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"Africa's Role in United States Security Policy During the Cold War"

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National security must be a prime concern of state for any political order and its leaders. It is not, however, a simple concept. Not all important interests are national security interests; indeed some the citizen's right to privacy, for example may under some circumstances weaken national security while increasing security of the individual. In a properly broad sense, national security at least for a society of liberal democratic traditions would involve all that would affect the survival of the state and its ability to function in an orderly manner capable of assuring what Americans take to be "unalienable" rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness".

National security has military concerns at its core, but extends beyond them. The pursuit of security will affect other important societal interests, sacrificing some and promoting others. The conventional division of such interests into military (the physical and organizational means of defense), economic (the provision of material and human resources and production of goods necessary to sustain defense) and political (the maintenance of relations with other states so as to help deter or repulse hostile attack) may serve as a convenient way of organizing our thoughts. In addition to those security assets a nation seeks for itself weapons, strategic materials, foreign bases there are those it has greater interest in seeing in the hands of friends (these might be termed "extended interests"), and those a nation has no interest in wanting for itself but much interest in denying to an opponent ("dental interests").

National security interests will change over time, as a nation's internal structure changes, as relations with allies and opponents change, and, not least, as technology changes. In an open society, public views on security issues may change in a manner quite independent of the pace of change in a country's objective situation. Security issues carry an emotional component that may distort perception and sustain policy positions long after their premises have been rendered invalid.

While acknowledging these complications and nuances, in considering Africa's role in security policy we nonetheless should begin with the basics and the constants, which are rooted in geography. Africa is a very big piece of real estate, most of which, at any one time, will be irrelevant to any particular strategic interest. Historically, the continent has been a vast obstacle to Western commerce with Asia, forcing Europe to pass through the lands of Muscovy or Islam to reach the riches of the Indies.

The Portuguese became the first power with global reach, thanks to their discovery and exploitation of the sea route around Africa. and the first European settlements on the African continent were established to protect those routes and provision those sailing on them. (Foltz 1985:1 27) (Among the reasons the United States never joined the scramble for a physical toehold on the African coastline was its western seacoast that gave it direct access to Asia.)

The military aspects of American security interests in Africa are heavily conditioned by geography. Protection of the sea lanes in United States Navy parlance SLOCs (Sea Lines of Communication) focuses interest on the potential "choke points" where shipping regularly passes close to land or through a restricted passageway. As a "lance at a map shows. those relevant to Africa are Suez, the Red Sea, Bab el Mandeb, the Straits of Madagascar, the Cape of Good Hope, the Cap Vert Cabo Verde Passage, the Straits of Gibraltar, and conceivably the Straits between Tunis and Sicily. Access to storage, bunkering, and repair facilities along the long African coast has historically been counted a military as well as commercial interest.

During the Cold War, much ink was spilled over the Soviet threat to Western SLOCs, mostly by proponents of larger naval budgets and/or a closer relation with South Africa (e.g. Wall 1975). Nonetheless, by the 1980s the balance of opinion in American military circles argued that the only local places at which the Soviet Union would be able effectively to interdict crucial Western supplies would be at the Straits of Hormuz and at the entry to European ports, both reachable by land based air power. This would change only if the Soviets were a) greatly to expand their naval forces and b) to acquire a major base on the African continents. The principal task, then, was not acquisition of bases, but denial of such facilities to the Soviets, something better accomplished through political means, notably good relations with potential host governments, than through military action. It should be noted that the United States Navy operated successfully without using South African ports from 1967 to 1994.

A twentieth century version of the SLOC is the air line of communication. The hop, skip, and jump routes from the United States, to Brazil, then across Africa to the Middle East, southern USSR, or Burma, were of major importance in World War II. The acquisition of over flight and landing rights are important today for Western countries, and during the Cold War even more notably for the USSR's connection to Cuba.

