



# CSIS AFRICA NOTES *Orig*

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## Africa in the 1990s

by Michael Clough

Since the dawn of the postindependence era in the early 1960s, Africa has been pushed and pulled by the tides of the Cold War. Although the influence of the European powers, especially France, survived the demise of colonialism, the axes on the charts used to plot the flow of events on the continent shifted dramatically. The challenges facing African leaders (the range of their options, the resources available to pursue different strategies, and the risks involved in doing so), as well as the issues confronting officials in the governments of the major powers, came to be defined in terms of simple dichotomies: East versus West, socialist versus capitalist, Moscow versus Washington.

From 1957 (when Ghana gained its independence and the Eisenhower administration recognized the need for a policy toward sub-Saharan Africa) until the mid-1980s, U.S. policymakers heeded one overriding prescription—prevent Africa from falling under the sway of the Soviet Union. Throughout this period, despite much lofty language about development and democracy, debates regarding Africa centered on strategies and tactics to counter Soviet influence. The amount of official attention and resources devoted to various areas of the continent was determined primarily by perceptions of the nature and extent of a Soviet presence or threat. In the early 1960s and mid-1970s, when the threat seemed great, Africa was a concern of U.S. presidents and secretaries of state. At times when or places where the threat seemed small and remote, Africa was left to the Africanists.

Gradually, in the years 1985-1988, the unexpected happened. The Cold War ended in Africa, and with it the relevance of the ideological and strategic compasses that had been standard issue to the officials and opinion leaders who had served as foot soldiers in the Cold War's many skirmishes. Both the East and West now face the challenge of developing new ways of understanding the continent and new means of addressing its problems. Toward this end, the Stanley Foundation convened a small but diverse group of experts from the United States, Europe, and the USSR at the Airlie House Conference Center near Warrenton, Virginia, in late October 1989 to discuss the changing global context of U.S. policy toward Africa. See page 3 for a list of participants. This issue of *CSIS Africa Notes* derives from a report of the three-day discussions prepared for the Stanley Foundation. (For an earlier commentary relevant to this topic, see "If the Cold War is Over in Africa, Will the United States Still Care?" by Martin Lowenkopf in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 98, May 1989.)



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## The Cold War Sequence in Africa

Most of those present at Airlie House agreed that the Cold War has ended in Africa and that there is little prospect of its revival. Less clear, however, is what the end of the Cold War will mean for Africa and for the policies of the United States and other nations toward Africa. To answer these questions requires an understanding of what the Cold War meant for Africa in the first place and why it came to an end.

The Cold War was a bipolar competition for strategic and ideological hegemony between two militarily predominant superpowers, one of which was also the world's preeminent economic power. The end of the Cold War involves more than just an end to U.S.-Soviet competition in Africa and other parts of the Third World. It entails a transformation in the structural relationships underlying that competition. More concretely, it marks a decline in the ability of Washington and Moscow to shape and color events in Africa; it also signals the growing importance for Africa of some new external actors. In short, changes are occurring in *both* the nature of U.S.-Soviet interactions in Africa *and* the weight of those interactions in the African equation.

In traditional military terms, the United States and the Soviet Union are still the world's only superpowers. But that now seems to matter less than it once did, especially in Africa. This is largely the result of a recognition of the limited utility of military power. Through experience on terrain as varied in natural and sociopolitical terms as the rice paddies of Vietnam, the mountains of Afghanistan, and the bush in Angola, U.S. and Soviet leaders have learned how difficult and costly it can be to attempt to convert military might into lasting geopolitical victories in the Third World. In Africa, moreover, it is a paradoxical fact that most countries that have received large amounts of military assistance over lengthy periods of time (e.g., Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan) are among the least secure on the continent as the 1990s begin. For Africa at least, Mao is thus in need of amending: what flows from the barrel of a gun is the semblance of power but the reality of insecurity. This realization has altered the superpowers' thinking about military commitments in Africa.

