



The RUSI Journal

ISSN: 0307-1847 (Print) 1744-0378 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi20>

Total Onslaught: War and Revolution in Southern Africa Since 1945

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To cite this article: Sue Onslow (2018) Total Onslaught: War and Revolution in Southern Africa Since 1945, The RUSI Journal, 163:6, 96-98, DOI: [10.1080/03071847.2018.1562047](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2018.1562047)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2018.1562047>



Published online: 28 Jan 2019.



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being considered in depth in a single, discrete chapter. This robs the study of some of its impact in this respect.

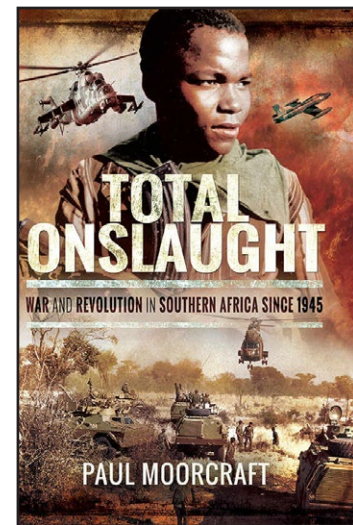
The conflict provides real depth to the analysis, while simultaneously adding value to our understanding of small unit leadership and cohesion

Second, the title of the book refers to 'British Army' cohesion, deviancy and murder. That title is misleading. This is not a study of the British Army in Northern Ireland, but of three battalions during a single, short phase of that conflict. The deviancy and murder on offer refer to two very specific incidents, namely the killing of Naan and Murray by soldiers of the Argylls, and the behaviour of the same unit following the death of Edmund Woolsey, a Catholic, in an explosion in South Armagh the same year, and in which Argyll soldiers were accused of retrieving Woolsey's body parts for use as trophies. Yet at the same time, Burke is clear in drawing a distinction between these sorts of actions and those of other army units in the same area of operations during the same period. He mentions the Welsh battalion which caused near panic in Republican circles with its 'friendly and restrained' approach, for example, and of the 'Gentlemen' units who preferred a less combative form of interaction with the locals. And the study supports and references the argument advanced by Stathis Kalyvas, namely that

the British Army's campaign in Northern Ireland was, compared with other counterinsurgency campaigns before and since, remarkably restrained in the application of lethal violence.

With this in mind, one cannot help but feel that the title does not accurately portray either the tone of the book or, indeed, the tone of the conflict as a whole. But it does not detract from the fact that this is still a very, very good book. In *An Army of Tribes*, Burke has produced a piece of work on the Northern Ireland conflict unlike any other. The range of face to face interviews with those actively engaged on both sides of the Troubles in Belfast and South Armagh during the height of the conflict provides real depth to the analysis, while simultaneously adding value to our understanding of small unit leadership and cohesion. ■

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**Total Onslaught:
War and Revolution
in Southern
Africa Since 1945**
Paul Moorcraft
Pen & Sword, 2018

This authoritative book, written by veteran journalist and military analyst Paul Moorcraft, charts the series of protracted wars which erupted across southern Africa between the 1960s and the 1990s. Here, decolonisation, militant national liberation movements and white-minority resistance interacted with the wider Cold War environment to deadly effect. Moorcraft's lengthy study provides a comprehensive overview of civilian-military relations and security structures (and their flaws) in the colonial Portuguese state, and white-minority states of Rhodesia and South Africa. Based on Moorcraft's extensive personal knowledge and close study of the region over the past 40 years, *Total Onslaught: War and Revolution in Southern Africa Since 1945* is part grand narrative and part personal recollection, as he interviewed a large number of

the protagonists and participants in these long conflicts.

The structure of the book follows a broad chronology, focusing on earlier conditioning conflicts (in terms of the development of South Africa's military capacity), on the wars of liberation and white-minority resistance, and on post-1994 turbulence. Using the lens of military engagements and their varied outcomes – together with the impact on the evolution of military forces and the civilian-military nexus as played out in neighbouring states – the book briefly charts white colonial settlement of South Africa, and the rise of the Afrikaner minority state; British decolonisation in sub-Saharan Africa; and white-minority resistance to the 'Wind of Change'.

Moorcraft is at his strongest when considering the period following Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence and the South African state in the apartheid era. He explores Rhodesia's counterinsurgency in the late 1960s and 1970s, and delves into the regional and international implications of South Africa's determined destabilisation of its neighbours in the 1980s. Even those who are well versed in the region's recent turbulent history will learn a considerable amount about the brutal civil war in Mozambique, Namibia's often overlooked struggle for independence, post-independence Zimbabwe, and the complexities of the National Security Management System in South Africa.

The main focus of this long book is the militarisation of ideological-political attempts to maintain white minority rule against mounting odds and multiple pressures. As the regional hegemon, South Africa gets the lion's share of Moorcraft's

robust analysis. Broad lessons for counterinsurgency (both in theory and practice) are firmly embedded in the text, although Moorcraft is careful to emphasise the unique aspects of each state: political leadership and organisation; social and ethnic divisions; economic and commercial structures; labour organisation; and individual and often competing liberation movements. He makes many astute observations and has a wry turn of phrase which make this book a very accessible read: white rule in Rhodesia and South Africa is characterised as 'a condition, a disease'; 'whites, like their black successors, were slow learners'; he contrasts the stick of South African security oppression with the 'withered carrot of reform'. Moorcraft draws a clear picture of the destructive and long-lasting legacies of 'struggle' across the region, which have left success or states with multiple complex challenges, and often profoundly eroded or compromised institutions. His trenchant conclusion is that 'appalling governance has emasculated the continent'. It is hard to argue with this judgement.