African "round installations for communication and intelligence gathering have played important roles in Western security in the post war era. The most important of these was the American Kagnew base near Asmara which listened in on the southern USSR and the Middle East and also was a major relay point in United States world wide military communications. South Africa's Silvermine installation near Simonstown was built to NATO technical specifications, and for some years at least provided intelligence on ship movements throughout the southern oceans. These were both replaced by satellite systems, independent of difficult local governments. Significant American installations continued to exist, however, in Liberia until 1990, and offshore on Diego Garcia and the Seychelles.

Africa has historically been used in the military role of launching pad for attacks directed elsewhere. The North African campaign in World War II was the most recent major episode in an historical line that includes the Punic wars and the eighth century Muslim conquest of Spain. More recently, Dakar, whose airport and harbor were refitted in part with U.S. help, provided a largely unheralded staging "round for British operations in the Falklands. The principal military theater of operations for which African territory might be used as a launching pad is the Middle East. The U.S. facilities in Morocco were designed in part for access to the eastern Mediterranean. Important also were the facilities in Kenya and Somalia intended to support operations in the Persian Gulf. This purpose was made clear by the United States military command structure: while most of Africa is the responsibility of the U.S. European Command, based in Stuttgart, Germany, the Horn of Africa, like the Gulf region, was put under the Central Command, based in Tampa, Florida. While access to African facilities was deemed important for American operations in the Gulf, the Soviets had no comparable need, since they could operate directly from land bases in the USSR.

United States economic security interests in Africa have not been impressive in the aggregate. During most of the Cold War, Africa represented about 4% of U.S. foreign investment and 4-6% of foreign trade. The numbers are half those today. It is the specific qualitative aspects of trade with Africa that count. While there is nothing of industrial or alimentary significance for the United States grown in African soil that cannot be, and is not, grown elsewhere gum arabic comes closest to meeting such a test Africa's underground resources have been considered of great importance. The "geological scandal" of Africa from Gabon and the

Copper Belt south made southern Africa the principal supplier to American industry of such strategically important minerals as cobalt, manganese, vanadium, chromium, and platinum group metals. As luck would have it, the principal alternative sources of supply all lie within the Soviet Union. If nothing else did, that coincidence seized the attention of policy makers.

As some argued at the time such supply dependence must be put in perspective. The issue was access, not ownership of the mines or denial of their production to the enemy. Stockpiling, recycling, and substitution could very substantially reduce dependence on any particular supplier and insulate the U.S. against intended or accidental disruption of supply. (Goeller and Weinberg 1976) While costs would be involved in modifying such arrangements, the idea that the United States was at suppliers' mercy seemed far fetched.

Petroleum must be counted also as a strategic product, and it was during the Cold War that North and West Africa became important suppliers of the world market, and of the United States in particular. While the cold war contest contributed to a sense of strategic competition for access to petroleum supplies, more thoughtful analysts argued that even more than other minerals, however, petroleum supplies are nearly perfectly substitutable. As one expert told a Congressional hearing, "Worry about access to African oil is groundless. Access is the biggest non problem in the book, except for access to money to pay for oil imports." (Morris Adelman in U.S. House of Representatives, October November 1979, p. 222). Actually, growing African oil production helped with the money problem, since increased world supply kept prices in check. As the cold warrior Reagan administration showed in Libya, the U.S. was quite prepared to boycott important producers of a strategic product, when strategically more important goals were thought to be involved.

Throughout history political aspects of Africa's role in great power security concerns have for the most part involved treating the continent as a surrogate terrain where outsiders could work out their competition for pre-eminence, or for a power balance, at less cost than if this occurred closer to home. Such competition has had its military aspects, but rarely has it involved direct military conflict between the contending outsiders. More often, the violence has been turned against the indigenous population, as the outside power sought to acquire African terrain as a symbolic marker of its status. In the cold war era, such political security aims took on more overtly benign form. At the most benign was competition for United Nations votes and other rhetorical expressions of like mindedness in international fora. Of more consequence was competition for ideological allegiance, and beyond that for formal alignment, which may be considered increasing degrees of client ship and fealty. Such competition readily acquired military aspects, as the patron was likely to cement his relationship with the regime in power by providing military aid, protection, and, perhaps, a supportive garrison. The Soviets made such military assistance a prime tool in their search for African clients (Payne 1987, Rubenstein 1988), while the French have been almost as assiduous, if not as profligate, in providing direct military support for valued clients (Moose 1985).

