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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Beginning with this volume, the *Africa Contemporary Record* will be providing two-year coverage of the continent. This format will ensure more timely publication and will continue for several volumes, eventually resuming annual coverage. The double-year volumes will lose nothing in coverage, as each year will be treated comprehensively, and contributors are invited to increase the lengths of feature essays and country chapters as each topic or time span warrants.

As volume 23 goes to press, extensive topical coverage for volume 24 (April 1992-March 1994) is already underway, with commissioned essays on Japan's policy, the history of Soviet policy, and Islam across the continent, for example. It is our intention to continue the practise of two-year publication as long as it remains both practicable and desirable.

This volume ushers in another innovation, namely, adapting to new technologies. Despite my personal old-fashioned lingering fondness for "hot lead" publishing, I am reluctantly persuaded of the advantages of desktop publishing technology, and we were fortunate to have this volume produced by True Moss Communications in the United States.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation for the abiding commitment of Miriam H. Holmes, publisher of Africana Publishing Company and Holmes & Meier; for the coordination by Katharine Turok, executive editor; for the copy editing and proofreading by Margaret Novicki, formerly long-term editor-in-chief of *Africa Report*, who has accepted an assignment in Ghana and will consult with the ACR as distance permits; for the typesetting by Stephanie True Moss; for indexing by Ronald Watson; and for the helpfulness of Anne Townsend and Irwin Wolf with editorial and manufacturing aspects respectively.

Colin Legum, Editor
The United States and Africa

Increased Marginalization in an Evolving 'New World Order'

PETER J. SCHRAEDER

The 'New World Order' heralded by President George Bush and his foreign policy advisors had several significant impacts on US foreign policy toward Africa during the second and third years of this Republican Administration. The most recognizable—and criticized—of these impacts was a tendency to relegate African issues to the foreign policy 'backburner' due to perceptions of the continent's relative strategic unimportance in the emerging post-Cold War international system. As has been the case historically, regardless of whether one speaks of Democratic or Republican Administrations, this perception increasingly prompted the White House to defer policy initiation and formulation to the Africa specialists in the national security bureaucracies (the State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA) of the Executive branch, and to encourage the former European colonial powers or rising regional powers in Africa to take the lead themselves in resolving African crises.

The White House response in 1990 to the escalating civil war in Liberia—the closest equivalent of a US colony in Africa—ofers a telling example of this dual tendency in the Bush Administration's African policies. Unlike its direct handling of more hardline military operations designed to oust Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and to expel Iraq from its illegal occupation of Kuwait, both of which were initially opposed by the State Department's Bureau of Latin American Affairs and Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, the White House deferred to Africa Bureau arguments to remain relatively neutral in the civil war and to seek the negotiated departure of the Liberian autocrat, Samuel Doe. Conscious of African concerns over foreign intervention on their continent, the Africa Bureau also gained White House support for a multilateral intervention force led by Nigeria and Ghana and comprised solely of African troops. Although the White House did ultimately send in the US Marines to ensure the safe departure of 11,100 civilians and diplomatic personnel residing in the country, their actions were solely limited to this humanitarian goal. At no point did US forces seek militarily to determine the outcome of fighting between Government forces and the opposing factions vying for control. Most important, unlike the more 'important' crises in Panama and especially Kuwait, the White House was only too willing to leave policy matters on the Liberian civil war to the State Department's Africa Bureau and welcomed the willingness of a regional power (i.e., Nigeria) to assume primary responsibility for maintaining regional stability.

White House perceptions of Africa's strategic unimportance also prompted senior Bush Administration officials to be generally less doctrinaire and more willing to compromise than their Reaganite predecessors when dealing with Congress and other parts of an emerging domestic constituency for Africa. Although the Secretary of State, James A. Baker III, claimed that a genuine desire to fashion truly bipartisan policies toward Africa served as the essence of this new tendency, critics perceived a realpolitik calculation to avoid involvement in controversial issues that would needlessly distract senior policy makers and complicate policy toward other, more important, parts of the world. The implications of this strategic worldview are demonstrated by focusing on the Bush Administration's responses to four of the most important African foreign policy challenges faced during its second and third years in office.

