CONSTRAINTS ON SUPERPOWER INTERVENTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

by

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The size and strategic location of the African continent; its plethora of natural resources concentrated in a few key countries; the newness, fragility, and instability of its varied political systems; and its lack of clear political ideologies have conspired to encourage superpower intervention and competition in sub-Saharan Africa. The deployment of Cuban combat forces to Angola and Ethiopia on behalf of the Soviet Union in the latter half of the 1970s signaled a major escalation of East-West military competition on the African continent, which previously had remained relatively immune to such rivalry. Western interventions have included coalition operations in Shaba Province in Zaire, not once but twice; the French-sponsored overthrow of Emperor Bokassa I in the former Central African Empire; and the British Commonwealth peacekeeping operations in Zimbabwe. More recently, events in southwest Asia have underscored the military importance of the Indian Ocean and prompted base rights agreements between the United States and the governments of Kenya and Somalia, presumably on a relatively permanent basis.

The results of such superpower involvement, however, have not been all marked by success. The Soviet Union and its Cuban ally have not been able to resolve the ongoing conficts in Angola and Ethiopia. In addition, Moscow has suffered well-publicized setbacks in Egypt, Somalia, and Sudan, and possibly in Guinea, one of its staunchest clients in the past. In the same vein, the United States has yet to resolve the political, social, and economic problems of Zaire—problems that have threatened to tear that resource-rich client apart since it gained its independence in 1960. Similarly, the United States has "lost" Ethiopia, and the US position in Liberia could be in jeopardy, depending upon future political evolution or revolution there.

Despite these reverses, current trends portend continued, if not increased, superpower intervention in Africa. There is little doubt that the Soviet Union will continue to view Africa as a legitimate arena for low-risk competition with the West. In this competition Moscow relies heavily on the military instruments of diplomacy. As Robert Legvold points out:

> The Soviet Union's apparent eagerness to secure the use of an even larger number of facilities wherever the remotest possibility exists—from Portugal to Mozambique—adds further evidence that it intends to have military power readily at hand in areas like Africa.[1]

This strategy is not going to be abandoned. Colin Legum tells us that "it would require nothing short of a major reversal of [Admiral] Gorshkov's strategy for the Soviets to lose interest in any of these areas [the Horn, southern Africa, the bulge of West Africa,

and the southern littoral of the Mediterranean]."[2] And, if for no other reason than that of increased Soviet involvement, US military involvement in sub-Saharan Africa also will increase, base rights agreements with Somalia and Kenya being initial steps in the process. As former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown projected in his *Department of Defense Annual Report* for 1981:

> We anticipate increased US security assistance programs in the years ahead to meet the growing requirements of developing local defense forces, and also because we wish to offer the African states an alternative to excessive reliance on the Soviet bloc for equipment, training, and advisors.[3]

Generally, the failures of the superpowers in sub-Saharan Africa can be attributed to a lack of understanding of the limitations facing superpower intervention there. These limitations are of two types. The first comprises those limits imposed by Africa itself, having their root in Africa's historical experience and economic realities. The second includes those imposed by the superpowers themselves, such as resource constraints and domestic considerations. If superpower competition continues to be a fact of life in sub-Saharan Africa in the coming years, it would be to our advantage if these limitations were more fully appreciated.

AFRICAN-IMPOSED LIMITATIONS

In 1963, 31 African heads of state gathered in Addis Ababa and formed the Organization of African Unity. While the achievements of the OAU have tended, during the intervening years, to be more ephemeral than of significant import, the charter of the OAU enunciates certain principles that all member states are pledged to uphold. These principles, in turn, serve as the yardstick against which Africans will measure superpower activities in Africa. More recently the North-South dialogue has provided additional guidelines that Africa, along with the rest of the Third World, wants to impose on the superpowers. This is not to suggest that Africa can forcibly respond to superpower violation of such principles and guidelines, but African representatives can exert considerable moral suasion in regional and international forums to the severe embarrassment and discomfort of the superpowers. An example of this kind of effort is the perennial drive to introduce a UN resolution imposing a total economic embargo on the Republic of South Africa, a resolution that the United States consistently opposes despite the negative publicity that ensues. Additionally, the lessons of the 1973 Arab oil embargo are not lost on those African states possessing raw materials vital to the industrial world. Nigeria has already exercised the oil weapon in its nationalization of British Petroleum assets because of that company's trade relations with South Africa.