A far more disruptive aspect of cold war political competition in Africa was sponsorship by an outside power of attempts to undermine or overthrow the government of a rival's client. In the attempt to humiliate the rival or to tie down his forces and bleed his resources. In this, the goal was not the acquisition of African terrain, or perhaps even of African clients. Rather, the goal was to use an African situation to attack a great power rival. It was not necessary that the terrain have any intrinsic value, only that the opponent have some tangible or symbolic investment of which he could be deprived

preferably in a highly public manner. The public act of denial was what counted. Both the Soviet Union and the United States played this game in Africa, in Angola, Somalia and Ethiopia most notably. In the case of the United States, the very publicity of such attempts meant that the issue became caught up in the domestic American political process.

American Attitudes: Most American attitudes on African issues including security issues have not been deeply fixed either in African reality or in a well established tradition of policy toward the region. Attitudes and policy preferences have been derived from more general concerns, which in their aggregate could be reduced to a single ideological dimension. (Schneider 1979: 73-80; Foltz 1979) The better educated an American and the more familiar s/he was with public affairs, the clearer the ideological dimension. The ideological dimension has been clearer on African issues than on most foreign policy issues: lacking information, people would fall back on general principles. That same lack of expertise, however, has meant that American views on specific African problems have tended to be less firm than views on other policy issues. They have also been likely to change as the ideological context of an issue changes or as their salience diminishes under the press of competing issues.

American attitudes toward African security issues during the Cold War have demonstrated a constant ideological spread along a single dimension, but the substance of the debate changed over time. To see this, the cold war era can usefully be divided into three periods of roughly equal length, with the transitional years marking times when the debates over security issues bubbled to the fore. The periods are: 1945 to 1957-60; 1960 to 1973-75; and 1975 to 1986-88. The December 1988 agreements on Namibia and Angola symbolically and practically announced the beginning of the Cold War's end in Africa.

1945 to 1957-60: Africa as an extension of Europe. Africa's lack of independent weight in American security calculations was suggested by the fact that the Department of State did not set up a full fledged Bureau of African Affairs until 1958. Even then, most business was at first handled through the European Bureau and through the embassies of the colonial powers. The United States showed little interest in getting directly involved in sub-Saharan African military matters. It vigorously opposed extending NATO's area of operation south of the Tropic of Cancer and rebuffed South African initiatives to create an African equivalent of NATO. (Geldenhuys 1984: 20) Without formally ratifying European control over African colonies, Washington was nonetheless content to leave African security issues to its NATO allies, and to treat the colonies as "associated appendages." (Lewis 1976: 279) The Union of South Africa was treated, in effect, as a European country and dealt with through the European Bureau of State. As such, and as an important supplier of uranium, South Africa in 1954 was invited to join the United States, Britain, and other European states as a founding member of the International Atomic Energy Board. In 1957 the Eisenhower administration signed a twenty year agreement for co-operation in nuclear energy research, with no indication that the agreement raised any unusual questions in Washington. (Study Commission 1981: 345) U.S. naval vessels made occasional calls at Simonstown, which until 1955 was a British base. South Africa's contribution of a flying squadron to the U.N. forces in Korea was appreciated in Washington, but largely taken as a matter of course.

North Africa, by contrast, was actively included in American military containment strategy directed against the USSR. Strategic Air Command bombers flew from three U.S. airbases in Morocco and naval patrols were based at a fourth, as a result of agreements worked out over the heads of the Moroccans with their French "protectors." This was a matter of convenience, not dedication to colonialism: the U.S. as enthusiastically supported early independence for

Libya, and in 1952 joined the British in establishing Wheelus field, from which nuclear armed B 36s could reach the Soviet Union. (Lewis 1976) The Kagnew communications facility in Asmara was originally constructed in World War II; its use was regularized by agreement with the Emperor in 1953, the year military aid to the Ethiopian army began flowing.

