

This leads thirdly to a deep imbalance in the related processes or perception and learning. The events in the region and wider international responses since 1975 have reinforced the prevailing perception in Pretoria. Put in Nye's terms, they have promoted "simple learning" processes which then reinforced pre-existing perceptions. Pretoria has used new information to adapt its means "without altering any deeper goals in the means-end chain."<sup>1</sup>

This South African perception holds:

- a) that the current South African state confronts a "total onslaught" in which all international power blocs participate. Thus in Pretoria's view, while there is clearly important space on the margins to play off the different powers against each other, as in Angola, for example, nevertheless both the US and the USSR participate to varying degrees in such a total onslaught, and South African policy has to rest finally on asserting its independent claim to be the "regional power" with "legitimate interests," which all states must be forced to accept;
- b) that the exercise of all elements of South Africa's disproportionate power in the region is the key to the survival of the current state. Given the regional power imbalance, Pretoria's strategists believe that the ruthless wielding of power is effective, and that no state, or alignment of states in the region finally has the capacity to withstand South African power;
- c) this perception is contingent on yet another--that in the last analysis, the prevailing international geopolitical realities rule out effective intervention against South Africa. This is a newer perception that Pretoria has learned particularly over the past five years. It is now widely believed in South Africa that no major Western power will take effective (rather than symbolic) measures to restrain the wielding of the power of the South African state, both domestically and regionally. Thus at worst, the international interventions will be confined on the one hand to those made by Cuba and the Soviet Union in Angola, and on the other the toothless sanctions package imposed by Western countries.

This implies that there are no real limits to the use of South African power in the region. While there are clearly important debates within the complex decision-making processes

<sup>1</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Nuclear Learning and US-Soviet Security Regimes," p. 380.