African nationalism is a direct reaction to Africa's colonial heritage. Basil Davidson describes the colonial period and its aftermath as follows:

> Viewed across the skylines of history, the colonial period has been little more than an episode, even a brief one; but the skylines of history are distant, and to Africans those fifty or sixty years of foreign domination have been tremendous and traumatic. . . . [The] impact of those years was always massive, and often terribly destructive. It left Africa with everything to build or rebuild. Many fragments of the 'old society' remained. But all too clearly they could never be put together again. Few people thought they should be. What was needed was a new society, a new pattern of daily life, a modern Africa equipped to join the modern world.[4]

In essence, African nationalism is manifested in efforts to prevent the reimposition of any form of external domination, whether political, economic, or military. It is not particularly oriented on the nation-state, of which there are few in Africa, but rather on the continent as a whole. In practical terms African nationalism sensitizes the continent to actions by the superpowers that appear to treat African states as less than equals.

African nationalism leads African states to nonalignment, which is viewed as a means of self-preservation in a world of superpower confrontation. As distinguished African scholar Ali Mazrui puts it:

> Given the competition between the giants, and a reluctance on the part of a newly independent country to be tied to either of the two blocs, a doctrine emerged asserting the right to remain outside military entanglements and the right of diplomatic experimentation for those who are newly initiated into international politics.[5]

But perhaps an old Swahili proberb explains the principle better: "When two elephants fight, it is the grass which suffers."[6]

The rhetoric and actions of some African leaders at times obscure this commitment to nonalignment. Many who proclaim the doctrine also appear to accept the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. A few others unabashedly pursue the economic benefits of capitalism. Indeed, the espousal of nonalignment is often useful in gaining assistance from both the East and the West; it can become the basis of "an exercise in balanced dependency" on the assumption that a client with more than one patron is freer than a client dependent on a single patron.[7]

In spite of its professed purpose of freeing a state from political and military entanglements with either East or West, then, nonalignment does not prevent a state from seeking military assistance or support from either side. Thus Liberia can maintain a bilateral defense agreement with the United States, an African country that was once a French colony can sign a mutual defense treaty with France, and Ethiopia can conclude an agreement that permits the construction of a Soviet military base on her soil. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania explains this apparent contradiction:

> We do not deny the principle that any African state has the right to ask for assistance, either military or economic, from the country of its choice. On the contrary, we assert that right—Angola, Ethiopia, Chad, Zaire, and all of us. I have that right. It is not for the West to object when Angola asks assistance from the USSR. It is not for the East to object when Djibouti asks assistance from France. And the requested country always has the right to decide whether to give that assistance.[8]

For a superpower wanting to enter into a military relationship with an African state, it is therefore essential that the African country has, or at least appears to have, freedom of choice in the matter and that the superpower's presence not be extended beyond its usefulness to that African state. General Obasanjo, former head of state of Nigeria,

provided constructive advice to the superpowers in his 1978 speech to the OAU summit:

> In the context of foreign intervention in Africa, there are three parties involved. There are the Soviets and other socialist countries, the Western powers, and we the Africans. If the interests of Africa are to be safeguarded, there are certain considerations which each of the parties must constantly bear in mind. To the Soviets and their friends, I should like to say that, having been invited to Africa in order to assist in the liberation struggle and the consolidation of national independence, they should not overstay their welcome. Africa is not about to throw off one colonial yoke for another. Rather, they should hasten the political, economic, and military capability of their African friends to stand on their own . . . .
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> To the Western powers, I say that they should act in such a way that we are not led to believe they have different concepts of independence and sovereignty for Africa and for Europe. A new Berlin-type conference is not the appropriate response to the kind of issues thrown up by the recent Kolwezi episode [in Zaire]. Paratroop drops in the twentieth century are not more acceptable to us than the gunboats of the last century were to our ancestors. Convening conferences in Europe and America to decide the fate of Africa raises too many ugly specters which should be best forgotten both in our and the Europeans' interests.[9]

Virtually all sub-Saharan states believe in the inviolability of their national borders. These borders, drawn by Europeans in the latter part of the 19th century, often divide like peoples among neighboring states or include diverse peoples within one state. They also form states that may be too small to be viable or too large to be manageable. Recognizing the potential for conflict should an attempt be made to change such borders, the OAU wisely adopted the policy of maintaining their sanctity. Nevertheless, many conflicts in Africa can be traced to some form of border problem. These include secessionist and irredentist conflicts that lead to a suppression of minority groups. In general, the weight of African opinion is on the side of the party attempting to maintain its territorial integrity.