There was agreement at Airlie House that, in the short term, neither Washington nor Moscow is likely to eliminate its military presence entirely. But the nature and significance of this presence have already undergone much change. Major new commitments of arms and advisers are not on any foreseeable agenda in either Washington or Moscow. Existing commitments are being steadily reduced. And, most significant, neither power seems more than perfunctorily concerned with the "threat" represented by the lingering involvements of the other.

The end of the ideological Cold War in Africa has been even more sudden and dramatic. The division of states into rival ideological groupings, one espousing socialism and nonalignment with an Eastern tilt and the other embracing capitalism and alignment with the West, was

never very firmly rooted in African soil. These were nonetheless the terms in which many African leaders chose to represent themselves and their policies in international forums; and it was in these terms that U.S. and Soviet officials chose to calculate gains and losses on the continent and distribute largesse. Such ideological appeals have now lost their currency, and more and more constitutions are being rewritten in nationalist rather than ideological terminology.

Pretensions to building socialism or promoting capitalism have been punctured by the increasingly evident sameness of conditions on both sides of the rhetorical divide. What most observers found when they surveyed the results of three decades of ideological competition were countries (whether "socialist", "capitalist", or "nationalist") with authoritarian, sometimes brutal, one-party regimes and faltering economies overburdened by bloated and inefficient state sectors, huge external debts, and disastrous agricultural policies. By the mid-1980s, neither the East nor the West could point with pride to a single clear-cut model of success for its ideological project in Africa. With the ascent of Gorbachev and the sea changes that are now breaking in Eastern Europe, the very idea of socialism as an alternative path of development is in doubt.

## Prospects for Constructive Collaboration

Signs of an end to the Cold War in Africa quickly gave rise to hopes that the superpowers might join together to address some of the continent's most pressing problems. Optimism about the prospects for a new era of constructive collaboration was heightened in late 1988 by the success of the negotiations the two powers cooperated in orchestrating on Namibia's forthcoming

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independence and the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. For the first time in the post-World War II period, U.S. and Soviet officials worked together in an open and nonantagonistic manner to resolve a bitter political-military conflict. If the superpowers could work together to achieve Namibian independence, it has been reasoned, perhaps they could also work together to resolve other African conflicts, or solve the debt crisis, or protect the African environment, and so on. Most of those present at Airlie House were skeptical of this follow-on reasoning.

Without the stimulus of strategic and ideological competition, it is far from certain that either the United States or the Soviet Union will be inclined to retain anything more than a token presence in Africa, much less commit the human and material resources that would be required to cure the continent's myriad economic, institutional, and human ills. In the Horn of Africa, for example, neither Moscow nor Washington has indicated a willingness to do anything more than quietly urge the parties to the various conflicts in the region to go to the bargaining table, while holding out the possibility that they might simply cut their ties with the warring parties.

When the Angola-Namibia accords of December 1988 are cited as a prescriptive model for U.S.-Soviet cooperation, three points are usually overlooked: (1) Had it not been for concerns in the mid-1970s about growing Soviet influence in southern Africa, the United States probably would not have taken the lead in efforts to promote Namibian independence. (2) In cooperating to settle the Namibian issue, both Moscow and Washington were acting in ways that would eventually reduce their commitments in the region. (3) It should not be forgotten that the Angola-Namibia settlement became a feasible undertaking because of new circumstances and developments over which the two superpowers had at best limited control. As several participants noted, the real turning point in the negotiations came on the battlefields of southern Angola as a result of military actions independently taken (and not taken) by Cuba and South Africa. (See "A Guide to the Intricacies of the Angola-Namibia Negotiations" by Gillian Gunn in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 90, September 1988.)

The most that can be expected in the way of U.S.-Soviet cooperation in Africa would seem to be a series of mutually self-denying understandings. Both powers, for example, seem largely to have abandoned the propaganda war whereby each sought to blame the other for most of Africa's troubles. They also seem to have agreed, implicitly if not explicitly, to avoid actions that might lead to confrontations. It would help to limit the damage inflicted in the continent's internal wars if they were to go a step farther and agree to eliminate arms transfers to the continent. Neither these actions nor any others that the erstwhile superpowers might take will end conflict in Africa, but they could encourage a change of direction.

