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South Africa: The Rightwing Threat



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A Research Paper

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ALA 85-10028
March 1985

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by
the Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It
was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations.

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**South Africa:
The Rightwing Threat**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 19 February 1985
was used in this report.*

The right has reemerged over the past three years as a major political force in South Africa. The rebirth of the right is a potential threat to President P. W. Botha's program of gradual, limited racial reform. Over time, the right could also pose a real challenge to Botha's National Party (NP) because the militant nationalism that the right espouses has historically been the most dynamic political force in Afrikaner society.

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According to public opinion polls, the conservative opposition now has the support of approximately a third of the Afrikaners, which translates roughly into about a quarter of the white electorate. In the past two years, the two rightwing opposition parties—the Conservative Party and the Herstigte Nasionale Party (Restructured National Party)—won approximately 40 percent of the popular vote in 17 byelections held in Afrikaner districts. The two parties agreed in June 1984 to work together in future elections and have already joined forces in seven byelections since then.

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While the electoral strength of the right is on the rise among Afrikaners, it does not now pose a serious challenge to NP rule. This is mainly because of the party's strength among the white electorate and the political skills of its leadership, especially of Botha himself. Indeed, the National Party's growing strength among English-speaking whites has compensated for its losses among conservative Afrikaners. The right, for its part, suffers from an underlying rivalry between the leaders of the two rightwing parties, a lack of funds, and weak support among the English speakers. Moreover, so long as Botha seems to be able to control the basic process and the general pace of change, we doubt that the right will be able to broaden its base in the white community sufficiently to challenge the NP.

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Not only has President Botha had to contend with the parties of the right, he has also had to face the rightwing faction within the National Party, which is sympathetic with the views of the opposition parties of the right. Press accounts and US Embassy reporting have identified 25 rightwingers within the NP's parliamentary caucus of 128, including two senior ministers. Thus far, the Nationalist rightwing faction has been content to work within the party to halt or at least slow the pace of reform, mainly because of the pull of party patronage, discipline, and perquisites.

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To date, the division in Afrikaner society has served US interests in southern Africa, in our view, by giving P. W. Botha greater freedom to carry out reforms and regional accommodations that have moved South Africa in the direction of US goals of peaceful change and stability. We believe Botha's ability to continue his reformist policies probably depends directly on his continued capability to contain the threat from the right, both inside and outside the National Party. If—as we expect—the NP maintains its hold on the Afrikaner middle class and roughly its present level of support among the English-speaking community, we would expect P. W. Botha to be able to continue on a reformist course during the next two to five years.

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Should Botha, who is 69, die or suddenly resign, moderate and rightwing Nationalists would compete for the mantle of party leader. We believe that the party leadership is most likely to pass to another moderate Nationalist, which may then lead the NP right wing to bolt the party. The prospects for a victory by a rightwing Nationalist would, however, improve in a period of escalating unrest and violence, particularly if a substantial majority of Afrikaners became convinced that the government's "soft" reformist policies were responsible for the unrest.

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Barring Botha's untimely demise, we regard the ascendancy of the right wing within the National Party or an outright electoral victory by the parties of the right as unlikely in the short term but growing in possibility over the longer term. Either one would lead to greater pressure on the United States to distance itself from South Africa and increase the likelihood of conflict between Pretoria and its neighbors, which, as a result, could revive or create opportunities for a more active Soviet role in southern Africa.

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Figure 1
South Africa's Rightwing Strongholds



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South Africa: The Rightwing Threat

Introduction

The right in South African white politics, long ineffectually if vocally critical of the ruling National Party (NP), has emerged over the past three years as a major political force representing Afrikaners opposed to President Pieter W. Botha's program of gradual and limited racial reform. The rebirth of the right is a potential threat to the NP because militant nationalism has historically been the most dynamic political force in Afrikaner society. In critical debates among Afrikaners over the past two centuries, extremists have usually emerged victorious. 

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Although the right does not now pose an electoral threat to the NP, its growing inroads in Afrikaner circles have forced the ruling party to try to broaden its appeal among the country's English-speaking whites. Should the NP continue to lose ground in the Afrikaner community and fail to rally sufficient support from the English speakers, the NP leadership might feel compelled to back away from Botha's program of domestic reform and regional detente in order to stop the hemorrhaging of Afrikaner support. 

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The Split in Afrikaner Society

The key to the National Party's hold on the government since it first came to power in 1948 has been its success in first molding and then in maintaining the unity of Afrikaner society as a political force. The political consensus among Afrikaners began to break down, however, in the aftermath of the Soweto riots of 1976, which ignited a debate over apartheid—the NP's fundamental policy of racial separation—that


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divided Afrikaners into two rival schools of thought, according to academic studies and State Department reporting:

- Conservative Afrikaners, popularly labelled *verkrampies* (literally, cramped ones), opposed any tinkering with apartheid, contending that even minor changes would undermine the entire system.
- The more moderate members of the Afrikaner elite, called *verligtes* (enlightened ones), argued that domestic and international pressures mandated limited increases in economic and social benefits for the country's black majority and a circumscribed political role for the mixed race "Colored" and to "Asians," which in South Africa means Indians. Reform, they maintained, was the only way to guarantee continued white control and preservation of the Afrikaner identity. 