The United States has normally remained aloof from this type of dispute, with the major exception of various crises in Zaire. In those cases, the United States was criticized for its intervention because the situation was not clearly seen as a violation of borders by the rest of Africa. Rather, it was perceived as an internal matter for Zaire.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has taken a more active role in such disputes, and its position has more consistently coincided with that of the OAU. For example, in the Nigerian Civil War the Soviet Union and Great Britain were the only major powers to provide military assistance to the federal military government, which was the side favored by most African states. France and Portugal supported Biafra, and US neutrality in the dispute was perceived by some African countries also as support for Biafra. During the South African invasion of Angola and the Somali invasion of the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, the Soviet Union and its allies were yet again seen to be supporting the sanctity of Africa's borders.

In two other cases, the Tanzanian invasion of Uganda and the Libyan incursion into Chad, African opinion was divided. Whether this represented a shift in the sanctity-of-borders principle is not yet clear.

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It is interesting to note, however, that both the United States and the Soviet Union refrained from any overt military action in those instances.

Often closely related to the border issue is the precept of noninterference in the internal affairs of African states, be it by other African states or by external powers. This principle leads to awkward situations for both internal and external actors. For example, Africans chose to suffer in silence the Idi Amin era in Uganda and, in fact, criticized the United States and others for anti-Amin statements and actions. And while the West applauded the daring Entebbe raid, Africa violently condemned the Israeli intervention because it was seen as gross interference in the internal affairs of a fellow African state. On the other hand, the German operation in Mogadishu was perceived to be legitimate because it had the full support and cooperation of the Somali government.

In an interesting corollary, African states may also take exception to attempts to shore up a legal government against internal dissension as another form of interference, as was the case with regard to the Western interventions in Shaba Province. Nyerere makes this point:

> We must reject the principle that external powers have the right to maintain in power African governments which are universally recognized to be corrupt, or incompetent, or a bunch of murderers, when their peoples try to make a change. Africa cannot have its present governments frozen into position for all time by neocolonialism, or because there are cold war or ideological conflicts between big powers. The people of an individual African country have as much right to change their corrupt government in the last half of the twentieth century as, in the past, the British, French, and Russian peoples had to overthrow their own rotten regimes.[10]

Another limitation on successful superpower intervention in sub-Saharan Africa is the position of the superpower on the issue of majority rule in southern Africa. Even though some sub-Saharan states maintain economic relations and conduct a political dialogue with the Republic of South Africa, the underlying black African commitment to majority rule remains strong.

Black Africa has repeatedly accused the United States of favoring the white-ruled regimes of southern Africa, and to a degree those accusations have been justified. Certainly the United States provided military, political, and economic support to the Portuguese government during its African wars. While this aid was couched in terms of Portugal's importance as a NATO ally and the value of the Azores, it nonetheless facilitated Portuguese counterinsurgency efforts in its African possessions. With regard to Rhodesia, the Byrd Amendment allowed the United States to import chrome from that country in contravention of a United Nations embargo, and there was considerable sentiment in the Congress to recognize the short-lived Muzorewa government in Zimbabwe, which was viewed by most Africans as a puppet regime still under the control of Ian Smith. Finally, the continuation of economic and political relations with the Republic of South Africa is often criticized by black Africa. At present, Africa is very suspicious of the Reagan Administration because of a perceived shift from the policies of President Carter toward closer relations with the white South African regime.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union and Cuba have been recognized in Africa as the champions of majority rule because of their intervention in Angola in support of Agostinho Neto's Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), first against the Portuguese and then against South African armed incursions. General Murtalá Mohammed, Nigeria's head of state at the time of the Angolan Civil War, praised Moscow and its allies at an OAU summit in February 1976:

> We are all aware of the heroic role which the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries have played in the struggle of the African peoples for liberation. The Soviet Union and, other Socialist countries have been our traditional suppliers of arms to resist oppression, and to fight for national liberation

and human dignity. On the other hand, the US, which now sheds crocodile tears on Angola, has not only completely ignored the freedom fighters whom successive US administrations branded as terrorists, it even openly supported morally and materially the fascist Portuguese Government. And we have no cause to doubt that the same successive American Administrations continue to support the apartheid regime of [South Africa] whom they see as the defender of Western interest on the African continent. How can we now be led to believe that a Government with a record such as the US has in Africa can suddenly become the defender of our interests?[11]

As a result of deteriorating economic trends, Africans are becoming more vocal in their demands for a "new international economic order," which would have as one of its key aspects various economic concessions by the developed nations. Although still often criticized for not providing enough economic assistance, the United States does appear to have a comparative advantage over the Soviet Union in the economic arena. The Soviets even admit to a poorer record of performance:

> The creation of the material and technical base of socialism and communism demands colossal capital investments . . . . [In the Soviet Union] there is not and cannot be 'surplus capital' by the very economic nature of socialism. The socialist countries have never entered into competition with capitalism in the volume of capital resources they export to the developing countries and in the existing stage of development they cannot do so.[12]

Nevertheless, the Third World is now looking on the Soviet Union more frequently as a charter member of the North in the North-South dialogue and, as such, a nation also subject to the demands for more human development projects, increased concessional aid, and better terms. As *The New York Times* reported during the Fourth Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Nairobi in 1976, the less-developed countries

> resent the Soviet Union's standing aloof from such questions and insisting that the world economic disarray is a consequence of capitalist contraditions over which it has no control and for which it bears no responsibility.[13]

Thus it appears that a superpower wanting to enter into arms or basing agreements with African states is going to be required to pay a higher price economically. The operative question from the African point of view will be, "What have you done for me lately?"

There are, then, several limitations and constraints that sub-Saharan Africa can impose on superpower intervention in Africa. It is extremely difficult to look upon them as being separate and distinct from each other, however, because there is considerable overlap. In general, each superpower has had success when it recognized and observed these limitations, and failure when it did not. The Soviet Union has the advantage in the political realm, for, as Ali Mazrui points out, "On balance it could be argued that the Soviet Union has so far always been at least a decade ahead of the USA in understanding the forces at work in the Third World."[14] On the other hand, Washington has the economic advantage over Moscow. At any rate, even if the superpowers are able to recognize the limitations they face in Africa and their own strengths and weaknesses in dealing with them, both have their own limitations at home that must be considered before success can be achieved.

SUPERPOWER-IMPOSED CONSTRAINTS

For the most part, major interventions by the superpowers in sub-Saharan Africa have been infrequent, the most notable exceptions having been those in Zaire, Angola, and Ethiopia. While in some cases the reluctance to intervene has been prompted by limitations imposed by the particular circumstances in Africa itself, in other instances

the superpower has been constrained either by its own internal considerations or by the potential response of the other superpower. The internal considerations for the United States are often similar to those faced by the Soviet Union.

Despite growing US concern over strategic minerals, strategic lines of communication, and perceived Soviet encroachments, sub-Saharan Africa is still of secondary importance to the United States. Attention given to Africa has therefore been minimal to the point of neglect. Lieutenant General Daniel O. Graham, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, described the situation in this way:

> Muted interest in academic circles and a public interest level ranging between utter apathy and outright disgust provided ample political support for a foreign policy of neglect as far as sub-Saharan Africa was concerned. On the international political side, it was reasonable to expect the Soviet effort in Africa would run afoul of the same intractable problems as had efforts of the United States. On the economic side, it was recognized that the raw materials of Africa were important to free world economies, but it appeared that they continued to flow despite the nature of local governments. No matter what unfortunate domestic or foreign policies might be adopted by African leaders, they still had to finance them by selling raw materials to the industrialized West. On the military side, [a lack of interest] quite naturally followed lack of US political concern for the area.[15]

US military resources that have been channeled to sub-Saharan Africa have been allocated primarily to only a few states, and to those on the basis of potential political, economic, or strategic gain. The principal recipients have been Zaire, Liberia, and Ethiopia before the fall of Haile Selassie in 1974. Kenya and Somalia have now replaced Ethiopia in a quid pro quo for military base rights. As for the many other states, they have been virtually ignored except when a crisis erupted, at which time previous neglect precluded any sort of US military response. The various crises in Chad are good examples.

