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Interrogating the South African Garrison State (1930s–1940s): Oswald Pirow and Jan-Hendrik Hofmeyr

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ABSTRACT

This article uses a comparative biographical study of Jan-Hendrik Hofmeyr and Oswald Pirow as a foundation to interrogate South Africa of the 1930s and 1940s as a garrison state. It examines Harold Lasswell's concept of the garrison state, a 'developmental construct' regarding the future path that democracies could take in their confrontation with fascism and communism in the mid-twentieth century. Hofmeyr and Pirow are representative of two opposites in the political-intellectual debates of the 1930s and 1940s within white society and both can be seen as guarantors of power. Pirow, a renowned fascist, wanted the creation of a Nazi-like state in South Africa. Hofmeyr, in contrast, espoused a liberal vision. This article is located within new scholarship on South African anti-fascism and the garrison state is cast as one counter-intuitive response to fascism.

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Introduction

The conceptualisation of South Africa as a garrison state has only been made once in the scholarly literature, by Bernard Magubane, in his attempt to describe the militarisation of South African society in the 1970s and 1980s.¹ This article goes beyond Magubane's work to test the applicability of the concept of the garrison state to South Africa in the earlier decades of the 1930s and 1940s. It examines whether there might indeed be an earlier origin

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1. Magubane wrote two important chapters on the garrison state in South Africa of the 1970s and 1980s. B. Magubane, 'From Détente to the Rise of the Garrison State', in South African Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 2, 1970–1980 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2004), 37–98; B. Magubane, 'The Crisis of the Garrison State', in South African Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 2, 1980–1990 (London: Routledge, 2024), 1–61.

for the phenomenon that what would then develop in the second half of the twentieth century.

The concept of the garrison state was first proposed by Harold Lasswell in an article that appeared in 1941. In this article he attempted to capture and describe the manner in which states in Europe developed in the face of military aggression, in particular that by fascism and Nazism. He argued that there were similarities between the states reacting to this aggression and he described the form these states took as the garrison state. A garrison state is a state that militarises in the face of potential military aggression from another state. This militarisation leads to changes within the state, one of which is that ‘specialists on violence’, thus, military leaders, take on powerful positions within the state. The garrison state is a state that is characterised by a centralisation of power. It thus leads to the undermining of democratic features of the state and of the democratic rights that citizens hold. Yet a garrison state is not necessarily an autocratic state, as the power that specialists on violence assume can be tempered by other political and social forces.

Looking at South Africa through the lens of the garrison state, this article assesses the roles of two key political figures in South African state formation in the 1930s and 1940s: Oswald Pirow and Jan-Hendrik Hofmeyr. Pirow and Hofmeyr had vastly different ideas for the future of South Africa. These ideas, amongst others, competed against each other in South Africa during the 1930s and 1940s. An additional idea at the time was fascism, South Africa not being isolated from concurrent global events.²

While the focus of the article is on South Africa as a garrison state, it also speaks to new scholarship on South African anti-fascism.³ Hyslop *et al.* note that at the time there was not ‘one anti-fascism, but a variety of anti-fascist responses that included both militant forms of resistance and cultural and intellectual manifestations of anti-fascism’.⁴ This article positions the garrison state as one of these manifestations of anti-fascism. The development of the garrison state in reaction to the rise of fascism shows how imperial internationalism could inform local politics. The anti-fascism of imperial internationalists such as Hofmeyr and South African politician and later prime minister Jan Smuts plays a crucial role in understanding the contribution that the concept of the garrison state makes to anti-fascism scholarship. This is not to say that there were no tensions between imperialism and anti-fascism.⁵

2. Other visions for the future of South Africa were communism and African nationalism. However, these are not part of the focus of this article. It is not a unique feature in the history of any country that varying ideologies would compete; South Africa was not an exception.

3. See, for example, J. Hyslop, K. Braskén, and N. Roos, ‘Political and Intellectual Lineages of Southern African Anti-Fascism’, *South African Historical Journal*, 74, 1 (2022), 1.

4. *Ibid.*, 5–6.

5. For more on this tension, see T. Buchanan, ‘“The Dark Millions in the Colonies are Unavenged”’: Anti-Fascism and Anti-Imperialism in the 1930s’, *Contemporary European History*, 25, 4 (2016), 645–665.

Exploring the examples of Pirow and Hofmeyr, we see what South Africa's future could have looked like. In the end, D. F. Malan together with the National Party was victorious over them and developed his own form of the garrison state, elements of which were retained up until the 1970s and 1980s, when the South African garrison state was at its peak.

In a last step, this article argues that the example of South Africa as a garrison state in the 1930s and 1940s can be used to sharpen Lasswell's concept. It does so by identifying critical political features displayed in South Africa during that time that Lasswell neglected to consider in his concept. The article distinguishes between an anti-fascist and an anti-communist garrison state in South Africa, which is an additional nuanced take that Lasswell did not consider. Lasswell never proposed the possibility of different iterations of the garrison state.

Lasswell and the garrison state

The garrison state deals with power and individuals who exercise power. It is important to place Lasswell's ideas in relation to later developments in the sociology of military power. Sociologist Michael Mann emphasises that military power is not an autonomous force: 'The most effective exercise of power combines collective and distributive, extensive and intensive, authoritative and diffuse power. That is why a single power source – say, the economy or the military – cannot alone determine the overall structure of societies.'⁶ This point is relevant to Lasswell's garrison state as he argued that it combines military and political sources of power.