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While *verligte* Nationalists headed by then Prime Minister P. W. Botha have led the National Party since 1978, the *verkrampie* faction was able to block many reform initiatives until 1982 by capitalizing on the fear of a party split. Tension within the party came to a head in late February 1982, when Andries Treurnicht, the leader of the *verkrampie* faction in the Cabinet, challenged the Prime Minister publicly over the issue of "power sharing." The party's expulsion of Treurnicht and 15 other Nationalist members of Parliament in March 1982 formalized the fissure in Afrikaner politics. 

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The split in the NP set in train divisions in Afrikaner social, cultural, educational, and religious organizations that had for decades been the backbone of Nationalist support. The loss since 1983 of between 1,500 and 2,500 of the estimated 14,000 members has left the semisecret *Afrikaner Broederbond* (Afrikaner Brotherhood) "unable to foster the National Party's

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Afrikaner Nationalism in Historical Perspective

South Africa's 2.8 million Afrikaners are descendants mainly of Dutch, French, German, and Scottish settlers who came to southern Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries. They share the Calvinist religion of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Afrikaans language, and a common historical experience. For the past century and a half, the driving ideology of the Afrikaner has been uncompromising nationalism. [redacted]

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Following the British conquest of Cape Province during the Napoleonic Wars, British Common Law established equality between Afrikaner farmers and their Colored and African servants. Between 1834 and 1838, about 30 percent of the Afrikaner population of the Cape trekked north to remove themselves from British law. Anna Steenkamp, the wife of one of the trek leaders, explained their intent: "We rather withdrew so as to preserve our doctrines in purity." [redacted]

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In the 19th century, the Afrikaners established two republics north of the Cape—the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. Afrikaner government was rough but democratic, and on one point all Afrikaners agreed: "There could be no equality between the Colored people and the white inhabitants either in church or state," according to the Constitution of the Orange Free State. [redacted]

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The decision of the Afrikaner republics to fight the British—first in 1880 and again in 1899—reflected the dominance of militant nationalists who rejected compromise. The second Anglo-Boer war divided Afrikaner society between the "handsuppers," those who accepted British authority, and the "bitterenders," those who stayed in the field until the end. [redacted]

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The defeat of Afrikaner republics in 1902 was the lowest point in the history of the Afrikaners, and still heavily influences their thinking. Afrikaner farms in the two republics had been devastated; over 25,000 Boer women and children had perished in British concentration camps; and tens of thousands of once prosperous farmers had become landless workers. The material effect lasted at least into the 1930s, when the Afrikaners were described by a Carnegie Commission study as a "poor white class" with an

average wage less than 60 percent of that of the English. Approximately 40 percent of Afrikaner children were malnourished, according to this study published in the late 1930s. [redacted]

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Until the late 1940s, Afrikaner society was politically divided between those Afrikaners who argued that the future of South Africa was inextricably linked with the British Commonwealth, and those who advocated a militant Afrikaner nationalism—principally the clergymen and intellectuals who founded the National Party following the First World War. The Nationalists' militant ideology gradually won them support in the smaller towns and working-class suburbs of South Africa, and they mobilized a network of educators, small businessmen, ministers, and farmers into a movement for the advancement of Afrikaner society. The party called for economic reforms to benefit the Afrikaner worker and for rigid political limitations on the nonwhite peoples. One Nationalist political slogan was "the Kaffir (African) in his place and the Koolie (Indian) out of the country." [redacted]

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Despite the popularity of Jan Smuts, who had led South Africa to join the Allied side in World War II, the Afrikaners united to defeat Smuts in the 1948 general election, bringing the NP to power for the first time. The NP proceeded to build a powerful political machine by gerrymandering parliamentary constituencies to give weight to smaller rural districts and by forming a party organization at local levels that included over 25 percent of the adult Afrikaner population. [redacted]

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The National Party has been in power since 1948. As government and parastatal bodies absorbed 40 percent of the Afrikaner work force and as the salaries of Afrikaners reached approximate parity with those of English speakers, the Afrikaner ceased to be a "poor white." The NP also established a more rigid and systematic approach to white supremacy than the British had imposed, restricting black political activity to 10 tribal homelands, removing the Coloreds from the voting roll, and displacing more than 3 million Coloreds, Indians, and Africans from their homes in residential areas the Nationalist government reserved for whites. [redacted]

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25X1 reformist vision of a new South Africa," [redacted]
 25X1 [redacted] The *Broederbond*
 had long been the key institution in the formation of
 Afrikaner political opinion and in generating support
 for the NP, especially in smaller towns and rural
 areas. Conservatives also led revolts against estab-
 lished officials in the Dutch Reformed Church, the
 Afrikaner Federated Teachers Union, and the Feder-
 ation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations, which repre-
 sents approximately 3,700 organizations, according to
 press and US Embassy reporting. [redacted]

