:

"The government of Zimbabwe constitutes a threat to South Africa's safety".

<u>Supporters of</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
NP	78,8	20,3
PFP	55,4	42,9
NRP	62,5	34,6
HNP	89,3	10,7
NCP	88,3	8,6

Significantly fewer NP and NRP supporters - some 15% in each instance - agreed that Zimbabwe represented a threat, compared with the numbers maintaining that the South African government was not exaggerating the communist threat. This might indicate that the respondents considered the communist threat a more serious one than that supposedly posed by Zimbabwe. Much the same can be said of the response of HNP supporters to the Zimbabwean threat. (It is, however, not unlikely that a fair proportion of the respondents would have seen both threats as part and parcel of an overall external onslaught on South Africa). For PFP and NCP supporters, respectively, their responses to the two threats were virtually identical.

3.3 The hottest pursuit

White South Africans held militant views on the manner in which the Republic should respond to the real and visible threat facing the country (read, present political structure) from terrorist/guerrilla action. To the statement, "South Africa should militarily attack terrorist bases in

* High = R1800 p.m. or more; upper middle = R1100-1799 p.m.; lower middle = R400 - 1099 p.m. and low = under R399 p.m.

its neighbouring states (like the ANC base near Maputo)", the reaction was as follows:

	<u>%</u>		<u>%</u>
Definitely agree	47,7	Inclined to disagree	13,2
Inclined to agree	<u>33,4</u>	Definitely disagree	<u>3,4</u>
	81,1		16,6

When these figures are correlated with language, party political orientation and sex, over 70% of each sub-group agreed with the statement. There were, however, interesting variations of opinion. The level of agreement was higher among Afrikaans-speakers (85,2%) than English-speakers (75,7%). Men were stronger in their support for such military action than women : 87,1% against 75,5%, and the party political breakdown was particularly instructive :

	<u>%</u>	
<u>Supporters of</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
NP	86,2	13,0
PFP	73,2	26,3
NRP	84,6	13,5
HNP	93,8	6,3
NCP	96,9	-

Supporters of the two right-wing parties (HNP and NCP) were the most hostile, with NP supporters not far behind. A notable feature was that followers of the NRP, a party generally considered to be somewhat to the left of the NP, registered essentially the same response as the Nationalists. Even PFP supporters responded in a markedly defiant fashion, in fact to a degree not readily reconcilable with their relatively moderate threat perceptions on the issues of communism and Zimbabwe. What is clear, is that the unacceptability of terrorist or guerrilla bases in neighbouring states, and the need for a drastic military response, are matters which produce a major degree of consensus between the supporters of the various political parties in South Africa.

3.4 Don't feed the hand that bites

Military action is not the only way a state can respond to perceived (or actual) threats from the immediate external environment; for example, economic ties can be manipulated. In South Africa's case, an export commodity which can be regulated for political and security purposes, is food.

The export of food, particularly maize, to black states perceived as being hostile to the Republic, has become a controversial domestic political issue, with the HNP, for example, attacking the government for exporting food to states which harbour so-called terrorists and, so, possibly feeding the terrorists.

In the survey, the following statement was put: "South Africa should not export food to black states which support or harbour terrorists". Surprisingly, respondents were less inimical than in the reaction to the foregoing statement. In fact there was greater overall support for drastic military options than for softer, more manageable ones like the manipulation of food exports. On this particular point the opinion of the white South African public does not support Walter Lippmann's familiar criticism that public opinion is typically inclined to favour the "soft options" in foreign policy. (4)

Of all respondents, 72,4% agreed that South Africa should not export food to states supporting or harbouring terrorists; 44,4% of this number chose the response option "definitely agree". A quarter of the 1 999 respondents disagreed, but only 7,3% said they "definitely disagreed". (A further 2,2% registered no response).

Support for a ban on food exports was greater among Afrikaans-speakers (75,7%) than English-speakers (68,1%), thus confirming a trend already discernable in previous answers. Much the same margin of difference was found between male and female respondents, but on this occasion women were more militant; 75,2% of them agreeing with the statement, against 69,6% of men. For women, the apparent discrepancy between the response to this statement and their views on military action against terrorist bases, may perhaps be explained in the context that cessation of food exports is a non-violent response, as opposed to the virtual certainty of bloodshed in a military attack.