The United States did not think much about African military assets like Dakar, Kano, Kamina, Lourenco Marques, Mombasa. It assumed they were there, and could be used if needed and even the interior bases might be needed in an era of propeller driven, short haul military transport. African natural resources were of no particular strategic importance to the United States, but their importance to Western Europe was generally acknowledged. The United States would have recognised an "extended security interest" in preserving the European African economic link.

For most of this period, to the degree that the United States considered it had political interests of strategic significance in Africa, they were interests in the domestic stability of its European allies. Washington, for example, supported awarding trusteeship over southern Somalia to Italy to strengthen the Christian Democrats against the Italian Communist Party in the crucial 1948 election. African development was seen as being useful for European reconstruction, and colonial powers, France notably, used Marshall Plan funds for African infrastructure development.

Only in the latter half of the 1950s were significant thoughts raised about American interests in Africa's future. A forerunner to much public discussion was a 1955 book by a popular political journalist, John Gunther, *Inside Africa*, the fifth of the best selling "Inside" series. He summed up Africa's security situation with characteristic panache: "Africa is almost completely defenseless from the military point of view and is the richest prize on earth." (Gunther 1955: 888) Gunther recognized the force of African nationalism, called for greatly U.S. technical and educational assistance to Africa, and support for reform and democracy as a bulwark against communism. To these liberal sentiments of the moment was added the "hope" that Africa's future would not involve an irremediable break with Europe.

The first major statement challenging the colonial consensus by an American politician was John Kennedy's June 1957 Senate speech denouncing French policy in Algeria; its underlying implication was that the United States might have to choose between African nationalism and its European partners, and that African nationalism would provide a better long run safeguard against "communism." (A strong form of the same argument had been made two years earlier by Nkrumah's West Indian associate, George Padmore, in his *Pan Africanism or Communism*.) Kennedy's speech was calculated to play to an American liberal constituency, whose support he needed within the Democratic party (Mahoney 1983: 20-33). It was a shock to the dominant foreign policy elite, which had made its career on bolstering European American cooperation as the prime bulwark against Soviet expansion. Dean Acheson, the epitome of that elite and, in his retirement, on his way to becoming a dedicated opponent of African nationalism, was particularly incensed. (Brinkley and Thomas 1988). Among conservatives of the mid Western, Taft wing of the Republican party Africa was nowhere on the security map. This group oscillated at most from a Fortress America isolationism to an Asia First interventionism epitomized by the so called "Committee of One Million" dedicated to supporting Chiang Kai Shek against Maoist rule in China. Amongst conservatives, only a few Easterners influenced by European conservatives considered Africa important enough to notice, and their interventions predictably came on the side of the most conservative and colonialist forces in Western Europe. By the end of the 1950s, American foreign affairs

specialists had only begun to think about African security issues, and the American public was hardly engaged in the debate at all.

1960 to 1973-75: Africa Joins the Cold War Military technology underwent a revolution during this period, which had profound effects on the way strategic planners thought about Africa. The rapid introduction of large and efficient long haul cargo aircraft 707's, C 130's and eventually the massive 747's and C greatly reduced the need for the World War II vintage chain of bases. United States based B 52's and intercontinental ballistic missiles greatly reduced the utility of the North African rimland launching platforms. Communications and spy satellites similarly provided alternatives to strategically located ground stations like Silvermine in South Africa and Kagnew in Ethiopia. Such changes did not occur overnight, nor were their implications immediately understood and accepted within the policy making community. Neither did the changes mean that the 1950's basing facilities were useless. Rather, the new alternatives greatly reduced the price the United States and other Western countries would be willing to pay to maintain possession or access, and that price was calculated as much in political as economic terms.