25X1 With their ideology increasingly at odds with the
 direction Botha was taking the NP, rightwing intellec-
 tuals formed the *Afrikaner Volkswag* (Afrikaner Peo-
 ple's Guard) in May 1984 as a rival to the *Broeder-*
 25X1 *bond*. [redacted] the declared
 aim of the *Afrikaner Volkswag* is "to work for the
 future of the white race." By late 1984, South African
 journalists estimated the membership of the *Afrika-*
ner Volkswag had grown to approximately 5,000. It
 has drawn support from conservative politicians;
 church, educational, and cultural associations; and
 paramilitary organizations such as the *Afrikaner*
Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Armed Resistance).
 [redacted]

25X1 The split within the Afrikaner community is also
 reflected in public opinion polls. A survey conducted
 in March 1984 by South Africa's foremost social
 science research institute at the University of Natal
 indicated, for example, that only 53 percent of Afrika-
 ners believed P. W. Botha was a "dependable and
 strong leader" and that only 47 percent believed he
 knew "what the country really needs." Likewise, polls
 taken between 1982 and 1984 consistently showed
 that between 30 and 40 percent of Afrikaners in the
 Transvaal—South Africa's most populous province,
 which has 57 of the 128 Nationalist members of
 Parliament—no longer support the NP. [redacted]

The Right

Political Organization

On the political side, the revival of the right came
 from the formation of the Conservative Party (CP) by
 the 16 parliamentarians who left the National Party in

March 1982. The CP has attracted support from
 many prominent Afrikaner politicians, including B. J.
 Vorster, the Prime Minister from 1966 to 1978, and
 Connie Mulder, former leader of the Transvaal cau-
 cus of the party and P. W. Botha's principal rival for
 the premiership in 1978, as well as several other
 former Cabinet ministers. [redacted]

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The CP quickly developed a political base in the rural
 and lower-middle-class urban districts of the Trans-
 vaal and the Orange Free State. Political surveys
 indicate that the CP also has strong support among
 farmers and smalltown businessmen as well as
 middle- and lower-grade civil servants, teachers, and
 policemen—essentially the Afrikaner lower middle
 class. The CP now has 18 representatives in parlia-
 ment and has a functioning party organization in all
 four South African provinces. [redacted]

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The CP is not the only party on the right. The
 extreme right had long been the preserve of the
Herstigste Nasionale Party (the HNP or Reconstituted
 National Party), which was formed in 1969 by four
 Nationalist parliamentarians who bolted the party on
 the issue of multiracial sports. Although the HNP has
 failed to win a single parliamentary or provincial
 council election since its formation, voting results
 have shown that it has solidified its support in many
 Afrikaner working-class neighborhoods since the ear-
 ly 1980s, even as the HNPs lower-middle-class mem-
 bers appear to have flocked to the new CP.² In
 districts where competition between white and black
 workers is most intense—the mining towns of the
 Transvaal and the major industrial cities of Cape
 Province—HNP support is strongest. In the 1981
 general election, the HNP took a strong antireform
 stance and won 14.1 percent of the total vote and—
 more significantly—more than 25 percent of the
 Afrikaner vote. [redacted]

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The combined strength of the CP and HNP repre-
 sents a growing electoral challenge to the National

² Since the formation of the CP in 1982, over a third of the HNP's
 membership has joined that new party, according to US Embassy
 estimates. [redacted]

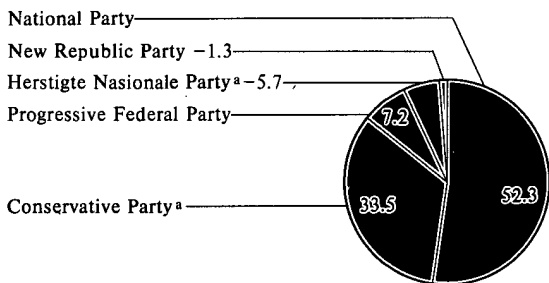
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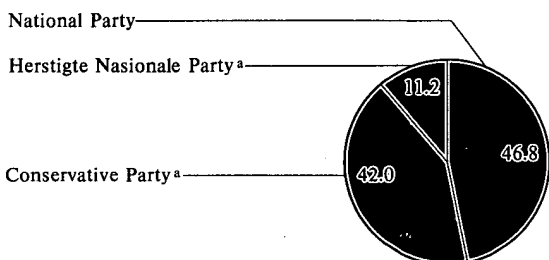
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Figure 2
Results of Parliamentary and Provincial
Council Byelections, 1982-84

Percent
 Elections in Afrikaner Districts



Parliamentary Elections in the Transvaal



^a Rightwing parties.