In 1941 Lasswell explained that the 'picture of the garrison state' that he offers 'is no dogmatic forecast. Rather it is a picture of the probable. It is not inevitable.'⁷ It is a concept that is defined by various characteristics. These characteristics are elaborated on in greater detail later on in the article, specifically when the concept of the garrison state is tested against South Africa of the 1930s and 1940s. These characteristics allow us to judge whether and to what extent a country may or may not have been a garrison state during a certain period in history.

To understand the characteristics that Lasswell identified, it is important to be aware of the historical context in which he was conceptualising the garrison state. By 1941, when Lasswell published his study of the garrison state, Europe was in the grips of World War II. Nazi Germany had become a major threat not only to civilians but to entire countries. With no end in sight to this global catastrophe, a great sense of insecurity prevailed across the world. The militarisation and build-up towards the war had not gone unnoticed by scholars. Lasswell attempted a nuanced analysis of states under military

6. M. Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, vol. 3, *Global Empires and Revolution, 1890–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.

7. H.D. Lasswell, 'The Garrison State', *American Journal of Sociology*, 46, 4 (1941), 456.

threat when he proposed the idea of the garrison state in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1941. Shortly after publishing the article, the War Department in the United States asked Lasswell to work for them as a civilian advisor, which he accepted.⁸

Lasswell considered the concept of the garrison state a ‘developmental construct’, thus an idea to understand and describe the changes and patterns that occur in concepts over time and into the future.⁹ A ‘developmental construct’ is a speculative model of social change, thus showing the potential direction in which a society is moving.¹⁰ Lasswell developed the concept of the ‘developmental construct’ from the 1930s as an ‘analytic tool’ and an ‘aspect of the method of futures thinking that he created’.¹¹ Lasswell saw the developmental construct as part of a greater process of ‘intellectual investigation’, which he called ‘developmental analysis’.¹² With the example of the garrison state as a developmental construct, Lasswell was preoccupied with ‘the values of democracy’, the existence of both civil liberties and ‘competitive political systems based on free and fair elections’.¹³ In addition, seeing the garrison state as a developmental construct could warn the sections of the population ‘who valued democracy’ to the dangers that they may face and empower them with added knowledge, which would enable them to combat the move towards a garrison state.¹⁴

The word ‘garrison’ carries two definitions. The noun refers to ‘troops stationed at a fort or fortified town’, while the verb means to ‘provide with or occupy as a garrison’, as defined by the Collins English Dictionary. According to Ronald Dains, Lasswell used literary license to modify the word ‘state’ by using ‘garrison’ as an adjective.¹⁵ Lasswell also regularly used the terms ‘garrison police state’ or ‘garrison prison state’ as interchangeable synonyms for the garrison state.¹⁶ Lasswell defined the garrison state as ‘a world in which the “specialists on violence” are the most powerful group in society’.¹⁷ These states are characterised by three critical practices: the ‘centralization of power’; the ‘manipulation of international crises’; and the ‘restriction of civil or political liberties in the name of security’.¹⁸

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8. Harold Dwight Lasswell Articles, Yale University, New Haven, Box 131, Folder 149–152 Harold Lasswell, letter to Ann and Linden Lasswell, 17 February 1941.
 9. W. Bell, ‘H.D. Lasswell and the Futures Field: Facts, Predictions, Values and the Policy Sciences’, *Futures*, 3 (1993), 807.
 10. H.D. Lasswell, ‘The Policy Orientation’, in Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell, eds, *The Policy Sciences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951), 11.
 11. Bell, ‘Lasswell’, 807.
 12. *Ibid.*
 13. *Ibid.*
 14. *Ibid.*
 15. R.N. Dains, ‘Lasswell’s Garrison State Reconsidered: Exploring a Paradigm Shift in US Civil–Military Relations Research’ (PhD thesis, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, 2004), 11–12.
 16. Dains, ‘Lasswell’s Garrison State Reconsidered’, 12.
 17. Lasswell, ‘Garrison State’, 455.
 18. Dains, ‘Lasswell’s Garrison State Reconsidered’, 2.

The garrison state links the reduction of societal freedom to the presence of a threat, which can be internal or external, real or perceived. The constant readiness and preparedness for total war leads to a militarised society. Technological innovations, especially in the military, and ‘specialists on violence’ assist in the perpetuation of the garrison state. Compulsory labour groups and unskilled manual labourers are used as ‘enemies’ and ‘scapegoats’. The problem with the garrison state lies, however, exactly in its centralisation of power; this can lead to the autocratic abuse of power, state capture, and the erosion of democratic rights. Lasswell himself opposed the development of garrison states with the following warning: ‘By the energetic application of the principle of civilian supremacy, we can guard against the perils of a garrison-police state and conserve the physical and moral resources of our nation.’¹⁹ The following section examines Jan-Hendrik Hofmeyr and Oswald Pirow in the light of their possible contributions to building a South African garrison state.

Jan-Hendrik Hofmeyr and Oswald Pirow

In the 1930s and 1940s, South Africa found itself at a crossroads. Few political actors personified this more than Hofmeyr and Pirow, with visions for the future of South Africa that could not have been more different. This section provides brief biographies on the two men. It then offers an account of what influenced them and describes their visions for South Africa. It examines their achievements and failures in the light of the political-intellectual debates of their time.