By contrast, the Soviet Union, which started from a position of having no strategic assets on the continent, slowly acquired access and modest basing facilities. Behind this lay four apparent sets of interest. Support for its client state in Cuba led to particular interest in military over flight and landing rights across North Africa through Mali and Guinea, together with modest supply and repair facilities in Conakry. With a great distance to cover, and with limited long haul capacity, such access was important. Expanding commerce and fishing interests, including sea borne transport between European and Asiatic USSR, perforce passed along the African littoral in international SLOCs. The beginning of a blue water navy, to replace the one sunk by the Japanese in the Straits of Tsushima, intensified the search for port access and anchorages, particularly in the Indian Ocean. Finally, Khrushchev's enthusiasm for third world revolutions led to a desire for more of a Soviet physical presence in Africa: moreover, military aid and training was a prime tool of acquiring influence, one of the few domains in which the Soviets could compete effectively with the West. (Rubenstein 1988)

Africa was far from the center of American third world security preoccupation during this period, however; Cuba, the Middle East, and Vietnam took sequential pride of place. The overall U.S. response to this modest, if growing, Soviet strategic interest in Africa was one of restraint. The net effect was to concentrate on denying or at least retarding Soviet access to African military assets by not engaging in a competitive base race. Thus, the Moroccan bases and Wheelus field were quietly evacuated, and when in 1967 domestic political pressures mounted against the Navy's calling at Cape Town, such visits were abandoned. Nor was there any serious concern evinced in Washington when Britain dropped its lease on Simonstown in 1975, to the intense distress of the South African government.

United States economic interests in Africa during this period remained at a similarly low level. Trade with Africa expanded, but its percentage of total American trade hardly varied. Access to "strategic" minerals became a contested issue when Britain imposed sanctions on its rebellious Rhodesian colony. The Byrd amendment, which allowed U.S. firms to continue to import Rhodesian chrome, was less an expression of economic security concerns than it was a backhanded gesture of conservative support for white rule in southern Africa. (Good 1973; Lake 1976) As Kissinger's famous 1969 National Security Study Memorandum 39 report concluded, none of the American interests in the southern African region "could be classified as vital security interests." (El Khawas and Cohen 1976: 89).

In the most general political terms, the American tendency to think of Africa as primarily a West European concern persisted after independence, even if the relationship were to be redefined from a colonial to a neocolonial one. The Congo crises of the early 1960's provided a first challenge to that viewpoint. The State Department split along bureaucratic lines over who should have primary responsibility for handling the issue, but the bureaucratic battle covered a basic dispute over how one should protect American security interests in Africa. The bureaucratic factions were the prestigious Bureau of European Affairs (known by its acronym. EUR) and the fledgling Bureau of African Affairs (or AF). The argument. fought out most specifically over whether or not to back the Katanga accession. pitted two visions of how to keep Africa from "going communist." EUR, speaking for its "clients", argued the case for, in effect, preserving Belgian economic interests through a compliant puppet state. AF, equally influenced by its bureaucratie clients, argued that preserving a strong. nationalist state was a better bulwark against Soviet penetration. Ideological conservatives, including parts of the China Lobby. flocked behind the Katanga cause, at the extreme opposing decolonization en bloc. (Mahoney 1984)

This viewpoint was put pithily by the conservative commentator James Burnham in a piece called "The African Shambles:"

We must purge our minas of the ideological driver about "liberation," "fresh winds blowing," "awakening," "equality." What we see...is our selves us men of the West fleeing headlong, beaten, panic struck...our weapons spiked or abandoned, our homes looted, our property smashed or stolen, our women raped. ..fleeing from Egypt, from Tunis and Morocco and the Congo....Our intricate guns are pulled from their emplacements; our soldiers get their command: Retreat!...If Belgium and her allies cannot, or will not, hold the Congo, will the armies of Ghana, Ethiopia, Mali, Egypt and Indonesia hold it for them? The Africans estimate correctly what has happened in the Congo: a Western surrender under a UN smoke screen. (National Review, 28 January 1961: 45).