The book's dominant theme is the danger of obsession with successful operational techniques which created 'a fatal blindness to the strategic political imperatives required to counter protracted insurgency'. All three white-minority governments struggled against African participation in national politics – and correspondingly resisted 'the war winner' of far-reaching reform. Moorcraft underlines the diverse and enduring complexities of Africa's conflicts, which are domestic, regional and international, thus proving such a challenge for the promoters of peace and conflict resolution. His analysis of strategies of conflict and military hardpower includes

consideration of each side's strengths and weaknesses, with the emphasis primarily on the 'white minority state' rather than liberation movements themselves. Moorcraft points to the legacies of political cultures and military institutions of national liberation movements in contemporary southern African states. In each case there was, and still is, a particular fusion of political and military elite, the sustaining power of ideas and simplicity of purpose, masking the many fractures within and between the nationalist movements.

Overall this is a book for the generalist, rather than specialist; on many occasions and in lengthy passages of the book, Moorcraft has not revealed his sources. The selected bibliography is limited – there is no reference, for example, to John P Cann's work *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War 1961–1974* or Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses's and Robert McNamara's exploration of Operation *Alcora* (the strategic 'unholy alliance' between South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia). When exploring South African motivations behind the invasion of Angola in 1975, Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Jamie Miller's *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and its Search for Survival* (Oxford University Press, 2016) are required reading. Similarly, Piero Gleijeses's *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–1991* (University of North Carolina Press, 2013), on South Africa, Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Angolan theatre, is a key work. There are surprising omissions from the rich field of studies on post-independence Zimbabwe (Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni) and the end of the apartheid era (for example, Adrian Guelke, Jack

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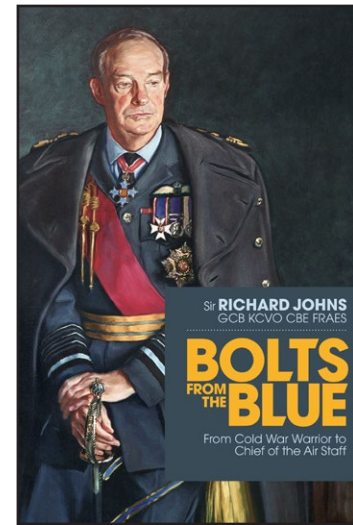
Spence, David Welsh, Charles Feinstein and Chris Saunders).

This book sits firmly in the field of security studies. For the specialist in international history, it contains a number of irritating errors, exaggerations and omissions. As a few examples: there is no discussion of non-alignment in this book; it is hard to characterise Britain's departure from Kenya as 'relatively graceful', given what we now know of the repressive colonial state during the Mau Mau emergency (see Caroline Elkins' and David Anderson's work); South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961 because it was determined to become a republic, and was made to realise if the country reapplied for membership, it would be barred. Moorcraft cites no sources on the manipulation of international gold sales. Rhodesia did not return to formal British rule until December 1979, not 1980. Nor did 'a second version of the Cold War phoenix under Putin'; the Soviets were not 'tactless colonisers', nor did they seek 'real estate' (see Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson, *The Hidden Hand: Russia and South Africa in the Soviet Era*, 2013). President Carter had already shifted towards 'big budget' war against the Soviet bloc before President Reagan's arrival at the White House. There is a somewhat simplistic presentation of the negotiated withdrawal of Cuban troops and personnel, Soviet military advisers and the SADF from Angola (see Anatoly Adamishin, *The White Sun of Angola*, English translation, Wilson Center, 2014), as well as Gleijeses's detailed exploration of the role of Cuban military advantage in Southern Angola, in *Visions of Freedom*). However, Moorcraft is certainly correct that the hard power of the South African state did not crack, and South African Foreign Minister Pik

Botha personally confirmed to me the existence of American fears, behind their encouragement to South Africa to decommission the homegrown nuclear programme, namely that a radical nationalist ANC government might pass nuclear secrets to Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. (Those interested in this topic should read South African scholars Anna-Mart Van Wyk's and Jo-Ansie Van Wyk's groundbreaking work.)

Notwithstanding the author's sometimes over-fondness for a colourful or glib phrase, he presents a sustained and powerful argument of creeping militarisation in the process of policy formulation, and underlines inconsistencies and contradictions of policy implementation – across southern Africa and beyond. There are many warnings from history in this book, most of all, on the danger of attempts at military solutions to political problems. As Moorcraft shows very clearly, relative military success and hard power advantage can militate against far-sighted political strategy and vision. Those who seek to use hard power to resolve political challenges should take note. ■

Sue Onslow is Deputy Director and Reader in Commonwealth History at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. She has published widely on southern Africa in the Cold War era. DOI: 10.1080/03071847.2018.1562047



Bolts from the Blue: From Cold War Warrior to Chief of the Air Staff

Richard Johns

Grub Street Publishing, 2018

Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Johns originally intended his book *Bolts from the Blue: From Cold War Warrior to Chief of the Air Staff* to be an autobiography for his grandchildren. In this, it succeeds magnificently. Thirty years and 250 pages cover a career of varied and exciting flying as an officer in the RAF: from his early training at Cranwell; to close-quarters combat training at night in Javelins; to supersonic Hunters doing fighter reconnaissance in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula; and then to flying and commanding the most challenging of airframes, the vertical take-off Harrier. The book also reveals the background to these events – a rich tapestry of travel to different postings, around every two years or less. The book is hugely illuminating for those outside the air force profession.