Pirow and Hofmeyr helped to establish the coercive powers of the South African state during the 1930s. Pirow helped build a strong bureaucracy and projected strength abroad via foreign policy and also advocated for paramilitary policing. However, Pirow was not successful as defence minister from (tenure 1933–1939), even though the ‘Five-Year Plan’ he proposed assisted in the development of the South African military. Hofmeyr, in turn, provided the administrative skills needed for Prime Minister Smuts to build up the military apparatus during World War II. This included the creation of South Africa’s defence industry, the recruitment of troops, and the creation of a substantial air force and a small navy, the latter which was formed without any real foundation.

Pirow was a lieutenant-heir to Prime Minister J. B. M. Hertzog, founder of the Nationalist Party, much like Hofmeyr was to Smuts, leader of the South African Party.²⁰ Smuts and Hofmeyr could be seen as liberal internationalists, anti-fascist by nature. Their orientation indicates how liberal internationalism could inform the development of a garrison state. Hertzog and Pirow, in turn,

19. S.J. Kunitz and V. Colby, ‘Lasswell, Harold Dwight’, in *Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature, First Supplement* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1955), 552.

20. A. Paton, *Hofmeyr* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 186.

could be categorised as conservative, right-wing localists. However, this changed when Pirow became more radical and his belief in fascism became entrenched. The two men under consideration here, via their actions and beliefs, came to represent different manifestations of the garrison state, as the article explores later, Hofmeyr along anti-fascist lines and Pirow anti-communist.

Hofmeyr and the anti-fascist garrison state

Hofmeyr, like Smuts, saw fascism as an existential threat not only to South Africa but to the entire world. His political career and the contributions he made during his time in office can be understood in the light of the anti-fascist manifestation of the garrison state.

Before entering politics, Hofmeyr had a tremendous academic career, attending the South African College School,²¹ from which he matriculated when he was 12.²² When he was 15, he read for his Bachelor of Arts in classics.²³ At 16 he read for his second bachelor's in mathematics and science and at 17 for a Master of Arts in classics.²⁴ He then spent three years at Oxford. At the age of 22 he returned to his old college in Cape Town as a lecturer in Latin. Six months later he was appointed professor of classics at the South African School of Mines and Technology (later the University of the Witwatersrand), to which, at the age of 25, he was appointed as its first principal. Then in 1924, a few weeks before he turned 30, he was appointed administrator of the Transvaal. Before his career in politics, the government would often ask Hofmeyr for help, as his academic achievements created a noteworthy reputation. Hofmeyr's academic background shows that he possessed great intellect and ability, which Smuts later drew on in an administrative manner to build up South Africa's military apparatus.

In 1933, by now Member of Parliament for the South African Party, Hofmeyr was set on *hereniging* (reunification), the amalgamation of South African political parties, more particularly the unifying of white Afrikaans- and English-speaking South Africans. We can draw a comparison with what historian Saul Dubow calls white 'South Africanism', which secured the basis of white supremacy in South Africa.²⁵ Hofmeyr was always against schism within white society, especially one based on language and culture. Hofmeyr's work for unification led to fruition when, on 10 February 1933, Prime Minister 'Hertzog issued a public statement that was virtually an offer to form a coalition government including Smuts and the South African

21. Paton, *Hofmeyr*, 6.

22. T. Macdonald, *Jan Hofmeyr: Heir to Smuts* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 194), 15.

23. Macdonald, *Jan Hofmeyr*, 15.

24. *Ibid.*

25. S. Dubow, 'Colonial Nationalism the Milner Kindergarten and the Rise of 'South Africanism, 1902-10', *History Workshop Journal*, 43 (1997), 55.

Party'.²⁶ Smuts reacted favourably and five days later Hertzog and Smuts began negotiating behind closed doors.²⁷ They came to an agreement to form a coalition government.²⁸ The agreement, however, led the nationalist politician D. F. Malan, then part of Hertzog's government, to split away, taking 26 nationalists with him.²⁹ The break-away group formed the new Purified (Herstigte) National Party (which after 1948 became the National Party) and became the official opposition in parliament, under Malan's leadership, pursuing a more markedly Afrikaner nationalist policy.³⁰

Early on in his political career as MP, one of the first challenges Hofmeyr faced was Malan's Immigration Quota Bill, tabled in 1930 when Malan was still part of the government. Malan, who would later entrench the anti-communist manifestation of the garrison state, was politically conservative from the start of his career. With this bill, which was ultimately accepted, the government aimed to deny 'Eastern European Jews entrance to South Africa'.³¹ The 1930 Quota Act was later succeeded by the 1937 Anti-Aliens Act that banned Western European Jewish immigration at a crucial period in Jewish history.³² The ideology underlying the acts was part of the racism and antisemitism that had become popular at the time globally.³³

Hofmeyr was known for his pro-Jewish stance, which in part informed his anti-fascism and by extension his role in establishing the garrison state. This placed him in direct contrast to Pirow. Hofmeyr made various speeches throughout his career expressing his pro-Jewish sentiment, such as the speech 'Israel's Gift to Humanity', delivered in 1938. In this speech Hofmeyr noted the contributions Jews had made to society and how being Zionist would make Jews 'better South Africans'. Yet, as with many other instances with Hofmeyr, his ideological stance clashed with what was politically practical at the time. Hofmeyr became trapped attempting to justify his position from a logical perspective, even when it was not feasible. The political sentiment of the day was in direct opposition to Hofmeyr's ideological stance; he ended up supporting the Quota Bill.