Sub-Saharan Africa is of secondary importance to the Soviet Union as well. Indeed, the poor state of the Soviet economy severely limits the allocation of scarce resources to such a peripheral region. As Robert Legvold points out, Africa is not

> a region of high priority for Soviet policy—intrinsically Africa is simply not of that importance. And certainly it is not enough to justify paying much of a price. The Soviet Union, for example, is conspicuously uneager to inherit as an additional ward an economically troubled country like Mozambique. Thus, not only does it counsel against impetuous revolutionary measures that can only compound the country's difficulties, but it also apparently hopes that the West will continue to lend a hand.[16]

Accordingly, the Soviet Union, like the United States, has concentrated its resources on only a few key states, those being Guinea, Mali, Angola, and Ethiopia, the latter replacing Somalia in 1975.

Because the superpowers assign a low priority to sub-Saharan Africa, it appears that neither has a consistent, coherent policy toward the region. The United States does have legitimate economic, strategic, and political interests there; however, those interests are not vital to her security in the same sense that US interests in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf are vital. The result is that they are less clearly defined and articulated and are subject to considerable debate at the policymaking level. US policy in Africa has been characterized in rather unkind terms by a recent *Wall Street Journal* editorial:

> The United States has approached Africa in a state of confusion verging on schizophrenia. We waver, hopelessly torn between our legitimate cultural, strategic, and economic affinities and a desire for popularity and moral rectitude . . . . In the end, we achieve neither rectitude nor popularity, nor self-interest.[17]

The regionalist school of thought tends to view Africa as a self-contained unit, vital in its own right. The globalist school looks at Africa only as it relates to other areas of the world. The definition of US interests and the formulation of policies based on those interests tend toward vacillation to the extent that both schools have their advocates in the US policymaking apparatus and neither is totally dominant over the other. Currently the globalist school is the more influential in defining US strategic interests in Africa. The globalists view Africa in a manner similar to that of the ancient Portuguese explorers: Africa is an obstacle to be circumnavigated en route to somewhere else. In the case of the Portuguese sailors, the objective was the riches of the Indies; for the United States, it is the oil of the Persian Gulf. Accordingly, decisions on Africa are influenced more by their potential effects on the US global position than on Africa itself.

A potentially significant outgrowth of this policy conflict is the emergence of the Congress as a major African policymaker. The Byrd and Clark Amendments are but two examples. In the absence of an authoritative voice speaking for the administration on Africa, this congressional role can be expected to continue, restricting US military options, often in unanticipated ways.

According to Robert Legvold, the Soviet Union is experiencing a similar dichotomy, which he describes in terms of an internal stake and an external stake. With respect to the internal stake, he comments,

> This is not a stake over which the Soviet Union feels it has enormous control. By and large, as the Soviet leaders know, change in Africa unfolds at its own pace and in its own fashion. There is change that the Soviet Union would be delighted to abet and, at the margin, it doubtless sees a role for itself. This role, however, is essentially as benefactor not instigator.[18]

Externally, "the Soviet Union is interested in promoting the kind of change easing its access to facilities that aid in the pursuit of its military-strategic objectives beyond Africa."[19] Hence it is reasonable to assume that there are debates on African policy in the Kremlin similar to those between the regionalists and the globalists in Washington. Indeed, Dr. Peter Vanneman and Martin James have identified five schools of thought within Soviet policymaking circles: "revolutionists," who support violent class struggle in Africa; "evolutionists," who favor alliances with the radical parties of sub-Saharan Africa leading to gradual communist domination; "isolationists," who prefer to strengthen the security of the Soviet homeland rather than become involved in African adventures; "internationalists," who preach detente with the United States first; and "globalists," who espouse a mercantilist approach to the mineral resources of Africa, as well as to the rest of the Third World.[20] Each of these schools of thought can be expected to exercise some political leverage in policy debates in the Kremlin, with corresponding constraints on the policy adopted.