A breakdown by party political affiliations produced the following response options:

"South Africa should not export food ..."

<u>Supporters of</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
NP	75,7	23,5
PFP	59,8	39,3
NRP	76,9	22,1
HNP	92,2	8,0
NCP	79,0	17,8

It is not surprising that a high proportion of HNP followers wish to see an end to food exports to what they see as hostile black states. It was, after all, the HNP which introduced the question of food exports into the domestic political arena. That three-quarters of the National Party supporters agree with the statement is however, highly significant, for it conflicts with the government's views on the issue. The government has hitherto publicly turned down demands for a prohibition of food exports to states which support or harbour so-called terrorists. Instead, Pretoria (at least publicly) insists on exporting food to "friends" and "foes" alike.

The NRP followers' tough stance was in line with their hawkish views on foreign terrorist bases, and again virtually identical with the Nationalist response. In fact, despite the view that the NRP is politically to the left of the NP, this did not produce a stance different from that of the Nationalists. Among PFP supporters, although the clear majority of them were in favour of stopping food exports, the softer line of their general view was upheld.

3.5 SWAPO : jaw, jaw or war, war?

The statement, "South Africa should negotiate directly with SWAPO to reach a settlement in SWA/Namibia", failed to elicit strong public appeal. Sixty percent of the respondents disagreed (divided equally between those inclined to disagree and definitely disagreeing); and roughly 38% agreed

any other issues. Even so, it should not be overlooked that as high a proportion as three-fifths of the English-speakers supported the hardline notion that South Africa can win the armed struggle against SWAPO in the long run.

As for the responses of the party political sub-groups, NP and HNP followers were on a par with approximately 85% disagreeing with the statement. For NCP supporters, the figure was 87,9%. NRP supporters registered a 73% disagreement, leaving a wider margin of difference in militancy between themselves and the NP. Indeed, the margin was greater than on previous issues. PFP supporters, in line with their earlier responses, again registered the lowest level of support for the statement, with 47,3% disagreeing with the contention that South Africa cannot win the war against SWAPO.

Given the white public's general confidence in South Africa's ability to prevail militarily in Namibia, an early negotiated settlement which produces a SWAPO regime, might create considerable domestic political difficulties for the South African government. A strong conservative backlash, spilling across party lines, is not inconceivable. The claim would be that South Africa could have defeated SWAPO on the battle field and destroyed it as a political force, had the government stood its ground. To prevent such potential domestic difficulties, Pretoria may well have to embark on a deliberate campaign to "educate" the public on the need for and the risks of a negotiated end to the Namibian dispute. This assumes that Pretoria is committed to the present Western settlement initiative. To date however, the government has done little to prepare the public for a negotiated resolution of the Namibian conflict, and least of all for an unfavourable outcome.

4. DARK TIMES AHEAD FOR SOUTH AFRICA :
THE WHITE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE

Having tested white opinions on South Africa's immediate external environment, the questionnaire shifted to views on the future of the Republic; the emphasis was again on the issue of security.

Acts of terrorism, perpetrated by the ANC, have in the last three years become a feature of the South African political scene. As a form of black

political expression, violence is no new phenomenon in South Africa; one need only recall the acts of sabotage launched by the ANC and PAC in the early 1960s. However, by 1964 the police appeared to have broken the back of this violent resistance.

The 1980s have, nonetheless, seen a resurgence in politically inspired violence, but this time the threat is unlikely to be checked in four years. Although the security forces have control of the situation, the government has been preparing the public for a long, and escalating spell of terrorism.

South Africa is, in the government's view, faced with a Communist-inspired "Total Onslaught", of which terrorist or guerrilla activities by the so-called liberation movements are essential elements. To counter this, the government has devised a "Total National Strategy", aimed at mobilising the country's total resources for "survival". The government is at pains to draw the black population groups into this strategy, arguing that the onslaught is directed not only against the Whites, but all races. The government is in fact trying to portray the security of Whites and Blacks as indivisible.⁽⁵⁾ Against this background, the survey tried to establish to what extent the public agreed with official views on select aspects of South Africa's future security.

4.1 The "Terros" are coming

Pretoria's constant warnings about an escalation in terrorist or guerrilla activities, certainly do not fall on deaf ears. In fact, the white public may be taking a more pessimistic view on this issue than the government.