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SOUTH AFRICA AND THE DEBATE OVER LIFTING SANCTIONS

The Bush Administration had entered office with the intention of avoiding the bruising battles with Congress over the African issue that caused the largest domestic controversy and one of the most noted foreign policy defeats of the Reagan Administration: sanctions against South Africa as embodied in congressional passage of the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act over the veto of President Reagan. Yet, despite Bush's attempts to demonstrate his Administration's sympathy for the victims of Apartheid by personally meeting with South African activists and publicly expressing his abhorrence of Apartheid, US foreign policy toward South Africa during 1990 differed little, if at all, from the latter years of the Reagan Administration. Because of the preoccupation with political changes occurring in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, US-South African relations were largely relegated to the Africa specialists within the State Department.

In congressional testimony, strikingly reminiscent of his predecessor's policy of constructive engagement, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman J. Cohen stressed that he perceived 'new thinking' and a 'new sense of realism' among the Africaners elite. If supported by an active US stance of 'dialogue, negotiation and compromise', Cohen explained in testimony that pressured rising pressures within the national security bureaucracies to repeal portions of the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, 'a democratic solution may be achievable'. Conscious of the public backlash that would predictably accompany any decision to modify US sanctions legislation, the President rejected such appeals from his advisors during 1990 and the first half of 1991.

Evolving political events in South Africa, most notably President Frederik W. de Klerk's unconditional release of Nelson Mandela, contributed in 1990 to a rising debate within the US policy-making establishment over whether to repeal portions or all of the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act. One group comprising the State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA had never supported the imposition of sanctions, and seized upon de Klerk's reform efforts as justification for the partial lifting of sanctions. An important and common concern of this group was that the growing polarization of South African politics could lead to the downfall of de Klerk, a reformist leader who, like Mikhail Gorbachev, was perceived as crucial to the reform process. In order to forestall the rising electoral strength of Right-wing forces in South Africa opposed to any changes in Apartheid, this group argued that the judicious lifting of sanctions would strengthen de Klerk's efforts. This viewpoint gathered prominence after the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, announced her Government's intention in early 1990 to lift a self-imposed ban on investment in South Africa.

A second group consisted of those congressional activists who favoured holding the line on sanctions until it became clear that the reform process in South Africa was irreversible. For example, although Representative Howard Wolpe, former chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa, recognized that de Klerk was much 'smoother' than his predecessor and 'better able to put a positive face on the tragedy of South Africa', he nonetheless underscored that his efforts would not necessarily guarantee 'fundamental change' in the structures of Apartheid. Even after a two-day fact-finding mission to South Africa in March 1990 after Mandela's release from prison, congressional activists, though hopeful, remained cautious. Describing the period as a 'rare window of opportunity' for the creation of a non-racial democracy, they nonetheless noted that significant obstacles remained to a lasting negotiated settlement.

In addition to those groups favouring the partial lifting and maintenance of existing sanctions legislation—the dominant perspectives within the US policy-making establishment during 1990—two other groups constituted fringe elements. Although
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as I've said on several occasions, I really firmly believe that this progress is irreversible. As a result, bans were lifted on, among other things, trade in various products, the provision of bank loans to the South African government, and new investments by US companies.

President Bush's decision to lift sanctions was not greeted warmly by those sections of the policy-making establishment that had been in the forefront of the sanctions campaign throughout the 1980s. Members of the House Subcommittee on Africa and the Congressional Black Caucus favoured the continuation of sanctions until a new constitution guaranteeing the right to vote for Black South Africans was in place, despite the fact that this was not one of the conditions of the 1986 legislation.