In the noteworthy liberal publication *Coming of Age* (1930), Hofmeyr authored a chapter titled 'Provincial and Local Government'. As in many other instances throughout his career, whether it be academic, administrative, or political, Hofmeyr focused on technocratic policy matters that the layman

26. N. Stultz, *Afrikaner Politics in South Africa 1934–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 27.

27. Stultz, *Afrikaner Politics*, 27.

28. *Ibid.*

29. H. Gibbs, *Twilight in South Africa* (London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1950), 30.

30. D. F. Malan served as the fourth prime minister of South Africa, from 1948 to 1954. Under his leadership, the National Party government implemented apartheid with its racial segregation laws.

31. M.W. Rubin, 'The Jewish Community of Johannesburg, 1886–1939: Landscapes of Reality and Imagination' (MA thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 2006), 131.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*

was not well versed in. Though one could forgive the decision to have Hofmeyr write on administrative technicalities, it was an attempt to protect him from having to offer opinions on controversial political issues when his own political career had just started. Thus, Hofmeyr was shielded by the other contributors from any real criticism lodged against *Coming of Age* or any potential claims of political contradictions within his party, as he did not render any profound or controversial opinions but merely wrote on administrative technicalities. Hofmeyr believed that most citizens had a direct and personal interest in the functioning of those subordinate organs of government which dealt with the administration of local affairs.³⁴ In this, Hofmeyr could be criticised for being out of touch with the common man. This was indeed a feature of Hofmeyr's career. He was correct in saying that the life of the average man was touched more directly by the way local problems were dealt with than by most of the matters to which parliament directed its attention.³⁵ However, the issue was that the average man cared more about issues in parliament than Hofmeyr realised. Hofmeyr continued the unfortunately lacklustre chapter by focusing on various sections of the Act of the Union.

Hofmeyr's speech 'Reconciling Imperialism and Liberty: South Africa's Contribution to the Solution of World Problems' (1945) is crucial to understand his political ideology and his vision for the future of South Africa. Following on the theme of Smuts and his imperial internationalism, Hofmeyr here made his own contribution to this idea. Hofmeyr spoke as a proponent of the idea that imperialism and liberty could be reconciled. For Hofmeyr, South Africa's contribution to the solution of world problems occurred within the confines of the British Commonwealth. In an address to members of the Royal Empire Society at a lunch hour meeting, Hofmeyr looked at a pattern for the world. In his introduction to the speech, Lord Addison, a former leader of the House of Lords, said that Hofmeyr was not only the Deputy Prime Minister of the Union but represented the spirit of the British Commonwealth of Nations.³⁶ Hofmeyr himself spoke about South Africa's decision to enter the war, on the side of Britain. He described it a free decision by a free parliament and a free people. Hofmeyr did not mention the objections by nationalists such as Malan and Pirow.³⁷ In his description, South Africa was prepared to accept the obligations and sustain the perils which resulted from that decision, but it did so of its own free, deliberate choice. To Hofmeyr, the quality of the contribution that South Africa rendered was undoubtedly enhanced by the fact that it was made in the spirit of freedom.³⁸ What he did not mention, however, was

34. J.H. Hofmeyr, 'Provincial and Local Government', in E.H. Brookes, ed., *The Coming of Age: Studies in South African Citizenship and Politics* (Cape Town: M. Miller, 1930), 297.

35. Hofmeyr, 'Provincial and Local', 297.

36. Alan Paton Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, PC 1/1/7/10/29, Jan-Hendrik Hofmeyr, 'Reconciling Imperialism and Liberty', 27 October 1945.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

that the outbreak of war found South Africa with a divided government; it was a divided parliament which took the decision.

Pirow and the anti-communist garrison state

Pirow was always politically conservative. However, this conservatism transformed into extremist fascism later in his career. Had Pirow been part of Malan's cabinet, the latter's anti-communist stance would have served his purposes well. Oswald Pirow was born in Aberdeen in the Cape Colony on 14 August 1890 to German parents.³⁹ After he finished school, 'he attended the Middle Temple in London at the age of 20 from 1910 to qualify as a barrister'.⁴⁰ After he qualified, he returned to South Africa. As historian Alex Mouton showed, Pirow was keen to leave his mark as an advocate, and afterwards to follow a career in politics.⁴¹ His personal ambitions would push him to advance his political career. From 1929 to 1933 Pirow served as minister of justice and from 1933 to 1939 as minister of defence. Pirow started laying the foundation for an improved, reorganised South African military, announcing a five-year plan in parliament on 2 May 1934, which would subsequently become known as 'Oswald Pirow's Five-Year Plan',⁴² even though he was not 'the true driving force behind the plan', which was Chief of the General Staff Pierre van Reyneveld.⁴³ As minister of defence, however, Pirow was in the public eye and thus the plan came to be associated with him. The implementation of the plan within the army was marked by frustrations similar to those that also arose later during 'the implementation with regard to the air and naval capacities of the UDF [Union Defence Force]'.⁴⁴ The Union's defence policy had been formulated in 1926 and remained unchanged in the five-year plan. It contained four aims:

- (i) 'the prevention and suppression of internal unrest'
- (ii) 'the military training of a part of the young men of the Union'
- (iii) 'the protection of the Union against an external threat'
- (iv) 'considering preparations for an expedition force should the Union become involved in a European War'⁴⁵

The anticipation and containment of 'internal unrest' held significant importance in the Union and lends special significance to the meaning of the garrison

39. F.A. Mouton, 'Beyond the Pale: Oswald Pirow, Sir Oswald Mosley, the Enemies of the Soviet Union and Apartheid, 1948–1959', *Journal for Contemporary History*, 43, 2 (2018), 94.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. J. Ellis, 'Oswald Pirow's Five-Year Plan for the Reorganisation of the Union Defence Force, 1933–1939', *Scientia Militaria*, 30, 2 (2000), 224.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, 225.