The implied policy of holding onto Western colonial bastions everywhere would have required a prohibitively large American military and economic commitment. No serious constituency for such a policy existed either in Washington or in the country at large. Nor, as the defeat of the Congo rebellions showed, did the Soviets have the economic or logistic resources to pose a serious security threat to Western interests, which alone might have justified a major commitment. If "African nationalism" was hardly to become the sole protector of American interest on the continent, it at least was accepted (north of the Limpopo) as a legitimate force that except in unusual cases was more usefully welcomed and influenced, than directly opposed. One such exception was Portuguese Africa There, successive U.S. regimes accommodated Salazar's demands, since only thereby was access assured to Portugal's Azores military base one that was, and is, judged to be militarily "vital." (Schlesinger 1965: 562 63, 582 83)

The comparative intensity of concern with African political issues characteristic of the Kennedy era diminished under his successors Johnson and Nixon. More important than any persona! or ideological factor in this diminution was the American preoccupation with Vietnam and the apparent diminution of Soviet political interest in most newly independent African States that came with Khrushchev's fall. In comparative obscurity, the African Bureau at State and its supporters evolved a general policy approach that came to be called "regionalism", an approach that emphasized seeking solutions to African problems within the African context and resisting their extension to East

West confrontation. As the colonial connection faded the old European Bureau fine evolved from a rearguard defense of the old order in Africa to an insistence that Africa be seen in what Henry Kissinger called a "Global Perspective." In practice, this meant that African concerns were to be subordinated to the overarching necessity of managing America in global competition with the Soviet Union. Like it or not, Africa was "linked" to these global concerns, and as a peripheral area in which the United States had no vital interests, it was a good candidate to be used as a surrogate terrain for setting back Soviet interests. In such an atmosphere, it is no wonder that one Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs privately defined his task as "Keeping African issues off the seventh floor", where the Secretary has his office.

The years 1973-76 provided a dramatic transition to a new set of American security concerns in Africa. The October, 1973, Middle East war, the Arab oil embargo, and the rise of OPEC immediately realised the salience of resource issues, the U.S. stake in Israel and the Persian Gulf, and the SLOCs and air access routes that lead there. The Portuguese revolution of 1974 raised serious questions about NSSM 39's "Option II" premise that "the whites are (in southern Africa) to stay." Overriding the "regionalists'" advice in 1975, Kissinger embroiled the United States in the Angolan civil war and the U.S. shared in its proteges' defeat at the hands of a Soviet Cuban expeditionary force. Finally, the Soweto revolt of June, 1976, called further into question the premises of American policy and raised serious concerns about access to southern Africa's strategic minerals. Africa was back in the American news in a way it had not been since the Congo crisis of the early 1960's.

1976 to 1986-88: Two Evil Empires. Technology had again changed the way military strategists would view Africa. This time the dramatic changes were on the Soviet side. As shown first in Angola and then in Ethiopia, the Soviets had acquired a long range, air and sea, power projection capability that for the first time allowed them to challenge the United States in local conflicts far from their own land bases. And in the Cubans, the Soviets had an eager intervention force, tailor made for African operations. Western strategists looking at the new Soviet logistic capacities, and taking literally the words of the Brezhnev Doctrine, had to be concerned that some basic security interests might be put at risk. A "New Soviet Empire" might be aborning. On the American side, the development of long range Trident submarines and the D 3 missile made the Indian Ocean suddenly an area of strategic interest, as its complex thermal layers makes it an admirable place for submarines on patrol to hide. This, in effect, made waters off Africa's east coast a possible new launching pad and increased both Soviet and American naval activity in the region and the eagerness with which they sought access to shore facilities.

The Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan produced a spate of hyperbolic rhetoric about an "Arc of crisis" wandering from Kabul to Cape Town (Brzezinski 1983) and threatening the Gulf oil states; it also produced a set of agreements for U.S. access to logistic and repair facilities in Kenya and Somalia, and to a greatly expanded offshore base in Diego Garcia. These were classic launching pad facilities, designed not for use in Africa, but to protect more important interests in the Middle East.