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Party, as evident in voting over the past two years. In 17 byelections for parliamentary and provincial council seats held between June 1982 and November 1984, the rightwing parties won approximately 40 percent of the popular vote as against 52 percent for the National Party. In the five parliamentary byelections in the Transvaal, the right outpolled the NP by 53 to 47 percent. According to US Embassy and press analysis, 30 to 40 percent of Afrikaner voters voted against the recently implemented new Constitution in the referendum among white voters in late 1983, as had been recommended by the HNP and CP; the Constitution passed with two-thirds of the total white vote in what was widely viewed as a great victory for P. W. Botha, the NP, and the program of reform.

The two rightwing parties publicly agreed to an electoral pact in June 1984 after interparty rivalry led to Nationalist victories in two byelections in 1982 and 1983. The pact led to open cooperation in several byelections and to a CP victory in one byelection in the northern Transvaal—the result, according to journalist observers, of HNP support for the CP ticket.

Both rightwing parties have expanded their campaigns into middle-class urban and suburban districts. For example, in byelections in November 1984, the CP and HNP challenged seats in Cape Province held by the Nationalists since the 1940s, winning 15 to 25 percent of the vote. A senior South African official told US diplomats last summer that a united rightwing movement might win several seats in the more conservative districts of eastern Cape Province in a future general election. Progressive Federal Party leader Frederick van Zyl Slabbert recently told senior US diplomats that with consistent HNP support the CP could take 40 to 50 seats in a general election and supplant his own liberally oriented party as the official opposition.

Rightwing Ideology and Tactics

The rightwing parties are totally opposed to any form of power sharing with the Indians and Coloreds. Andries Treurnicht, who now leads the Conservative Party, emphasized in speeches in Parliament in 1984 that limited political rights for Coloreds and Indians were the “thin edge of the wedge” that would lead inexorably to universal suffrage and “one man, one vote.” The HNP’s leader, Jaap Marais, said in a speech last September that “the government had entered into an alliance with the Coloreds and Indians against Afrikanerdom” by putting the new Constitution into effect. Rightwing positions on domestic and regional issues directly oppose those of the National Party:

- Apartheid, Treurnicht openly argues, is necessary to protect the white man and to prevent him from being swamped by other races. The right opposes any change in the apartheid system in sports, education, or labor—areas in which the NP has been cautiously open to limited reform.

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- The right views the National Party's attempts at accommodation with Mozambique and Angola as surrenders to the African Marxist states. An editorial in the *Herstigte Nasionale Party's* newspaper, for example, called the Nkomati Pact with Mozambique a "betrayal of the vital interests of the white people."
- Both rightwing parties are critical of alleged US interference in South African domestic and regional policies. The HNP has been particularly vociferous in publicly denouncing Foreign Minister Pik Botha as a "stooge of Washington," charging that the National Party has subordinated South Africa's interests to those of the United States. [redacted]

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A review of CP and HNP statements shows the right's tactical ability to play on the specific concerns of electoral groups. The right capitalized in byelections in 1984 on Afrikaner middle-class frustration with the economic recession, which has worsened since 1982, and on instances of alleged corruption within the Nationalist leadership, such as a \$120,000 honorarium paid to P. W. Botha for his 35 years of parliamentary service. The right also has played on working-class Afrikaner fears that improving facilities for nonwhites means poorer ones for whites—a concern often reflected under the rubric of "maintaining standards." In three major towns in the northern Transvaal, Conservative Party supporters wrested control of local government from the National Party in early 1984 and passed legislation reinforcing apartheid regulations. [redacted]

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Limits to Rightwing Influence

Despite its growing strength, the right has so far failed to mount an effective challenge to the National Party's hold on the bulk of the Afrikaner middle class, which, according to US diplomatic and journalist observers, was largely created by the ascendancy of the NP since 1948 and, according to recent polls, now constitutes the largest segment of the Afrikaner population. Indeed, according to recent government statistics, 25 to 30 percent of top management positions in the private sector and 90 percent of all senior civil servant positions are in Afrikaner hands, whereas only 8 percent of the Afrikaner population are now farmers (down from 35 percent in 1948). [redacted]

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Dr. Andries Treurnicht



Jaap Marais

While the right has made inroads among Afrikaners, it has not had much success in recruiting English speakers, who are approximately 40 percent of the white population and distrust the militant Afrikaner nationalism of the right. Political surveys by Afrikaner universities indicate that the HNP won less than 2 percent of the English vote in the 1981 general election. According to recent polls taken by the English and Afrikaans press, only 5 to 7 percent of the English community now supports either the CP or the HNP. Many white former Rhodesians and, since 1980, Zimbabweans, have resettled in South Africa, however, giving a boost to English-speaking support for the right. In two recent byelections, English-speaking immigrants from Zimbabwe voted in large numbers for the Conservative Party, according to press reports, indicating at least some potential for future inroads. [redacted]

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In trying to attract both the Afrikaner middle-class and English-speaking whites, the right is severely constrained by lack of money. Neither can afford a daily newspaper—a serious handicap in a country in which the government controls the broadcast media. Both parties have weekly newspapers, however, with an average circulation of about 15,000—compared with 60,000 to 100,000 for the National Party dailies in the Cape and Transvaal. The right's shaky financial support also has limited the development of a professional political bureaucracy, which it needs to counter the formidable National Party apparatus. [redacted]

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Despite the cooperation of the CP and HNP at the polls, we believe competition between the two parties will continue to divide the right and prevent a united challenge to the NP:

- Relations between HNP leader Jaap Marais and Conservative Party chairman Andries Treurnicht have been strained for years, according to press and US Embassy reporting.
- According to the Afrikaans media, many HNP leaders resent the CP's success and feel that the rival party is "soft" on racial and regional issues.
- According to South African press accounts, several violent clashes have occurred between HNP and CP regulars at meetings and rallies.