Another key restraint against superpower intervention in Africa is simply risk, the potential for failure in the endeavor itself and the potential reaction of the other superpower. Certainly the United States is not eager to confront the Soviet Union directly in Africa. In addition, the so-called Vietnam syndrome effectively limits possible US military responses even when the Soviet Union is not a factor. As former Senator Birch Bayh has noted:

> If we have learned anything from our experience in Vietnam, it is the folly of permitting a cold-war mentality to lead us to choose sides in an internal conflict in a remote corner of Africa which presents no real threat to our national security or to vital national interests.[21]

The Soviet Union's slow, calculated approach in Angola and Ethiopia implies a similar concern over confronting the United States in either country. Dimitri Simes points out:

> The Soviet leadership has not yet used its iron fist without some restraint and caution. It appears that Brezhnev and his associates

are still learning by trial and error exactly how far and how fast they can go without provoking a major confrontation with the United States. While Washington cannot seriously retard the development of Soviet military capabilities, the Kremlin's assessment of the risks and benefits of imperial meddling in the areas of international instability is quite another matter. Where there is no credible Western commitment to counteract, Moscow feels free to use force to affect fluid local conditions and, if possible, establish a foothold.[22]

While Moscow correctly surmised that the threat from the United States would be negligible during their Angolan and Ethiopian adventures, the ultimate lesson for them may be the value of prior restraint. In both of those countries the Soviets and the Cubans face protracted guerrilla war with no military victory in sight, a problem now compounded by the Soviets' predicament in Afghanistan. Indeed, Moscow may yet develop its own Vietnam syndrome over the difficulties of counterinsurgency operations in remote locales where Soviet interests are minor.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union are also constrained by their own ideologies in their relationships with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Since Marx and Engels wrote little about Africa, it was left to Lenin to develop the ideological base for Afro-Soviet relations. Lenin saw colonialism as the weakest link of the capitalist system and foresaw the day when "the upheaval of a Western proletariat and the struggle of a colonial peoples would merge into a single revolutionary process directed against their common tormentors."[23] Therefore, it was necessary, he told the Second Comintern Congress in 1920, to recognize the "national revolutionary movements as a transitional device pending the emergence of Soviet-line Communist regimes."[24] Nevertheless, at the Third Comintern Congress a year later, the only Africans to attend were white South Africans, and the only blacks at the Fourth Congress in 1922 were Americans.[25] After World War II Soviet interest in Africa increased as the winds of change began to sweep the continent. The Soviets recognized their ignorance of Africa and developed a body of African scholars to attempt to fit African realities into communist ideology.

Under Khrushchev, the Soviet Union was partial to the "progressive" states, such as Ghana, Guinea, and Mali. With regard to the "reactionary" states, diplomatic relations were unthinkable, except with Ethiopia. Under the more pragmatic and businesslike policies of Brezhnev, however, the Soviet Union is now willing to establish normal diplomatic relations with any independent black African nation, whatever its political coloration, although the Soviets remain partial to the socialist regimes. Diplomatic ruptures do occur between the Soviet Union and African states though, sometimes even with the "progressives," primarily as a result of real or perceived meddling by the Soviets on the party level.

In the political arena, the Soviet Union may be described as a nation conducting foreign policy on two levels, "that of normal interstate diplomacy and that of revolutionary action working through party machinery and front organizations, propaganda, and subversion."[26] That there are sometimes contradictions between these two levels appears inconsequential to the Soviets, although such contradictions have caused problems for them in the past. Relations on the party level pose more problems for the Soviets than government-to-government relations. Although there are various African governments that proclaim Marxism-Leninism or scientific socialism to be the basis for their rule, there are no overt communist parties as such. In the absence of an indigenous communist party, the Soviets conduct the equivalent of party-to-party relations with either the ruling party (usually the only party allowed in the country) or with various front organizations such as trade unions, youth groups, and student organizations. These party-to-party relations may have serious political consequences for the Soviet Union. They generate ideological disputes over such subjects as religion, the

proper road to socialism, and the vanguard party versus the mass party, among others. For example, General Siad Barre of Somalia, despite professing his dedication to scientific socialism, had this to say about religion:

> In our case, religion is not an instrument of exploitation and domination of one class by another. Ours is the religion of the common man: it stands for equality and justice. Consequently, scientific socialism as applied to our particular conditions cannot identify religion as an obstacle to the progress of the working classes and therefore cannot negate it.[27]

Similarly, the United States tends to support those African states more ideologically attuned to the concepts of democracy and capitalism and to shun those states that use Marxist rhetoric and proclaim their dedication to various forms of socialism. Hence, Washington often misses potentially valuable opportunities to wean so-called socialist states away from the Soviet Union. The failure to establish diplomatic relations with Angola is a case in point.