The upheavals of the late 1970's brought issues of economic security to the fore. The Arab oil embargo and southern African disruptions, abetted by the Club of Rome reports holding out the threat of natural resource depletion, evoked the spectre of a "resource war" and provoked otherwise sensible social scientists to join with those peddling special interests to write alarmist articles and books on the subject (Finlayson and Haglund 1987). In this setting, the

USSR appeared doubly strong: an oil exporter itself, it would be impervious to any OPEC threats and a beneficiary of its price raising policies. As the one great alternative repository to South Africa of several strategic minerals, the Soviet Union seemed to many as ineluctably bent on seizing the Southern African minerals storehouse, thereby to acquire a supply monopoly that would bring the industrial West to its knees. (van Wyck and von Below 1988)

Southern Africa provided the sub regional context that produced the sharpest division of opinion and the greatest public participation in the policy debate. On both elite and mass levels, opinion on what to do about relations with South Africa divided, depending on the context in which the issue was posed. If put in the context of South African racial policies, a majority of Americans would oppose any support for the regime. If the contest was strategic minerals or opposition to Soviet expansion, a majority would agree to such support (Foltz 1979; 1985b; Cobb 1989) Those in the middle of the ideological spectrum provided the decisive swing opinions.

For the true believers on either end of the ideological spectrum, the dilemma simply disappeared. Thus, a member of the Board of Editors of the Strategic Review noted his distaste for apartheid, but continued: "A successful insurgency in South Africa will change the strategic balance in the Indian and Atlantic oceans, on the African continent and in the world....South Africa (is) our sole ally in the region." (Maistre 1985: 10 11.) The opposite side most typically refused to deal in strategic terms or presumed that all U.S. strategic concerns are illegitimate and the policies involved equally objectionable. Thus, for a writer denouncing Reagan's policy in the TransAfrica Forum, constructive engagement hardly differed from other U.S. Policies, it "may simply be naked rather than covert U.S. imperialism." (Schmidt 1983) The result was that the farther left groups effectively took themselves out of debates over strategic issues. Alternatively, they would threaten unspecified and improbable reprisals by independent African states, if the United States did not embrace fully the cause of African liberation. Either way, they left their opponents a freer run of the field of argument over policy than the weight of their reasoning may have deserved.

The first six years of the Reagan administration increased the polarization of opinion of African issues. Put most simply, it became a question of which Evil Empire did you fear, the Soviet Union or South Africa? For true Reaganites, South Africa was a somewhat embarrassing, but necessary ally, and its regional depredations however deplorable their human cost were useful steps in turning southern Africa into a surrogate terrain where the Soviets and their Cuban minions could be bled dry and humiliated. Military support for UNITA's "freedom fighters", from this perspective, was a logical, even a necessary policy. Similar support for Renamo seemed equally consequent. At the opposite end of the spectrum, their opponents focused on the intrinsic evils of apartheid, P. W. Botha's declaration of a state of emergency, and South Africa's "total strategy" of regional destabilization. Against these undoubted evils, other considerations, such as the presence of a Cuban/Soviet expeditionary force in Angola, faded into obscurity.

The United States Congress managed to have it both ways. It voted economic sanctions against South Africa and thus struck a blow against apartheid. It also voted military aid for the South African Defense Force's protégé, UNITA. Both left and right thus got their first priority. The result might have looked like incoherent foreign policy, but its domestic political logic was impeccable.

1986-88: Transition to a New Strategic Era. The years of 1986-88 turned out to be a new

transitional period. This one was not driven by technology change, but by fundamental change in Soviet policy worldwide and in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. The December, 1988, agreement on Namibia and Angola was one of the first fruits of the new relationship. In effect it announced the end of the Cold War in Africa, even before the Berlin Wall came down or the Soviet Union collapsed. The change in Soviet policy quickly brought about a sharp reduction of its military presence in far flung outposts and of its military commitments to supposedly "progressive" regimes. Withdrawal from Africa led the way for withdrawal from Afghanistan.