When presented with the statement, "A terrorist war like (sic) in South West Africa will in time also develop in South Africa", no less than three out of four respondents indicated agreement. Of this figure, 25% said that they "definitely agree" with the statement, while 50% were "inclined to agree". Of the 22,8% who recorded disagreement, a mere 3,3% said that they "definitely disagree". The results correspond with those of an opinion survey which M & M conducted for a well-known newspaper group in April 1980. In that survey, out of some 2 000 respondents, 71,1% agreed that "there were difficult times of war and internal unrest ahead in South Africa".

In the current study there was a large measure of consensus among the various sub-groups. So, 75,1% of the Afrikaans-speakers and 75,9% of the English-speakers agreed that a terrorist war may develop in South Africa; 75,5% of the male and 75,3% of the female respondents agreed. For the high, upper middle and lower middle income groups, the extent of agreement with the statement ranged between 75,2% and 78,7%, whereas for the low income group it was 58,1%.

On this issue the responses of the party political sub-groups are of some interest. The lowest level of agreement with the statement came from NP supporters, of whom 71,2% said they agreed, 21% "definitely" agreeing; followed by NRP supporters with 76,9% agreement. For the three remaining parties, the level of agreement was over 80% - the HNP supporters topped the list with 84,8% in favour, and 53,4% indicating definite agreement.

It is puzzling why Nationalists are least convinced of the inevitability of a terrorist war. Arguably, the approximately 30% of them who disagreed with the statement believe either that South Africa is militarily powerful enough to prevent a repetition of the Namibian war inside South Africa, or that the government has created adequate channels for black political expression and that Blacks are satisfied, or both. These two considerations might apply in reverse fashion among HNP supporters. Perhaps the HNP respondents think that the government's "liberal reforms" have raised black political expectations and encouraged them to become more assertive, even to the extent of violence. There might also be an emerging feeling - long evident among white right-wingers with regard to Namibia - that the government has not been firm or ruthless enough in suppressing black resistance.

4.2 "We have the happiest Africans in the world" ... but we cannot trust them

One of the charges frequently levelled against white South Africans by Blacks and foreigners alike, is that they live in blissful ignorance of true black political sentiments. Given the racially polarised nature of South African society, and the Whites' monopoly on political power, it is of course difficult for Whites to gauge reliably black political opinion.

In an effort to understand Whites' perception of how Blacks respond to their condition, the survey contained the following somewhat radical

assertion: "South Africa's Blacks have good reason to take up arms against the government". (Blacks in this context refers to black Africans only.)

Of the 1 999 respondents, only 26,9% agreed with the statement; (a mere 6% said that they "definitely agree"). Against this, 71,4% expressed disagreement (of whom nearly 40% "definitely disagreed").

There were considerable differences in the responses of the various language and political sub-groups.

	<u>%</u>	
	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
Afrikaans-speakers	13,9	84,5
English-speakers	44,9	53,7
NP	9,8	89,9
PFP	69,5	30,2
NRP	28,8	67,3
HNP	5,4	94,6
NCP	2,9	94,0

Quite clearly, Afrikaners take the view that the treatment of Blacks by the government gives them no cause to consider resorting to armed struggle. Almost half the English-speaking respondents disagreed that Blacks have good reason to take up arms, and this may well be indicative of profound doubts among English-speakers about the government's racial policies.

Agreement with the given statement was considerably higher among PFP supporters, of whom the vast majority are probably English-speaking. No less than seven out of ten PFP followers agreed that Blacks had good reason to take up arms. This view is obviously related to the PFP's fundamental differences with the NP over racial policies.

The Nationalists' conviction that Blacks have no cause to resort to violence - of 89,9%, 56% "definitely disagreed" with the statement - may be taken as a manifestation of their faith in the correctness of the government's policies towards Blacks.

Although HNP and NCP supporters were even stronger in their disagreement with the statement than the Nationalists, this cannot be taken as an endorsement of government policies on this issue. Given the baasskap

policies advocated by the two right-wing parties, their supporters might hold the crude view that Blacks have no right to object to whatever a white government decrees for them. There is also the familiar charge from these quarters that the government is already doing too much for the Blacks - at the expense of Whites; if this is the perception, Blacks would then have even less cause to resort to arms against the government. The NRP supporters' response tends to confirm that the party is not far removed from the NP on racial policies, and stands much closer to the NP on its right, than the PFP on its left.