Moreover, in several byelections in 1982 and 1983, the National Party has won despite drawing fewer votes than the combined total of the two rightwing parties.

If the electoral pact formed last June breaks down, a significant number of HNP supporters probably will join the CP and lead other HNP militants to leave conventional politics. Some might join paramilitary organizations like the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* or the *Wit Kommando* (White Commando), both of which have been implicated in terrorist assaults on government officials, liberal Afrikaner academics, and civil rights workers. In an interview last December, Minister of Law and Order Louis Le Grange noted that the police were concerned about the growth of these two organizations.

The National Party and the Right

Given the inroads the right has made, the National Party is taking steps to limit the potential political damage. President Botha, as party leader, has carefully crafted policies to limit further defections by rightwing Nationalists, to solidify support in the Afrikaner middle class, and to increase support in the English-speaking community.

Latent Support for the Right Within the NP

The greatest potential threat to Botha's control over the government, in our view, comes from the right wing of his own party. According to recent articles in the South African press, approximately 25 of the 128 National Party members of Parliament belong to a

conservative faction that favors forgoing further political reforms to win back dissident Afrikaners who have been disaffected by Botha's commitment to change. Because many of these parliamentarians faced stiff challenges from HNP and Conservative Party candidates in the 1981 general election and subsequent byelections, they believe themselves vulnerable to defeat by candidates from the right in future contests, according to press reporting.

We believe latent support for the right exists at every level within the ruling party, including the Cabinet. According to US Embassy reporting, the leading conservative in the National Party is Minister of Home Affairs F. W. De Klerk, leader of the party caucus in the Transvaal and one of the chief contenders for the succession to P. W. Botha as President. Minister of Transportation Hendrik Schoeman is another senior Transvaal Nationalist who has been named by South African journalists as a leader of the rightwing faction of the party.

Despite the ideological affinity of the NP's right wing to the HNP and CP, according to press and US Embassy reporting, P. W. Botha's skillful use of National Party patronage, discipline, and perquisites has kept the rightwing faction within the party:

- National Party discipline remains intact in the parliamentary caucus of the party. In early February, F. W. De Klerk himself introduced bills to repeal the Mixed Marriages Act and that part of the Immorality Act, which prohibit marriage and sex across racial lines. Although the existing legislation has the support of conservative Afrikaners both inside and outside the NP, he did so because these issues fall within his portfolio and because, as an NP minister, he is bound to support the agreed party position.
- Botha's appointment of a conservative Afrikaner, B. H. Wilkens, to serve as Deputy Minister of Land Development is only the most recent indication that Botha is sensitive to the need to co-opt the party's right.

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Rival Leaders of the Afrikaner Right Wing

25X1 *Dr. Andries Treurnicht, the leader of the Conservative Party, has been the intellectual leader of right-wing Afrikanerdom since the early 1960s. As a one-time Dutch Reformed Church clergyman, newspaper editor, chairman of the semisecret Afrikaner Broederbond, and Cabinet minister, Treurnicht has been an uncompromising advocate of apartheid.* []

25X1 *In 1960, while serving as moderator of the Cape branch of the Dutch Reformed Church, Treurnicht stifled opposition to apartheid within his church, almost certainly at the behest of then Prime Minister H. J. Verwoerd. In the late 1960s, as the editor of the conservative journal Hoofstad and later as chairman of the Broederbond, Treurnicht became the spokesman of the right wing within the National Party.* []

25X1 *In 1971, Treurnicht was elected to Parliament from Waterberg, an extremely conservative constituency in the northern Transvaal, which he still represents. He entered the Cabinet in 1974 and four years later was appointed head of the Transvaal caucus of the National Party.* []

25X1 *In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Treurnicht became Botha's most persistent critic within the Cabinet. Because of his opposition to reform, Treurnicht was named "Dr. No" by the English press. His decision to challenge the Prime Minister on the National Party policy of constitutional reform in March 1982 led to his expulsion from the party with 15 other Nationalist members of Parliament and their formation of the Conservative Party.* []

25X1 *Treurnicht is highly respected among Afrikaners. A poll taken in 1983 showed that 40 percent of them rated him as a "true Afrikaner," as compared with 45 percent for P. W. Botha. Treurnicht is both the leading ideologue and the most forceful speaker in the Conservative Party and is, in our opinion, the only politically active Afrikaner capable of leading a cohesive rightwing opposition to President Botha.* []