One area in which most of those present at Airlie House agreed that the United States and the Soviet Union ought to be urged to play a significant role is that of

This issue of *CSIS Africa Notes* derives from a three-day roundtable on "Global Change and Africa: Implications for U.S. Policy," hosted by the Stanley Foundation at Airlie House Conference Center near Warrenton, Virginia, in late October 1989. Africa was one of four world regions assessed in concurrent sessions of the Stanley Foundation's thirtieth Strategy for Peace, U.S. Foreign Policy Conference. Participants in the Africa roundtable, all of whom attended in their personal capacity rather than as representatives of their governments or organizations, were:

Michael Clough (chair), Senior Fellow for African Studies, Council on Foreign Relations, New York

Robert J. Berg, President, International Development Conference, Washington, D.C.

John Chipman, Assistant Director for Regional Security Studies, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London

Warren Clark, Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs, Department of State

L. Gray Cowan, Senior Technical Adviser on the Private Sector, Africa Bureau, Agency for International Development

William J. Foltz, Professor of Political Science, Yale University

Ralph P. Hofstad, Consultant and former CEO, Land O'Lakes, Inc., Edina, Minnesota

Helen Kitchen, Director of African Studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.

Winrich Kühne, Head of Africa Department, Research Institute for International Politics and Security, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Ebenhausen, West Germany

Neil MacFarlane, Associate Professor of Government and Foreign Affairs, University of Virginia

J. Stephen Morrison, Staff Consultant, Subcommittee on Africa, House Foreign Affairs Committee

Sergei Shatalov, Africa Institute, Soviet Academy of Sciences, Moscow

John Stremlau, Deputy Director, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State

Ernest J. Wilson III, Director, Center for Research on Economic Development, University of Michigan

James L. Woods, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA/Africa

I. William Zartman, Director of African Studies, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

Michelle Bassin (rapporteur), Council on Foreign Relations



providing humanitarian assistance and support for reconstruction in Sudan, Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. The depth of human suffering in these war-torn countries is beyond the ability of most of us to comprehend. The combined toll of the dead, maimed, and brutalized is in the millions and rising.

Although spawned by local grievances and power struggles, the wars in these countries were fueled and fanned with arms and rationales proffered by the superpowers. It is not enough, therefore, for U.S. and Soviet officials simply to declare the Cold War over and go home. As the conflicts in these countries wind down, each in its own way, at its own pace, there will be a tremendous need for large-scale rehabilitation efforts, and neither Moscow nor Washington should be allowed to forget its obligation to support such an effort with more than hollow words and surplus goods.

In fields other than conflict resolution and rehabilitation, it is not realistic to expect joint action by the United States and the Soviet Union to yield significant results. With regard to the environment, health, population, and most of the other important nonsecurity issues in Africa, the superpowers' superpowerdom never had much significance.

### Other External Actors

In economic terms, the superpowers, especially the Soviet Union, have never been the dominant force in Africa. The United States is the major trading partner of only a few; if trade in oil is excluded, the number of such countries shrinks to almost zero. Most African countries, especially the francophone ones, have remained closely linked economically with their former metropolises. This is even more true with regard to direct investment than with trade. Europe as a whole has always contributed far more in development assistance to Africa than has the United States.

As a result of trends over the past decade, the United States is becoming an even less influential economic force in Africa. In 1987, the United States ranked fifth on the list of major aid donors to sub-Saharan Africa, behind France, the World Bank, Italy, and Germany. It has now also been surpassed by Japan.

The most important external economic forces in Africa are currently the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. (See "How the IMF and the World Bank Affect African Decision Making" by Carol Lancaster in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 97, April 1989.) In the past, these institutions were perceived as extensions of the United States. While such perceptions linger on in Africa, the reality is that both institutions have developed an increasing degree of autonomy.

The two unfolding international developments that could have the greatest impact on Africa over the next decade are the integration of Europe and the emergence of a more independent, internationally minded Japan.