45. *Ibid.*

state at the time. As military historian Johan Ellis noted, ‘although the policy did not state it as such, this aim was interpreted as referring to black uprisings’.⁴⁶

In late 1938, Pirow toured Franco’s Spain.⁴⁷ As the South African defence minister, he was accompanied by Don Nicolás Franco, who served as ambassador to Portugal and was a brother of General Francisco Franco.⁴⁸ Pirow was received by General Jordano, who was the minister for foreign affairs under Franco.⁴⁹ He also visited Bilbao to view the defence works that were captured by Franco’s troops.⁵⁰ Pirow also visited Lisbon, Portugal, then under the control of António de Oliveira Salazar.⁵¹ Strict censorship was enforced during this visit, but Pirow admitted that he discussed the question of an airline between South Africa and Angola.⁵² News articles reported that the main topic of discussion was the establishment of a common South Africa–Portuguese defensive front against possible aggression in the southern part of the African continent.⁵³ Also, it is believed that Pirow and Salazar reviewed the German colonial claims. Pirow also proposed that the defence of Angola, Mozambique, the Union of South Africa, and the important port of Lourenco Marques should be fortified. South Africa had considerable interest in this port, as many exports from the Transvaal were shipped from there.

Pirow also visited his parents’ homeland, Germany, in November 1938.⁵⁴ He met with various high-ranking Nazi officials before the grand prize of meetings, one with Adolf Hitler himself. He first met with Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister, and Field Marshal Goering.⁵⁵ Pirow was treated like an old friend and a celebrity: he was given a private air force demonstration, visited an air force training school and an infantry school, and was received by Goering as his private guest, even going hunting with him.⁵⁶

Pirow met Hitler on 25 November 1938 in Berlin, though it was just for an hour.⁵⁷ On the same day Hitler also met with King Carol of Romania, as did Pirow briefly.⁵⁸ There is speculation about what Hitler and Pirow discussed and why the meeting was relatively short.⁵⁹ Officially it was stated that Hitler and Pirow discussed the relations between Germany and Great Britain at the

46. *Ibid.*, 226.

47. National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA), P.S. 9/9/2, *Daily Mail*, 31 October 1938, newspaper article.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

51. NASA, P.S. 9/9/2, *Newsday* (London), 31 October 1938, newspaper article.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. NASA, P.S. 9/9/2, *Telegraphy*, 19 November 1938, newspaper article.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

57. NASA, P.S. 9/9/2, *The Scotsman*, 25 November 1938, newspaper article.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

time, and that German colonies were not discussed.⁶⁰ This could have been due to reports that Pirow had been ordered by the South African government not to discuss the issue of colonies with Hitler or even to raise his personal opinion regarding the matter.⁶¹

The Fusion government of Hertzog and Smuts facilitated Pirow's position as minister of defence, which in turn contributed substantially to the development of South Africa as a garrison state. If it had not been for the coalition government, it would have been unlikely that Pirow would have been sent to Europe as South Africa's defence minister.

But the Afrikaner Nationalist movement suffered a massive blow from its continued alienation from Hertzog.⁶² According to historian Mikuláš Touška, 'Malan's leadership was complicated by the radical and pro-Nazi oriented opposition within the party, led by Oswald Pirow'.⁶³ Pirow's travels in fascist Europe before World War II only strengthened his position regarding his fascist political ideology. The direction of Pirow's group was captured in the pamphlet 'Nuwe Orde vir Suid-Afrika' (A new order for South Africa), which he penned in 1940. The group also derived its name from the title of this pamphlet: 'Although the [group's] original programme was inspired by the Salazar regime in Portugal, its starting point was anti-capitalist and Christian-Republican.'⁶⁴ One would have expected that Pirow, with his German background and admiration of German fascism, would have based his party on Hitler's National Socialist Party; however, from a theoretical standpoint, Pirow found Salazar's fascism more pragmatic.

Gradually, the rhetoric coming from the New Order party became more fascist. Notwithstanding substantial backing that the group received, particularly in the Transvaal, Pirow (differing from other opposition leaders) did not challenge Malan's place as leader of the Herenigde Nasionale Party (Reunited National Party, HNP), as the National Party was called from 1939. Malan attempted to convince Pirow that the New Order should function as an organisation within the HNP. These attempts, however, were seen to be meaningless gestures by the fundamentalist members of Malan's party; rather, the continued disputes between 'the New Order and Malan's HNP leadership led to the New Order's closer cooperation with the Ossewabrandwag (OB) mass movement'.⁶⁵ The New Order became the organisation which formulated the philosophy and goals of the OB, a social and later paramilitary right-wing Afrikaner movement. The bond that was forged between the New Order and the OB ultimately led to candidates of the New Order being excluded

60. NASA, P.S. 9/9/2, *Yorkshire Post*, 21 November 1938, newspaper article.

61. *Ibid.*

62. M. Touška, 'Divided Union: South African Nationalist Opposition from 1939 to 1943', *Prague Articles on the History of International Relations*, 2 (2019), 83.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Ibid.*

from the HNP list of candidates and the group failing completely in the 1943 elections. Eventually, Pirow's split from Malan and his continued belief in fascism led to his political demise. As Mouton noted: 'After rejecting parliamentary democracy, it was impossible for Pirow to contest the 1943 general election.'⁶⁶ However, even if he had taken part in the election, Mouton suggests, 'he would have suffered a humiliating defeat', as the New Order had limited support at best.⁶⁷ In fact, by the end of its existence as functioning organisation, the New Order was mocked and referred to as 'a collection of generals without an army'.⁶⁸ This would be the political legacy of Pirow, a man who helped strengthen South Africa's response to the very ideology he vigorously supported. In essence, he helped lay the foundation for some of the most important anti-fascist garrison state characteristics in South Africa during the 1930s and 1940s.