Treurnicht, who is in his sixties and holds a doctorate in divinity from Stellenbosch University, eschews racial statements in his defense of apartheid. In a speech last December, Treurnicht noted that the Afrikaner does not regard himself as a member of some chosen race at the expense of others but that "he is a member of a nation which has its own culture, its own right to a separate existence and to a distinctive territory." []

25X1 *Jaap Marais, leader of the Herstigte Nasionale Party, is a longtime rival of Treurnicht, having defeated him in three elections for the Waterberg parliamentary seat. In the late 1960s, Treurnicht helped cast Marais and his fellow HNP militants out of the National Party and the Broederbond—insults that Marais has never forgiven, according to US Embassy and journalist reports.* []

25X1 *Marais was one of the four National Party parliamentarians who formed the HNP in 1969. He served as deputy leader of the HNP until he assumed the party's leadership in 1977. Marais is a forceful party leader with a large following among Afrikaner blue-collar voters. He is an effective and popular political speaker.* []

25X1 *Marais, who is in his late fifties, shows little of Treurnicht's intellectual polish. While Treurnicht is equally fluent in English and Afrikaans, Marais will speak only the latter. Whereas Treurnicht speaks of rights for all South Africans, Marais speaks of the swart gewaar (the black danger) to white South Africa. Because of the personal, ideological, and political differences between the two men, we believe that Marais would be the more likely to break the electoral alliance between their parties. In case of such a split, we estimate that the HNP would lose supporters to the Conservative Party.* []

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Afrikaner Rightwing Terrorism

Rightwing Afrikaner paramilitary organizations have proliferated during the past five years. Two have carried out terrorist attacks against moderate Afrikaner politicians and intellectuals. Although these groups have only minimal support in the Afrikaner community, we believe they have the potential for carrying out more extensive and destructive operations during the next two years. []

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The Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Armed Resistance or AWB) is the best organized and largest of the paramilitary groups with approximately 1,200 members, according to press reporting and academic studies. Since the mid-1970s, the AWB has attacked moderate Afrikaner intellectuals, clergymen, and politicians on several occasions. In 1983, two members of the AWB were sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for plotting terrorist raids against multiracial hotels and casinos. Minister of Law and Order Louis Le Grange stated in Parliament last May that the security police were actively monitoring the AWB. []

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Eugene Terre'Blanche, the leader of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, has patterned the party on the German National Socialist (Nazi) movement, and he himself apes Hitler's mannerisms. The party symbol is a version of the Swastika, and Terre'Blanche—whose name can be translated as "white land"—surrounds himself with young men in brown shirts. In mid-1984, Terre'Blanche announced that the AWB would cooperate with the Conservative Party in its campaigns in the Transvaal, stating that such cooperation was "necessary to keep alive the flame of freedom of the white race." While AWB assistance may have contributed marginally to the Conservatives' victory in one constituency, press reports indicate that this help may have cost the CP support in wider Afrikaner circles. []

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The other major rightist paramilitary group, the Wit Kommando (White Commando or WK), is more clandestine and violent than the AWB. In the past five years, the WK has claimed responsibility for

bomb attacks against opponents ranging from officials of the National Party to white civil rights activists. In a press statement issued last year, the WK noted that its declared policy was "to warn first, and later to eliminate, if necessary, all persons, institutions, and organizations promoting racial integration and black rule in South Africa." In December 1984, the Wit Kommando threatened to kill American legislators visiting South Africa, according to US Embassy reporting. []

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As of 1982, the Wit Kommando was composed of 500 men, according to a press interview with Gen. Johan Coetzee, the present Commissioner of the South African Police. In the same article, the South African security official speculated that Italians financed the Wit Kommando through sympathetic Italian-South Africans. []

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Afrikaner proto-fascist movements are not a new development. More than 100,000 Afrikaners joined the pro-Nazi Ossewa Brandwag (Ox Wagon Sentinels or OB) in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The OB openly supported Nazi war aims, carried out espionage activities for Germany, and terrorized pro-British Afrikaners. Both future Prime Minister B. J. Vorster and Gen. Hendrik van den Bergh, head of the Bureau for State Security from 1966 to 1977, were detained for subversive activities as OB members during the war. The OB was absorbed into the National Party in the late 1940s, but residual sympathy for the aims and means of the Nazi regime remains among at least a small minority of Afrikaners, according to polls and academic studies. []

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We believe that the paramilitary organizations have been responsible for killing white political activists, such as civil rights worker Richard Turner, who was murdered in 1978. The potential for future attacks is high and will increase if frustration within the Afrikaner community with reform continues to grow. In our view, the most likely target of future rightwing terrorist attacks would be government officials. []

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Botha's Strengths and Strategies

Although the Nationalist right wing will seek to undercut Botha's reformist agenda, we believe—on the basis of recent polls and press reporting from South Africa—that P. W. Botha is very much in control of the National Party and that the great majority of the party membership continues to support his commitment to reform:

- A poll taken in mid-1984 found that only 12 percent of Afrikaans-speaking Nationalist voters felt that sufficient change and reform had taken place or that change had gone too far. In the same survey, only 18 percent felt that P. W. Botha should try to win back support from the rightwing parties, while substantially more (29 percent) felt that the NP should collaborate more with black, Colored, and Indian leaders.
- A poll taken by an Afrikaans newspaper in November 1984 found that the average National Party voter "had moved to the left" on most domestic issues but that the English-speaking voter had become more conservative. The survey also found that the majority of NP supporters were amenable to further political, social, and economic change. The US Embassy, commenting on the poll, noted that moderates now dominated the NP. [redacted]

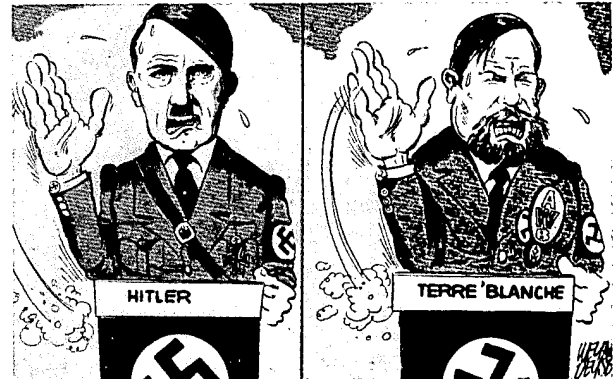
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Botha has tried to stifle intraparty rivalry, and has refused to allow his supporters to challenge or to embarrass the rightwing faction within the NP. For example, he prevented moderate Nationalists from challenging De Klerk for the leadership of the party in the Transvaal during the last meeting of the provincial caucus of the party, [redacted]

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Consolidating Afrikaner Support. Botha also has made important changes during the past year to revitalize support for the NP in the Afrikaner community. Despite the widely publicized defection to the right of many local NP party chapters, which have been reported in the South African press, NP organizers have strengthened the party apparatus in many constituencies now by recruiting new members. Although this effort has not been successful in rural



districts, the NP organization in urban constituencies seems as strong as ever. For example, in the November 1984 byelection in Primrose near Johannesburg, the local NP organization identified 2,000 postal (absentee) voters for a hard-pressed candidate whose margin of victory was less than 800 votes. [redacted]

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Botha has purged the Cabinet of unpopular and incompetent ministers during the past year, replacing them with younger Afrikaner politicians. The average age of incoming Cabinet ministers in 1975 was 55, with an average parliamentary experience of 15 years. The new Nationalist ministers have served only 7 to 10 years in Parliament and are mainly in their early 40s. Now serving in critical positions in the Ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Industry, they have been supporters of P. W. Botha since the late 1970s and have actively backed his program of political and economic reform within the parliamentary caucus of the National Party, according to both journalistic and US diplomatic reporting.³ [redacted]

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Wooing the English. Botha has made an active effort to attract English speakers to the National Party since he became Prime Minister in 1978. He persuaded several English-speaking parliamentarians from opposition parties to join the NP, and he has actively supported English-speaking Nationalist candidates in

³ These young supporters of President Botha include Minister of Finance Barend Du Plessis, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Louis Nel, Minister of Industry Dawie De Villiers, and Deputy Minister of Cooperation and Development Sam de Beers. [redacted]

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byelections. This policy paid dividends in the constitutional referendum of 1983, when 60 to 70 percent of the English-speaking whites supported him and the National Party by voting "yes," according to US Embassy reporting. A leader of the liberal, English-oriented Progressive Federal Party told US diplomats after the referendum that approximately half of his party voted "yes" despite the PFP's spirited opposition to the new Constitution. [redacted]

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Recent elections suggest that the National Party's redoubled efforts to recruit English speakers are paying off. English-speaking Nationalists have won parliamentary and provincial elections in Natal, Cape Province, and even the Transvaal. While there is still considerable "anti-Nat" feeling in the English-speaking community, polls indicate that the NP is developing a base among a growing number of English-speaking whites at the local level in both urban and rural areas. [redacted]

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The National Party has benefited from the ongoing disintegration of the New Republic Party, which controls the provincial government in Natal—the only province with an English-speaking majority. Three leading NRP parliamentarians switched to the NP in September 1984, and one of the defectors was made a deputy minister. Both US Embassy and journalist observers believe that the recent appointment of a liberal Afrikaner as NP leader for Natal will accelerate the demise of the NRP and bring more English voters to the National Party. [redacted]

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Botha's foreign policy, in our view, has fostered a political consensus between English and Afrikaans speakers on most security issues, and won him still more English votes. A public opinion survey taken in March 1984 showed that 92 percent of white South Africans supported Pretoria's pact with Mozambique, including more than 85 percent of English speakers. Botha's trip to Western Europe last summer, the first such visit by a South African Prime Minister in over a decade, also received approval among most English speakers, according to political surveys. [redacted]

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The growing accord between "Boer" and "Briton" seems evident on domestic political issues as well. Polls taken in mid-1983 reveal growing support in the