It is interesting to recollect that over 70% of the Nationalist respondents had earlier agreed that a Namibia-style terrorist war could develop in South Africa. Given the subsequent decisive rejection by Nationalist supporters of the contention that Blacks have good cause to resort to violence, the obvious conclusion is that NP followers believed that a terrorist war will originate not in legitimate black grievances, but will be instigated by extraneous hostile forces, particularly communists.

It follows that the next question should focus on how Whites believed Blacks would behave in the event of war. Respondents were asked to react to the following statement: "White South Africans cannot depend on black South Africans in the case of war against South Africa". (Again, the reference was to black Africans.) The overall response was as follows:

	<u>%</u>		<u>%</u>
Inclined to disagree	30,2	Definitely agree	19,6
Definitely disagree	<u>6,6</u>	Inclined to agree	<u>42,0</u>
	36,8		61,6

Although a sizeable majority agreed with the contention, it is noteworthy that this opinion was not strongly held; as many as two-thirds of these respondents indicated they were "inclined to agree".

The differences between the responses of the various language and party political sub-groups, respectively, were significantly narrower than in the case of the previous question. Over 58% of Afrikaans-speakers and 65,6% of English-speakers, agreed that white South Africans cannot depend on the loyalty of Blacks in the event of war.

Among the supporters of the five political parties, the extent of agreement with the given statement ranged between 52,7% for NP supporters and 74,6% for PFP supporters. The relatively low figure on the NP side, probably means that nearly half the Nationalist supporters believed either that Blacks shared their perceptions of a communist threat, or that Blacks were willing to defend the status quo - thus assuming that Blacks were reasonably content with it, or both. The reaction of PFP supporters - three-quarters of them agreed with the above statement - could have been anticipated and corresponds with PFP misgivings about the government's racial policies. What is surprising, however, is that 72,1% of NRP supporters indicated agreement. This does not conform with their earlier responses which were much closer to those of the NP than the PFP. Among both HNP and NCP supporters, the agreement was 70%. This was probably not a reflection of their disagreement with government policies in the first instance, but rather an expression of a basic tenet of separatist ideology, viz. black and white interests, also in the field of security, were fundamentally different and irreconcilable.

4.3 "Fempower on the march", but at no extra cost

Given the deep sense of threat felt by white South Africans, it is rather surprising that a majority of respondents saw no need to increase defence expenditure. Yet, paradoxically, there was strong support for extending compulsory military service to women.

In reaction to the statement, "The government does not yet spend enough on defence", 41,6% of the respondents agreed and 56% disagreed. The response distribution was characterised by relatively low percentages at both ends of the scale: only 12,1% said they "definitely agree" and a mere 8,6% fell into the "definitely disagree" category. The 56% disagreement with the statement implies either that the respondents thought that the defence budget was of the right order, or that it was already too high.

An analysis of the results by language group and party political affiliation showed wide differences of opinion:

"The government does not yet spend enough on defence"

	<u>%</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
Afrikaans-speakers		52,4	45,8
English-speakers		26,8	70,0
NP		51,7	48,2
PFP		19,5	79,0
NRP		34,6	61,5
HNP		61,6	38,4
NCP		66,5	30,3

Only among Afrikaans-speakers and NP, HNP and NCP followers was there more than 50% support for the notion that the government needed to spend more on defence: it was only fractionally over 50% in the case of Afrikaners and Nationalists.

In contrast, nearly 8 out of 10 PFP supporters thought the government was already spending either enough or too much on defence. Well over half the NRP supporters endorsed this view. Sizeable support for increasing the defence budget came only from HNP and NCP supporters, something which corresponds with their generally hardline orientation.

In the absence of closer questioning, it can only be speculated on why the widespread idea existed that defence expenditure need not be increased. A primary reason can certainly not be the belief that South Africa's security is not seriously threatened. It could, however, be that the public believe that the Defence Force is strong enough to meet the potential threat. Pure financial considerations perhaps also played a role, because many people object to increased defence expenditure on the grounds that this may lead to tax increases. Another possible consideration, influencing PFP supporters in particular, is that a more secure investment in South Africa's safety would be greater government expenditure in areas such as black education; therefore, their call would be for a re-allocation of financial resources.