A comparison of opposing ideas

Hofmeyr's and Pirow's opposing views for the future can be illustrated in various examples. Hofmeyr's early start in politics was not as fortuitous as he had hoped. Hofmeyr had attempted to oppose Malan on the Immigration Quota Bill in the early 1930s, wanting a more liberal approach to allow more Jewish immigration into South Africa. However, his inability to tackle the practical matters regarding immigration undermined him and allowed Malan to clinch the parliamentary debates. Hofmeyr's involvement in the combined works of *Coming of Age* was limited to technical and administrative matters, but it associated his name with the vision of a more liberal and inclusive society, already in the early 1930s.

Hofmeyr followed in Smuts's footsteps of imperial internationalism. Hofmeyr's belief in a more inclusive South Africa was limited to South Africa being part of the British Empire. He gave an important speech titled 'Reconciling Imperialism and Liberty'. This speech links Hofmeyr to British anti-fascism as the belief was that states acting within the British empire could combat fascism and that fascism could not exist within the British empire. After the 1948 election, which Smuts lost, Hofmeyr wrote a series of articles under the umbrella title 'What of the Future?' In them Hofmeyr detailed his ideas regarding national unity and especially about the National Party's authoritarian policies regarding race. In his position, Hofmeyr was influenced by Smuts and the 'new liberalism', by which idealism in the fight against a fear complex is insufficient and action is required, a position prevalent within the United Party.

66. Mouton, 'Beyond the Pale', 18.

67. *Ibid.*

68. M. Roberts and A. Trollip, *The South African Opposition 1939-1945* (Cape Town: Longmans, Green and Co, 1947), 147.

Pirow's political fall from grace should be intrinsically tied to his beliefs in fascism. By the end of World War II, when the horrors of the Holocaust could no longer be denied, the political aspirations of people with pro-Nazi sympathies such as Pirow were permanently damaged. What saved Malan's political career at this point was that he had not been pro-Nazi but rather against South Africa's participation in World War II. Pirow also played an important role in establishing crucial characteristics of a garrison state in South Africa. Pirow's five-year plan focused on expanding and industrialising the South African military, making it much more powerful and influential within South Africa. Lasswell flagged militarisation as one of the crucial characteristics of the garrison state. The expansion of South Africa's military capabilities, aided by an increase in personnel and an expanded production of arms, led to the fulfilment of another characteristic of the garrison state, namely that the most powerful members of society would come from the military.

Neither Hofmeyr's nor Pirow's vision for South Africa's future came to fruition. Smuts's United Party lost the 1948 election to Malan's National Party; Hofmeyr became part of the opposition in parliament (but died prematurely the same year). Pirow exited politics and became a successful writer, authoring Hertzog's biography.⁶⁹ He also returned to practicing law. Both men played a crucial role in developing the characteristics that made South Africa a garrison state. Hofmeyr was the anti-fascist manifestation of the South African garrison state, whereas Pirow was the anti-communist manifestation. As the next section explains, the 1930s and 1940s can be seen as a period when ideas of both an anti-fascist and an anti-communist garrison state could develop. The threat of fascism drove Hofmeyr, whereas the fear of communism drove Pirow. Both manifestations were marked by the same garrison-state characteristics; what differentiated them was the specific enemy on whom they focused.

The South African garrison state of the 1930s and 1940s

Lasswell added a crucial caveat to his work: 'The picture of the garrison state [that I offer] is no dogmatic forecast. Rather, it is a picture of the probable. It is not inevitable.'⁷⁰ Lasswell focused on *potential* developments, for, as he noted, humans, when they act rationally, 'consider alternative versions for the future'.⁷¹

The concept of the garrison state is tested here against South Africa of the 1930s and 1940s. The focus is on the potential development of characteristics of the garrison state, in the spirit in which Lasswell intended the concept to be used, as a form of 'futures thinking'. Thus, we can identify which

69. O. Pirow, *James Barry Munnik Hertzog* (Cape Town: Timmins, 1950).

70. Lasswell, 'Garrison State', 456.

71. *Ibid.*

characteristics South Africa of the 1930s and 1940s did, or did not, exhibit. In this way we are contextualising Lasswell's concept.

The garrison state is a concept that is rooted in the American and European experiences of the first half of the twentieth century. The British had an alternative approach to fascism than other European nations. The British approach was to seek security in a global federation – the Commonwealth of Nations – that would secure their interests and give legitimacy to what remained of their empire. South Africa was a member of this Commonwealth and as such the garrison state was to some extent an awkward fit for it. It can be argued that South Africa could only realise the garrison state once it had severed its ties with the Commonwealth in 1961. The concept of the garrison state also fits South Africa better in the 1940s than in the 1930s. Although one can see the development of some characteristics in the 1930s, the war period of the first half of the 1940s was marked by enhanced garrison state characteristics.