Europe's movement toward greater economic unity is a mixed blessing for Africa. On the positive side, a single European market could open new opportunities for

African countries that are able to develop manufacturing export industries, as long as the preferential access that Africa receives under current agreements between the EEC and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries is not eliminated. On the other hand, a single European market may only serve to highlight the relatively marginal economic significance of European trade and investment in Africa. Moreover, the sudden changes in Eastern Europe have created a demand for economic assistance as well as openings for foreign investment that will inevitably reduce the resources available for Africa.

European bilateral interest in Africa also may have to be reassessed. For many years the one certainty in assessments of foreign involvement in Africa was that the French were on the continent to stay. (See chapter 3, "Which Outside Power Has the Most Influence in Africa?," of *Some Guidelines on Africa for the Next President* by Helen Kitchen, CSIS Significant Issues Series, 1988.) Several participants in the Airlie House dialogue believe that this is changing and that a mood of "Afropessimism" is developing in France. The Franc Zone is no longer as profitable an arrangement as it once was, and French investment in francophone Africa reportedly has declined by 25 percent. Among the other European countries, only Italy seems to be increasing its economic role in Africa.

Japan's emergence as an international economic power, on the other hand, could have positive ramifications for Africa. The Japanese government has already announced its intention to make \$60 billion in economic assistance available to the continent and there is speculation that Japanese investors might seek to use Africa as a base from which to penetrate the new European market.

Uncertainty about the Japanese role in the 1990s focuses on the fact that Tokyo has increased its aid in large part because of urging from the United States and others, and does not appear to have an Africa policy per se. Part of the problem is that Japan lacks any real expertise or experience with Africa and has not yet developed a clear sense of where Africa fits into its overall foreign policy. In the short run, at least, the Japanese are likely to continue to concentrate their aid in the cofinancing of projects with the World Bank.

In sum, Africa is becoming less and less the economic preserve of any country or group of countries and more and more the concern of multilateral institutions. Increasingly, bilateral aid will take the form of contributions to the multilateral agencies. Any future efforts to address African problems will have to take this new reality into account.

### Dimensions of Africa's Crisis

There was a consensus around the table at Airlie House that Africa is in a state of crisis and that the crisis has many aspects. Among the most critical of the problems facing the continent in the decade ahead are:

- Political and institutional crises that have contributed to the collapse of effective government in a host of



countries and spawned civil wars in at least seven.

- An AIDS crisis more serious than that on any other continent, with incidence of the disease among professionals of the critical nation-building elite—politicians, civil servants, the military, business. (See “AIDS in Africa: Knowns and Unknowns” in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 74, July 1987, and “AIDS as a Factor in U.S. Foreign Relations” in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 93, December 1988, both authored by Lynn W. Kitchen, M.D.)
- A debt crisis from which a growing number of countries seem to have little hope of escaping without wholesale debt cancellations.
- An environmental crisis that is gobbling up critical arable lands and forests.

One of the Airlie House participants suggested that we should think in terms of “two Africas”: (1) those countries such as Niger and the Central African Republic where it is not realistic to expect significant economic development in the foreseeable future (short of unexpected finds of minerals or oil), and the main challenge is survival; (2) countries such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe that could, with future-oriented leadership, policies, and assistance, experience at least modest takeoffs. The first group of countries are destined to remain dependent on the

international community for the foreseeable future, whereas the second have a more encouraging option.

### **A Basis for Hope?**

The dismal record of the past three decades has caused many outside observers, and a growing number of Africans, to question whether more external assistance is the answer to the continent's needs. An old slogan—“African solutions to African problems”—is gaining new currency among both Africans and Africanists. A consensus appears to be forming that Africans must face up to the fact that most of their problems are home-grown and that, as the superpowers and others pull back in a world reshaped by the end of the Cold War, ways must be found to address those problems which do not depend on large inflows of foreign assistance.

In this regard, almost everyone around the table at Airlie House agreed that Africa's future hinges in large part on (1) the emergence of a stable middle class capable of providing continuity of managerial and entrepreneurial leadership and (2) the establishment of representative, responsive, and enduring governmental structures. Such an agenda would refocus the policies of the major external powers on helping to strengthen nongovernmental sectors in African societies and encouraging African governments to pursue policies that will allow those sectors to thrive.



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