It should, however, be borne in mind that the intensity of disagreement with the statement was remarkably low. This indicates that opinion might easily shift in support of an increase in defence expenditure. The factors

influencing South Africa's security are not static, and changing circumstances may well alter public opinion.

If the public was satisfied that enough money was spent on defence, it certainly did not take the same view of the manpower situation. Respondents were presented with the following statement: "In the light of the present threat against South Africa, young women should also be called up for a form of compulsory military service". Of the 2000 respondents, 71,2% agreed, and 27,1% disagreed. Particularly significant was the consensus between males and females : 70,6% of the men and 71,7% of the women agreed with the statement (in each case, approximately 24% said they "definitely agree").

There was, however, a considerable margin of difference in the responses of the two language groups: 79,1% of Afrikaans-speakers supported military service for women, against 60,4% of the English-speakers. Although the margin of difference was much smaller among the four income groups, it is significant that there was an inverse relationship between level of income and degree of agreement with the given statement. This means that agreement was smallest (but still admittedly substantial) among the high income group (68,9%), rising gradually through the upper middle (70,2%) and lower middle (73%) income groups, to reach a peak (79,1%) among the low income group.

The greatest support for compulsory military service for women, came from NP supporters, of whom 82,6% agreed, followed by 74,1% of HNP supporters. The lowest number in favour were, again, PFP supporters, with 55,4% agreeing. This figure, it is interesting to note, was below that for English-speakers and the high income group, two sub-groups strongly represented in the PFP.

5. THE HAWK-VERKRAMP SYNDROME : SOME CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC ISSUES

The responses to many of the previous questions indicated correlations between the public's perceptions of foreign policy issues and their party political loyalties. On the basis of party affiliation, it was also possible to draw inferences about respondents' views on domestic political issues. In this section, the white public's opinion on a number of topical

local political issues was measured and will now be cross-tabulated with perceptions already noted. The domestic issues fall firmly within the so-called verlig-verkramp controversy, and the foreign policy issues are those which reveal the respondents' threat perceptions. The purpose of the exercise is, in other words, to investigate the correlations between the white public's threat perceptions and their domestic political sympathies, in each case using quantifiable data.

Before coming to the specific domestic political issues on which opinion was tested, the party political breakdown of the respondents used in the present survey should be briefly discussed. The 1 999 respondents were asked: "If there were to be a parliamentary election now (i.e. February 1982) and the NP, PFP, NRP, HNP and NCP have candidates in your constituency, would you vote (and if yes) for which party would you vote?" Only 2,2% of the panel failed to respond; 7,9% were not registered voters and 12,4% said they would not vote, but were registered voters. The remaining 77,5% (i.e. 1 550 respondents) indicated the following preferences:

	<u>%</u>
NP	57,6
PFP	26,4
NRP	6,7
HNP	7,2
NCP	2,0

Compared with the results of similar M & M opinion surveys conducted over the past 5 years, NP support has declined from 73,5% in 1977 to 57,6% registered in this survey. Until 1979, over 90% of Afrikaner voters would have voted NP; in 1982, the figure stood at 77,3%. The PFP's hypothetical support increased from 13,5% in 1977 to 26,4% in 1982, and the HNP's from 1,5% to 7,2%. The level of support for the NRP in 1982 was 6,7%, almost exactly that registered in 1977.

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the three following statements:

- * "The time has arrived for Coloureds and Indians to sit with Whites in the same Parliament";

- * "White children should not participate in sports meetings with other population groups"; and
- * "Cinemas should be open to all population groups".

Responding to the first question, 61% indicated agreement, 37% disagreement and 2% failed to respond. Predictably, there were profound differences of opinion between the two language groups and the party political groups. Only 41,4% of Afrikaans-speakers agreed that Coloureds and Indians should now join Whites in Parliament, compared with 87,8% of English-speakers. Least support for the statement came from HNP supporters of whom 9,8% agreed, followed by 13,5% of NCP supporters. Of NP supporters, 41,4% agreed and 56,9% disagreed. Slightly over three-quarters of NRP supporters and 98% of PFP supporters agreed.