It is safe to determine that there was not one specific moment of inception for the South African garrison state. Rather, the characteristics for such a state developed incrementally over the two decades. But not only that; we can also identify two versions of the South African garrison state during this time, namely an anti-fascist and an anti-communist version. The influence of the 'state' in 'garrison state' cannot be underestimated. As previously mentioned, Lasswell saw the development of the garrison state as a potential reaction to fascism; yet this would not stop a fascist government from using the machinery established by an anti-fascist garrison state if it supplanted the latter. Smuts's administration, in which Hofmeyr served, partly constructed an anti-fascist garrison state against the fascist threat of the time. However, this garrison state was then repurposed by Malan – and the National Party leaders who succeeded him – in a fight against communism. Both versions reflected their location in a colonial context in their consideration of African political power as a threat (whether real or perceived). Thus, we can argue that the transfer from an anti-fascist to an anti-communist garrison state retained the fear of a loss of white superiority on the political front.

One of Lasswell's characteristics of the garrison state is that 'specialists on violence' become the most powerful and influential group. If we look at the power structure of South Africa from the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s, we can clearly see that military men were in control of the country. Jan Smuts would be a prime example of this. When Smuts took control of South Africa's government and became prime minister in 1939, the first action he took was to involve South Africa in war. Smuts was a benefactor of Pirow's work to expand South Africa's military and its ability to produce arms. Smuts's military background, combined with his role as field marshal to Churchill in World War II and the strength of the South African military at the time, clearly represented a characteristic of the

garrison state. Lasswell also stated that ‘the military men who dominate a modern technical society [of the 1930s] will be very different from the officers of history and tradition’.⁷² It was thus likely, he explained, that the ‘specialists on violence’ would have received a substantial degree of training in ‘many of the skills that we have traditionally accepted as part of modern civilian management’.⁷³ This was certainly the case with Smuts, who was a trained lawyer.

Another garrison state characteristic that South Africa exhibited was that the ‘expectations about the future may rest upon the extrapolation of past trends into the future’.⁷⁴ Here we can use the example of South African sovereignty and its participation in both world wars. In the mid-1930s, Hertzog was concerned that South Africa would be co-opted into participating in another world war if Britain were to take part, as had been the case with World War I. Hertzog was ultimately proven right: the Smuts government decided to enter the war on Britain’s side when Britain declared war on Nazi Germany, just as the Botha government had reacted in World War I.

A further characteristic is that ‘specialists on violence are [...] preoccupied with the skills and attitudes judged characteristic of nonviolence’.⁷⁵ This is because in a context in which a garrison state arises, military and civil skills need to be merged. In South Africa of the 1930s and 1940s, the military became increasingly equipped with different skills. Just like a ‘large-scale civilian enterprise’, it adopted management capabilities that allowed it to strengthen its power and build its infrastructure, something that is demonstrated in Pirow’s five-year plan.

Lasswell, having witnessed the aftermath of the Great Depression, commented that the garrison state would aim to make unemployment obsolete as this would imply uselessness, something a garrison state cannot tolerate. For the garrison state, ‘there must be work – and the duty to work – for all’.⁷⁶ In South Africa, the question of poor whites came to the fore especially during the 1930s and 1940s, a problem captured in particular by the 1932 report of the Carnegie Commission. The aim of the focus on poor whites was to move these families away from charity and helplessness and to provide them with opportunities and employment. This also coincided with the large number of economic projects and race legislations that benefitted poor whites, such as job reservation.

Another of Lasswell’s characteristics of the garrison state was that ‘ruling elites must continue to put their chief reliance upon propaganda as an instrument of morale’.⁷⁷ This characteristic can be universal and applicable to a

72. *Ibid.*, 457.

73. *Ibid.*, 358.

74. *Ibid.*, 456.

75. *Ibid.*, 458.

76. *Ibid.*, 459.

77. *Ibid.*, 461.

variety of different types of states, authoritarian or not; propaganda is a normal part of politics. Thus, even though South Africa did portray this characteristic during the 1930s and 1940s, it is one that is not unique to the garrison state. According to Lasswell, a ‘mystic “democracy”’ may be found where authority and control are highly concentrated but the ruling elites speak in the name of the people as a whole.⁷⁸ These states are thus not democracies in the strict sense of the term anymore. South Africa was a ‘mystic “democracy”’ during the 1930s and 1940s as even though elections took place, these were shaped by concerns about race and not by pure democratic principles.

It is also important to focus on the characteristics of the garrison state that South Africa did *not* exhibit. First, in Lasswell’s prototypical garrison state, a socialisation of danger takes place, which leads to the unification of the nation. South Africa, however, was not unified. This was made impossible by the divisions between the races but also those within white society between ethnic and language groups. For example, amongst the Afrikaners, a major division occurred when Smuts and Hertzog parted ways on the question of South Africa’s participation in World War II. Another characteristic of the garrison state is the duty to obey and to serve the state, especially from a military perspective. This, too, did not occur in South Africa. South Africa only instituted conscription in 1967. In a garrison state, Lasswell argued, institutional practices long connected with the modern democracy would disappear. Yet South Africa was never a true democracy until 1994 and institutional democratic practices did not disappear in the 1930s and 1940s but never existed in the first place. According to Lasswell, the garrison state is marked by government by plebiscite. But in South Africa, the first referendum took place only in 1960. Lasswell’s model garrison state does away with the legislature.⁷⁹ This, too, did not occur in South Africa, certainly not in the 1930s and 1940s; it can be said, however, that in the 1980s the state undermined the country’s rule of law and created a parallel state. The paradigmatic garrison state would ceremonialise rather than fight, a particularly prominent and influential characteristic.⁸⁰ But this was not the case during the 1930s and 1940s when South Africa participated in the most prominent war of that era, namely World War II.