English community for Nationalist domestic policies: one poll showed that 50 percent of English speakers were "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the government's efforts to solve domestic and foreign problems, compared with those of previous Nationalist governments. [redacted]

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The National Party recently has made concessions to the influential English-speaking community in Cape Province that were designed in part to gain support in the English-speaking population generally. The South African Government announced late last year that laws restricting blacks from permanent residence in western Cape Province would be repealed, a long-standing demand of the Cape business community that had been opposed by the National Party for over a decade. The fact that P. W. Botha and his lieutenants were able to obtain support for this controversial measure in the Cabinet suggests that they might press ahead with other measures designed in part to co-opt English-speaking voters. [redacted]

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Outlook and Ramifications for US Policy

The Most Likely Prospect: The Right Remains Weak

We believe that the National Party will have little difficulty weathering the threat from the right in the near term. We agree with most observers that the party will probably not suffer a major split as long as Botha is National Party leader and President. [redacted]

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Indeed, recent US Embassy reporting on the opening of the new tricameral legislature suggests that Botha will be less constrained than before by pressure from the right. Botha's recent public statements in favor of a national political role for the country's black majority and his recent unprecedented public discussions of the status and possible release of Nelson Mandela, the imprisoned leader of the African National Congress, seem to reflect renewed self-confidence in his authority both within the National Party and among Afrikaners. [redacted]

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If—as we expect—the NP maintains its hold on the Afrikaner middle class and roughly its present level of

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support within the English-speaking community, we would expect P. W. Botha or his successors to be able to maintain a reformist course over the next two to five years. As long as Botha seems in control of the process and the pace of change, we doubt that the right will be able to broaden its support within the white community sufficiently to challenge the NP.

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We believe, moreover, there is a better-than-even chance that rivalries between the two rightwing parties and their leaders will shatter their electoral alliance and degrade their capacity to threaten the NP. The result of such fratricide within the right, however, would probably be the growth of radical-right paramilitary groups and more attacks by these organizations against government officials and institutions.

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The divisions within Afrikaner society, have served US interests in southern Africa, in our view, by giving P. W. Botha greater freedom to carry out domestic reforms and regional accommodations that have moved South African policy in the direction of US goals of peaceful change and stability. We believe Botha's ability to continue his reformist program and policy of regional detente will depend directly on his continued capability to contain the threat from the right both inside and outside the National Party.

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US declarations on southern African developments, which are reported extensively in the South African press, probably represent a two-sided sword for moderate National Party leaders. A senior official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told US diplomats last December that the US policy of constructive engagement had helped the NP build the growing coalition of moderate English- and Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans in favor of reformist initiatives. On the other hand, overt pressure on South Africa by Western governments—especially public criticism—is viewed by Pretoria as counterproductive. Botha's quick response to President Reagan's criticism of apartheid late last year showed that Botha and his colleagues feel it imperative that they be seen in total control of the pace and direction of political and social change.

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Alternative Scenario: A Threat From the Right

A less likely scenario would develop if widespread racial violence—particularly in combination with worsening economic conditions or a major foreign policy setback—drastically reduced P. W. Botha's mandate within the National Party and caused Afrikaners to lurch to the right. In a period of crisis, particularly if the President and his reform program were widely viewed as responsible for growing unrest or were seen losing control of the situation, rightwing Nationalists might succeed in undercutting Botha's position and rallying the *volk* on a conservative course in an attempt to turn back the clock.

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The Nationalist right wing would also have an opportunity to achieve power during a succession crisis. Should Botha, who is 69, die or resign suddenly in a scandal, as did his predecessor, the balance of power in the National Party could shift:

- If the party leadership goes to another moderate Nationalist—such as Minister of Foreign Affairs “Pik” Botha or Minister of Cooperation and Development Gerrit Viljoen—as we believe most likely, rightwingers might bolt the party, joining the Conservative Party. Although the defection of 25 NP parliamentarians would make the CP the strongest opposition party, the NP would still maintain its grip on power: the parliamentary balance would shift from 128 Nationalists and 18 Conservatives to 103 Nationalists and 43 Conservatives, an apparently comfortable majority of 25 in the Parliament. In our judgment, however, the psychological effect of such a major split in the party would be severe, making even NP *verligtes* wary about continuing on a reformist course and perhaps shaking the underlying confidence of the Afrikaners in their long-term ability to control the government and the black majority.
- If a leader of the Nationalist right wing such as F. W. De Klerk is selected as Botha's successor, he probably would halt or at least slow the pace of reform, an outcome not dissimilar to that of a *verligte* government with a slim parliamentary majority.

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Should the rightwing Nationalists succeed in forcing the party to retrench on Botha's program of reform, we believe that US-South African relations would suffer. The polarization of South African society that, in our view, would be likely to result from a rightwing victory would almost certainly put greater pressure on Washington to divorce itself from Pretoria.

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A rightwing government in South Africa would also drastically affect US interests in southern Africa, in our view. The likelihood of conflict between Pretoria and its neighbors would rise, reviving or creating new opportunities for greater Soviet influence in southern Africa.

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