Seven hundred and forty respondents disagreed with the statement, adopting what can conveniently be called a "verkrampste" point of view. From a cross-tabulation of these panelists' response to this particular question with their answers to some of the foreign policy questions, it was found that of the 740 :

- * 89,7% disagreed that the government was exaggerating the communist threat;
- * 78,4% agreed that Zimbabwe threatened South Africa's safety;
- * 90,3% agreed that South Africa should militarily attack so-called terrorist bases in neighbouring states; and
- * 81,9% agreed that South Africa should not export food to black states harbouring so-called terrorists.

The hawkishness of the verkrampste respondents was also borne out in the mere 12,2% support they gave to the statement that South Africa cannot win the military struggle against SWAPO.

On South Africa's future, three-quarters of the 740 respondents took the pessimistic view that a terrorist war, similar to that in Namibia, would in time develop in South Africa; 94,2% of them, however, believed that South African Blacks did not have cause to take up arms.

The second statement elicited a generally stronger "verligte" response than the first one on parliamentary representation for the Coloureds. Over 75,1% of the respondents disagreed with the contention that "White children should not participate in sports meetings with children of other population groups"; 23,5% agreed. Disagreement was notably greater among English-speakers (93,2%) than Afrikaans-speakers (61,8%). Turning to the political sub-groups, 99% of the PFP supporters disagreed, followed by 87,5% of the NRP's and 69,4% of the NP's. The majority of HNP and NCP supporters, by contrast, agreed that white children should not participate in racially mixed sports: 65,2% of the former and 75,7% of the latter.

Of the 1 999 respondents, 470 took a verkrampte stand on the issue of multiracial school sport. When the 470 respondents' reaction to this question is cross-tabulated with some of their other responses, it emerges that:

- * 90,2% of them disagreed with the statement that the South African Government exaggerates the communist threat;
- * 80,6% agreed that Zimbabwe constitutes a threat to South Africa's security;
- * 89,4% agreed that South Africa should attack so-called terrorist bases in surrounding states; and
- * 83% agreed that South Africa should not export food to black states giving support to terrorists.

The hawk/verkrampe correlation is also evident in the finding that only 15,7% of the 470 respondents agreed that South Africa cannot win the military conflict against SWAPO in the long run. Another striking similarity with the earlier cross-tabulation, was that 76% of the 470 panelists thought South Africa would in future experience a Namibia-style terrorist war; 92% of them nonetheless disagreed with the contention that South African Blacks have reason to resort to arms.

The hardline point of view prevailed in the overall response to the third question, where the panelists were asked to respond to the statement, "Cinemas should be open to all population groups". Of the 1 999

respondents, 54,7% disagreed, and 43,8% agreed (which is perhaps a significant "verligte" minority).

There were, however, wide differences of opinion between the two language and various political groups, as the following table shows:

	<u>%</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
Afrikaans-speakers	26,7	71,8
English-speakers	67,1	31,5
NP	29,2	70,4
PFP	84,1	15,6
NRP	59,6	39,4
HNP	7,9	90,4
NCP	12,6	82,9

More important, for the purposes of this section, is the cross-tabulation of the overall responses with the opinions expressed on other issues. Of the 1 094 respondents who disagreed with the statement that cinemas should be open to all population groups:

- * 88,9% disagreed that the communist threat was exaggerated by the government;
- * 77,9% agreed that Zimbabwe posed a security threat to South Africa;
- * 85,6% agreed that South Africa should launch military attacks against terrorist bases in other states; and
- * 79,7% agreed that South Africa should ban the export of food to black states supporting terrorists.

Only a minority of 17% of the respondents took the "softline" view that in the long run South Africa cannot defeat SWAPO militarily. The pattern of responses which emerged earlier, was repeated with the following cross-tabulations : of the 1 094 respondents, 74,2% agreed that a terrorist war was likely to develop in South Africa, but 87,8% disagreed that Blacks have good reason to take up arms.

Having probed the foreign policy stances of verkrampte respondents, it is only fair to consider the verligtes' views. The first of the three questions on domestic politics can justifiably be used as a fair indication of verlig-verkramp sympathies. It will be recalled that 61% of the respondents - 1220 - agreed that Coloureds and Indians should enjoy parliamentary representation. A cross-tabulation of responses revealed that of these 1220 respondents :

- * 67,5% agreed that Zimbabwe threatened South Africa's security;
- * 54,0% agreed that South Africa should negotiate with SWAPO;
- * 34,1% agreed that South Africa cannot win the war against SWAPO;
- * 77,7% agreed that the Republic should attack terrorist bases on foreign soil; and
- * 68,5% agreed that South Africa should not export food to states hosting terrorists.