On the other hand, the United States often remains tied to its favored clients beyond the point of diminishing returns. The United States was blinded to the faults of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia until it was too late. In Zaire the situation has led to a classic case of reverse clientism:

> No African leader owes his rise to, and retention of, power more directly to Washington's patronage than does President Mobutu. Paradoxically, he has often treated the United States with disdain and antagonism. Perhaps even more paradoxically, succeeding administrations have on the whole responded with timidity to his performances. The explanation lies in Mobutu's skill in presenting himself as a leader for whom there is no alternative.
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> Examples of this odd reverse dependence abound. Zaire has expelled two US ambassadors since [Mobutu] came to power in 1965; the American response to the second expulsion (in 1975) was to send Mobutu's favorite American diplomat, Sheldon Vance, back to Zaire to soothe the president's feelings and to 'introduce' the proposed successor before the routine request for agreement was dispatched through diplomatic channels. In effect, Mobutu was given a personal veto over who would represent the United States in Kinshasa. The well-known fact that Mobutu received a regular stipend from the CIA during Zaire's formation years did not deter him from publicly charging the agency in 1975 with trying to overthrow his regime or, according to John Stockwell, from actually imprisoning the CIA-connected officers in the Zaire army. Most important, he has been manipulatively resistant to American advice and pleas concerning the state of his economy and the declining standard of living of the Zairian people, not to mention latter-day American illusions that it is possible to engender respect for human rights within the kind of social and political system existing in Zaire.[28]

From the African point of view, therefore, all an African leader has to do is dress his speeches in the appropriate ideological cloak to entice a particular superpower into a relationship from which it can extricate itself only with great difficulty.

Another limitation on US intervention in Africa is public opinion, to include the views of the press and the Congress. (This kind of limitation presumably does not affect the Soviet Union.) In a Gallup Poll conducted in 1978 for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, only four percent of the American public expressed the belief that Africa should be an important focus of US foreign policy.[29] And while 44 percent favored giving foreign aid to sub-Saharan Africa, 57 percent expressed worry that such aid would lead to US military involvement in the region.[30] A survey taken in 1979 found "the average American's impressions of Africa documented by stereotype images of natives and wild animals, and by perceptions of widespread poverty."[31]

Another 1979 poll, conducted by William J. Foltz, surveyed members of the

Council on Foreign Relations and members of various committees affiliated with the council, an elite group presumably better informed on Africa. The results, however, seem consistent with the broader polls:

> The 2295 respondents to this survey have spoken as individual Americans with unusually strong backgrounds and interests in foreign affairs, not on behalf of their government or of any organization. Their responses suggest that elite Americans are, as a group, both concerned and uncertain about Africa and American policy toward Africa. African issues produce significantly varied reactions which are rooted as much in general political ideology as in details of the African situation. Overall, most policy preferences are 'conservative' in the non-ideological sense: there is little sense of excitement or gain in Africa; rather, one senses a widespread disquiet that unfriendly forces are treading on a Western preserve where they have no legitimate business, coupled with a reluctance to get heavily committed.[32]

In summary, it appears that most Americans have little knowledge of, or concern over, sub-Saharan Africa. Even as Vietnam retreats from the American consciousness, it is difficult to project significant popular support for any kind of US military intervention in Africa. This attitude is reflected in the Congress, where the Clark Amendment still prevents any such activity in Angola and where base rights agreements with Kenya and Somalia are a source of apprehension.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is little doubt that the United States is going to become more involved militarily on the African continent in the coming years. As we have seen in other parts of the world, political and economic relationships can often lead to military relationships. Certainly the base rights and security assistance agreements with Somalia and Kenya imply a desire for long-term military connections with those countries. Similarly, there appears to be no weakening of our military relations with old friends such as Liberia and Zaire, among others, despite potential political liabilities. Remote possibilities for military involvement might include anti-terrorist operations, evacuation missions, or perhaps some form of peacekeeping. Indeed, a continued Soviet military presence in sub-Saharan Africa almost dictates an increased US military involvement.