As this paper has noted earlier, United States security interests in Africa were not perfectly parallel to or symmetric with those of the Soviet Union. Therefore, one side's reduction of commitments in one corner of the continent did not necessarily imply an equivalent action by the other. By the 1980's, U.S. military facilities and operations in and around northeast Africa and the Indian Ocean were occasioned not so much by the Soviet military presence in Ethiopia and Socotra as by a search for launching pads for operations in the Gulf and the Arabian peninsula. These were areas threatened by intra regional and domestic tensions, not by the Evil Empire. Extended security concerns may have operated also: Israel regarded the Red Sea as a zone of its own strategic interests, and that may have added to reasons for the United States to maintain its military presence in the region. (Codo 1989).

By 1990 it was clear that only Northeast Africa retained significant U.S. strategic interest by virtue of its geographic location, and that interest related exclusively to Middle East issues. Even this interest proved marginal during the Gulf War when no attempt was made to use Somali facilities. Even Kenyan facilities were not deemed essential, since American and allied troops could deploy directly to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Whatever mix of motivations propelled the United States into its subsequent Somali adventure (Operation Restore Hope), concerns with controlling a strategic location were far from planners' minds. Indeed, in the minds of both the Pentagon and ordinary Americans, all of Somalia was not worth the bones of the 19 U.S. servicemen killed by General Aideed's gunmen.

By contrast, the U.S. Cold War engagements in Africa were virtually cost free in terms of American military casualties. (The cost in African lives is quite another issue.) Whatever intervention there was was indirect, through local clients and other third parties. Most remarkably the two cold war principals, the U.S. and the USSR, took great care never to confront one another directly on African soil or in African waters or airspace. In that sense, both sides made sure that the African strategic sideshow never got completely out of control.

The cold war pursuit of national security goals by both the U.S. and the USSR brought little demonstrable advantage to either of the superpowers, though it was the Soviet Union that paid the greatest price for "imperial overstretch." Nor can it be said that the African states where the superpowers were most involved profited from their patronage. One need only look at the sorry current condition of the principal African recipients of American and Soviet foreign aid: for the Americans Sudan, Somalia, Zaire and Liberia; for the Soviets Ethiopia, Angola and Somalia. A few African leaders may have profited from cold war attention; it seems clear that their nations did not.

Now That The Cold War is Over...

As we have seen, in the first three decades of African independence the United States had few purely African security concerns. Most often, Africa entered into American security planning

because some parts of African terrain could serve interests located elsewhere. Interest shifted from one part of the continent to another with changes in the external focus of security concerns, but particularly with changes in technology that affected location of desirable lines of communications and of potential launching pads.

The end of the Cold War has diminished the overall American level of security concerns worldwide, and of the resources the U.S. is willing to spend on security issues. The reduction is felt particularly heavily in Africa where consulates and even a few embassies have been closed for budget reasons. The military component of security concerns has diminished dramatically. The principal form of military involvement undertaken with some reluctance by the Pentagon is participation in or support of African peacekeeping deployments. As the proposal for the African Crisis Response Initiative suggests, the United States prefers that its support for peacekeeping not include the actual deployment of U.S. troops on African soil.

Perhaps surprisingly, the most consistent American policy initiatives have had a strong ideological component of a sort that is general enough to command broad political support across the American political spectrum. These are the pressures on African states for electoral democracy, the rule of law, and market oriented economies. These have the advantage of costing little and possibly reaping the rewards of adding to the number of more vibrant and legally regulated economies that make good commercial partners, which can ultimately contribute to mutual economic security.

With Cold War security pressures out of the way, space is left open for policies that are more sensitive and responsive to Africa's needs and possibilities. It is not yet clear that this opportunity consciously to redirect policy has been taken. One must beware the tendency of policy advocates to slap the accolade "strategically located" on any country in which they take an interest. Any coastal country potentially guards (or threatens vital shipping lanes; any interior country risks "destabilizing its whole region" because of its multiple and inevitably porous borders. In such use, the term loses all meaning.