Verligtes, therefore, tended to be only marginally less hawkish on foreign policy issues than the white population as a whole. It is interesting to note that the verligtes' views on the five issues listed above did not neatly correspond with either English-speakers' or opposition supporters' responses. The differences are probably accounted for by the considerable number of Afrikaner-Nationalists who fall into the verligte category alongside English-speaking PFP and NRP supporters.

6. CONCLUSION

The three major aspects explored in this study were, first, the white public's threat perceptions; secondly, the public's views on ways of meeting threats and thirdly, the correlation between perceptions of foreign and domestic policy issues. The extent to which white South Africans have become threat-conscious, is reflected in the fact that over 70% of the respondents (i) denied that the government was exaggerating the communist threat, (ii) believed that Zimbabwe constitutes a threat to South Africa's security, and (iii) agreed that a terrorist war, as in Namibia, will in time develop in South Africa.

The hardline inclinations of the white public are manifested in the support for tough South African responses to perceived external threats. Consider the fact that over 80% of the respondents agreed that South Africa should militarily attack terrorist bases in neighbouring states; over 70% supported a ban on food exports to black states harbouring so-called terrorists; over 70% believed South Africa could prevail in the war against SWAPO; and some 60% were against South Africa negotiating directly with SWAPO.

These figures show that respondents generally adopted notably hardline stances on some of the main foreign policy issues of the day. Although a clear majority in each case took a hawkish position, thus pointing to the consensus-building qualities of external threats, this feature should not be allowed to mask the revealing finding that language and party political affiliation are significant divisive forces. The survey showed that there was consistently greater support from Afrikaans-speakers than from English-speakers and from NP followers than from PFP followers, for striking terrorist bases in neighbouring states and for stopping food exports to states supporting "terrorists".

The differences between these sub-groups were particularly pronounced on the question of South Africa's ability to win the war against SWAPO: over 80% of the Afrikaans-speaking respondents and NP supporters, believed South Africa could prevail; compared with only about 47% of the PFP supporters and roughly 60% of the English-speakers. Similarly, English-speakers and PFP supporters were less threat-conscious than Afrikaners and NP supporters; this applies to both the communist threat against South Africa and the threat Zimbabwe poses for the Republic's security.

These findings may contain some food for thought for the architects of South Africa's total national strategy ...

The above correlations already indicate a connection between respondents' perceptions of domestic and foreign policy issues. In short, Afrikaners and supporters of the NP, HNP and NCP were most pronounced in their support for tough foreign policy actions and also register the greatest threat perceptions of all the sub-groups. Given the divisions that plagued the NP at the time of this opinion survey, it could not be assumed that NP supporters were largely in agreement on contentious domestic political issues. It was therefore necessary to test respondents' views on a number

of specific issues, which would reveal their verligte/verkrampete sympathies. Focusing on respondents who expressed verkrampete sentiments, it was found that they overwhelmingly opted for a high level of threat-consciousness and a strongly hawkish orientation on foreign policy issues.

Verligtes, the survey revealed, were only marginally less hawkish on foreign policy issues than the white population generally.

Speaking of the verligtes, it is worth recalling that they were in the majority on two of the three questions dealing with domestic political issues, while the verkrampete majority on the third was not really convincing. Although one should of course guard against reading too much in the responses to only three questions, there would seem to be a fairly strong verligte inclination among the majority of white South Africans. Some groups were, needless to say, more verlig than others. Taking opinions on domestic and foreign policy issues together, the present survey points to a notably verligte domestic posture, coupled with a decidedly hawkish external orientation.

It is safe to assume that the bulk of the verkrampete respondents will today identify with the newly constituted Conservative Party (CP) and the HNP. Until the birth of the CP - an off-shoot of the NP - many of these people would probably have been NP supporters (albeit disgruntled right-wingers). Given such a constituency, the CP is likely to adopt a decidedly militant foreign policy posture.

The emergence of the CP points to the inescapable dilemma of polls such as this. They present snapshots taken at specific moments in time under particular circumstances. As situations change, so political opinions will be influenced, and, ideally, opinion surveys should be repeated at regular intervals, to obtain a "moving picture".