Improving the garrison state concept

As this article seeks to contribute to Lasswellian scholarship and the concept of the garrison state, it is important to focus on how the concept can be improved upon and clarified. The use of the concept can also be promoted in differing contexts. Although Lasswell presented a fascinating perspective, his garrison state concept is by no means perfect. It is important to focus on missing

78. *Ibid.*, 462.

79. *Ibid.*, 455.

80. *Ibid.*

characteristics that Lasswell omitted, which would have the potential of improving the concept. A revised concept with additional characteristics would make it more universal. This would mean that the concept would have a greater utility as it could be applied to a wider context. As it stands, the concept does not reach its full potential. I here consider the South African example to think through possibilities of tightening Lasswell's concept.

The most important factor that Lasswell omits in his theory of the garrison state is the matter of race. The garrison state is obsessed with power and control, and it requires a threat (real or perceived) as a reason to exercise excessive power and control over its population. Racism can be orchestrated into a threat from a specific racial group, which can prove to be extremely useful for a garrison state. Garrison states can thus use race to manipulate the public and use fear to legitimise their use of excessive control over their societies. The incorporation of race and racism into the concept could make it more applicable to various contexts. It could allow scholars to understand racism and systemic racial oppression in a different and insightful manner. Similar arguments could be made regarding religion, caste-systems, and classism, thus pushing Lasswell to be more specific and expansive in his analysis of potential threats to the garrison state.

In the garrison state, decisions are made by 'specialists on violence', but Lasswell does not deal with what motivates them. Such decisions would not necessarily be solely influenced by domestic matters, but most possibly also by international events. However, a garrison state such as South Africa could also have its decision-making process influenced by an imperial or colonial power. A country that does not have complete sovereignty could exhibit garrison state characteristics, yet these characteristics could manifest themselves because of the influence of an external imperial or colonial power. A country could then exhibit garrison state characteristics not for its own benefit but rather that of this external power. This context clearly affects decision-making within such a garrison state. Dominion status and trusteeship, or indeed any other form of an imperial or colonial power usurping the sovereignty of a nation, could have potential consequences in relation to its character as a garrison state. In this context we must also consider decision-making in the military, especially in the more current context of nuclear weapons. A revised version of the garrison state would need to consider the intricacies that this form of weapons raises.

Lasswell did not elaborate much on the role of elections in a garrison state and how these could potentially cause a country to transform into (or even potentially out of) a garrison state. There might also be the possibility that elections lead to the transfer of political power *within* a garrison state, from one political party to another, irrespective of political ideology. Playing into elections is the matter of censorship, the control of information would be vital to the maintenance of power within a garrison state – a matter that needs more attention.

Recently, political scientist Eyal Rubinson proposed that it is possible to identify a garrison state prototype and to draw up a garrison state index to measure the extent to which a country is exhibiting garrison state characteristics. Rubinson identified the garrison state prototype as ‘a modern-day Sparta [that] primarily centralize[s] an unproportionate amount of its resources towards preparing for a real or perceived national security threat’.⁸¹ The garrison state index is estimated on the basis of seven components:

- (i) ‘the amount of armed forces personnel’
- (ii) ‘military expenditure as a share of Gross Domestic Product’
- (iii) ‘arms exports and arms imports’
- (iv) ‘terrorist attacks’
- (v) ‘conflict recurrence’
- (vi) ‘military participation in government and Military Dimension Index’
- (vii) ‘Civilian Control Scores’⁸²

This index could serve as a modern version for the garrison state, although it should be noted that Rubinson deviates quite substantially from the traditional garrison state characteristics that Lasswell proposed. If a revised version of the garrison state were to be produced, Rubinson’s index could be included, together with the previously mentioned factors that Lasswell neglected in order to allow for the garrison state as a concept to be more widely utilised.

Conclusion

The concept of the garrison state adds a layer to the new scholarship on South African anti-fascism. Anti-fascism in South Africa has been ruled by the practices of ‘anarchist, socialist, and communist internationalism and New Left movements’.⁸³ These practices can also be seen as traditions which show how South Africa has been influenced by internationalist movements from the West. However, Hyslop *et al.* showed us that South Africa can be influenced by traditions which are more Africanist in nature, such as ‘Pan-Africanism, anti-colonialism, Third Worldism, Black Consciousness Movements, and different anti-racist and anti-apartheid movements’.⁸⁴ Anti-fascist scholarship has yet to unpack how imperial internationalists such as Smuts and Hofmeyr played a role in anti-fascism. Michael Seidman has identified conservative anti-fascism as ‘counter-revolutionary’ anti-fascism.⁸⁵ Although Seidman

81. E. Rubinson, ‘Measuring Garrison States in International Politics: Towards a New “Garrison Index”’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 47, 10 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2024.2347881>, 3–4.

82. *Ibid.*, 5–6.

83. Hyslop, Braskén, and Roos, ‘Political and Intellectual Lineages’, 5–6.

84. *Ibid.*

85. M. Seidman, *Transatlantic Antifascisms: From the Spanish Civil War to the End of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 239.

does not engage with examples from South Africa, this description is relevant to Smuts and Hofmeyr. Using South Africa as an example of the garrison state, we can see how the concept can be improved upon. The South African garrison state also shows that the concept can take on different manifestations, be it anti-fascist or anti-communist in nature.

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