The United States must be aware of the limitations facing any such military involvement or intervention if it is to increase the chances for success. Accordingly, the United States should:

- Recognize that African nationalism is a more potent force in sub-Saharan Africa than either communism or Western concepts of democracy. Africa is not about to allow itself to be colonized for the second time by either the East or the West.
- Analyze the African dynamics operating in any given situation to determine the African position prior to making any decision regarding military intervention. If necessary, monitor the views of, or seek advice from, African states recognized as opinion leaders—Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, among others. Finally, also pay attention to what the Organization of African Unity is saying.
- Recognize African socialist rhetoric for what it is—mainly just rhetoric. As Helen Kitchen puts it,

> American policymakers should not make life more difficult for African leaders by assuming that rhetoric equals fact, especially on issues involving southern Africa, relations with the former colonial powers, African unity, human and political rights, and economic ideology. As a distinguished African noted recently, there is a 'consistent inconsistency' between what African politicians must say for the record and the pragmatism with which they often act—particularly when economic realities are involved.[33]

- Push harder for majority rule in southern Africa. The United States, by its

forceful role in the negotiations over Namibia, was able to undercut, at least initially, some of the prestige gained by the Soviet Union in Angola. The failure of current initiatives would threaten our ability to play a decisive role in the future and would leave the door open for Soviet penetration.

- Provide more support for the South in the North-South dialogue. Additionally, lead from US economic strength. Economic development is the most pressing problem in sub-Saharan Africa today. Only the United States has the resources and the technological know-how to alleviate that problem to any substantial degree. Certainly the Soviet Union cannot compete with the United States in the economic arena. As Kitchen points out:

> Although the name of Karl Marx is often invoked by African politicians for one purpose or another, the fact is that Marx never analyzed African society or an African-like situation. Moreover, no African who calls himself a Marxist has yet demonstrated how the problems of a single African country could be resolved in a Marxist context.[34]

Conversely, the United States must also recognize that it cannot solve *all* of Africa's economic problems. Kenneth Adelman makes this point clear in his appraisal of the economic approach in a larger perspective, that is, one that goes beyond the national or regional level.

> While sounding ideal in theory, this approach would prove quixotic and ineffective in practice. Pacification in Africa would flop as it did in Asia. No conceivable assistance program could alleviate the massive suffering in Africa, with over 60 percent of the UN's 'least developed' nations. Even if billions were available for aid—which they are surely not—African countries still lack the infrastructure to absorb these funds effectively.[35]

- Reconsider its priorities for allocating scarce resources to sub-Saharan Africa, in addition to increasing their allocation. Past concentration on the so-called "bellwether" states has intimately linked the United States with countries such as Zaire, Liberia, and pre-1974 Ethiopia, which turned out to be more millstones than bellwethers. On the other hand, aid to the Front Line states (states surrounding areas governed by white minorities) is currently miniscule. Emphasis on those states could result in increased contact with the southern Africa liberation groups, preempt the Soviet Union from improving its position with these groups, decrease the dependence of the Front Line states on South Africa, and send an unmistakable signal to Pretoria.
- Formulate a policy for Africa that is more coherent than the "cacophony of discordant voices from various power bases in Washington."[36] This policy must strike a balance between the regionalists and the globalists and be backed up by sufficient resources.
- Beware of the potential for reverse clientism as exemplified by our relations with Zaire. A watchfulness in this regard is quite in order as US relationships with Kenya and Somalia mature. Internal and regional instability in the Horn of Africa offers great potential for engulfing an unwary patron in a conflict not of his own choosing.
- Consider reinstituting military assistance programs in Africa. African countries do have valid military needs that the United States can legitimately satisfy. Often, however, those states can meet such needs only to the detriment of their fragile economies and domestic stability.
- Better inform the American public about sub-Saharan Africa. While the chances of the commitment of US combat forces to the continent is remote, only a knowledgeable public can ultimately approve such a measure or even a significant increase in aid to the region.
- Be patient. There are no easy or quick solutions to Africa's problems. Both the United States and the Soviet Union will continue to suffer reversals as they attempt to negotiate in this immense region of the world. The pitfalls are many and the rewards are few, for, as Helen Kitchen concludes:

Africa must travel a long road as it seeks out its ultimate post-colonial and post-neocolonial identity. It is a road that will be crisscrossed by many experimental short cuts that will dead-end and be abandoned. American policy should be based on the premise that Africa is not about to be won—or lost—by anybody.[37]

NOTES

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