What is, however, certain, is that neither the threat-consciousness nor the hawkish inclinations of white South Africans will decline - but will, on the contrary, increase - as long as South Africa finds itself so drastically at odds with the wider international community over its domestic political arrangements.

REFERENCES

- 1) Quoted by Frankel, J., The Making of Foreign Policy : An Analysis of Decision Making, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, p.73.
- 2) Quoted loc. cit. For a more detailed consideration of the role of public opinion in the formulation of foreign policy, see Olivier, G.C., Die Grondslae van Suid-Afrika se Buitelandse Beleid, D. Phil. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1973, pp.36-40.
- 3) Commissioned by the South African Institute of International Affairs and being undertaken by the present author.
- 4) Quoted by Frankel, J., op. cit., p.73.
- 5) See Geldenhuys, D.J., Some Foreign Policy Implications of South Africa's Total National Strategy, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, 1981, 63 pp.

A N N E X U R E

QUESTIONNAIRE

In this section you are asked to answer a few factual questions (Nos. 1 and 2) and to indicate your attitude concerning some matters of public importance. If you know the answers to Questions 1 and 2, write them in the space provided - if not, merely indicate by a dash (-). Please don't look up the answers or consult somebody else. We only want to find out what you personally know or think.

ANSWERS

- 1(a) Who is the Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs?(07)
- (b) Who is the Minister of Defence?(08)
- (c) Who is the President of Botswana?(09)
- (d) Who is the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe?(10)
- (e) Who is the President of Mozambique?(11)
- (f) Who is the President of France?(12)
- (g) Who is the Prime Minister of New Zealand?(13)
- (h) Who is the Prime Minister of Britain?(14)

- 2(a) With what does UN Resolution 435 deal?
.....
.....(15/16)
- (b) What do the following abbreviations stand for?
ANC:(17)
SWAPO:(18)
- (c) Does America allow South Africa to buy military weapons from her?
Yes 19- 1
No 2

3. Please indicate the degree to which you differ or agree with each of the following statements (numbered (a) to (i)) by circling the appropriate number on the scale : "Definitely agree" ----- "definitely disagree" e.g. (2) :

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Definitely Agree</u>	<u>Inclined to Agree</u>	<u>Inclined to Disagree</u>	<u>Definitely Disagree</u>
(a) A terrorist war like in South West Africa will in time also develop in South Africa	20- 1	2	3	4
(b) The Communist threat against South Africa is exaggerated by the Government	21- 1	2	3	4
(c) The Government in Zimbabwe constitutes a threat to South Africa's safety	22- 1	2	3	4
(d) South Africa's Blacks have good reason to take up arms against the Government	23- 1	2	3	4
(e) White South Africans cannot depend on the loyalty of black South Africans in the case of war against South Africa	24- 1	2	3	4
(f) South Africa should negotiate directly with SWAPO to reach a settlement in SWA/Namibia	25- 1	2	3	4
(g) South Africa cannot win the military struggle against SWAPO in the long run	26- 1	2	3	4
(h) South Africa should militarily attack terrorist bases in its neighbouring states (like the ANC base near Maputo)	27- 1	2	3	4
(i) South Africa should <u>not</u> export food to black states which support or harbour terrorists	28- 1	2	3	4

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Definitely Agree</u>	<u>Inclined to Agree</u>	<u>Inclined to Disagree</u>	<u>Definitely Disagree</u>
(j) The Government does not yet spend enough on Defence	29- 1	2	3	4
(k) In the light of the threat against South Africa young women should also be called up for a form of compulsory military service	30- 1	2	3	4
(l) The time has arrived for Coloureds and Indians to sit with Whites in the same Parliament	31- 1	2	3	4
(m) White school children should not participate in sports meetings with children of other population groups	32- 1	2	3	4
(n) Cinemas should be open to all population groups	33- 1	2	3	4
4. If there were to be a Parliamentary election now and the following parties have candidates in your constituency, would you vote? For which party would you vote?				
I am a registered voter but would not vote	34- 1			
I am not a registered a voter	2			
<u>WOULD VOTE FOR</u>				
National Party (NP)	3			
Progressive Federal Party (PFP)	4			
New Republic Party (NRP)	5			
Herstigte National Party (HNP)	6			
National Conservative Party (NCP)	7			