For these critics, lifting sanctions before the emergence of an agreed-upon power-sharing agreement only invited insurrection on the part of the de Klerk regime. The proponents of maintaining sanctions nonetheless were severely hampered by the simple reality that South Africa had largely met the conditions originally established by Congress in 1986. As noted by Senator Richard Lugar, one of the original co-authors of the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act who favoured the lifting of sanctions, to change the conditions of the 1986 law to include some sort of power-sharing agreement was tantamount to changing the rules in the middle of the game.

The general movement toward reform in South Africa did not mean that the Bush Administration had a free hand in reestablishing the close US-South African ties that existed prior to the mid-1970s. Despite growing pressures throughout the national security bureaucracies, the anti-Apartheid coalition was sufficiently strong to be able to maintain other forms of sanctions legislation not associated with the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act. In addition to a variety of legislation that remained in place at the local, city and state levels, continued restrictions at the federal level included bans on exports to the South African military and police forces, and any form of intelligence sharing. Although Cohen indicated the possibility of seeking the prosecution of a 'test case' in which local anti-Apartheid legislation failed to comply with new federal realities, this approach seemed highly unlikely given the continued political concerns of the anti-Apartheid movement. Whereas the lifting of sanctions in accordance with legislatively mandated conditions was one thing, to seek the reversal of other forms of legislation before actual constitutional changes had taken place in South Africa was quite another. It was for this reason that the State Department's Africa Bureau sought to soften the potential domestic uproar by ensuring that the decision to overturn the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 was announced in consultation with Mandela after a major ANC conference during the first week of July 1990, at the same time giving notice of a doubling in the levels of US assistance (from $40m to $80m) devoted to housing, economic development, and education programmes for Black South Africans.

Zaire and the debate over aid to corrupt dictatorships

Zaire's critical role as a regional ally that facilitated US paramilitary intervention in Angola during the 1980s resulted in President Mobutu Sese Seko being honoured as the first African leader to be invited by the Bush Administration for an official White House visit. Despite the accolades offered by Bush and his advisors for what they perceived as Mobutu’s unwavering support for US policies during the Cold War era,

influential members of Congress responded to a request by the Bush Administration to provide C.S56m in aid (including $4m in military aid) to Zaire in 1991 by calling for the complete termination of all security assistance, as well as the channeling of all humanitarian assistance through non-governmental organizations. In testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations on 5 April 1990, Representative Stephen J. Solarz supported a cut-off in aid by comparing the future
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of Mobutu to the fates that befall other dictators such as Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania, Eric Honecker of East Germany, Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, and Anastasio Somoza Debayle of Nicaragua. 'Sooner or later, Mobutu will go', explained Solarz. "When that time comes, it will not be in our interest to have been perceived as propping up this discredited dictator'.

Although partisan differences in Congress forestalled attempts at radically altering the US-Zaïrean special relationship, events in 1990 underscored the human rights shortcomings of the Mobutu regime and provided ample ammunition for congressional activists. In response to growing popular demands for some sort of multiparty political system, Mobutu delivered a major address on 24 April 1990 in which he announced significant political reforms, most notably the legalization of opposition parties. An important aspect of this reform process was the establishment of a National Conference on Democracy—a political body composed of prominent government and opposition political figures—which assumed the task of refashioning Zaïre's political system, particularly the Constitution, in preparation for multiparty elections. Similar to past pronouncements of reform, rhetoric severely clashed with reality when opposition figures took Mobutu at his word and parties, such as the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), actively began campaigning for a true alternative to the Mobutu regime. In one of the most publicized examples of government repression designed to intimidate opposition figures, at least 12 (some figures go as high as 150) students at Lubumbashi University were killed during the night of 11 May 1990 when members of Mobutu's elite Presidential Guard attacked a group of student protestors.

As the culmination of a trend that began in the late 1970s, congressional activists in October 1990 seized upon the Lubumbashi massacre as the basis for terminating already reduced levels of military aid, as well as ensuring that the majority of economic aid scheduled to be disbursed in 1992 and beyond would be channeled through non-governmental organizations. In sharp contrast to traditional State Department arguments that cutting off aid only served to undercut the process of reform, congressional critics expressed doubts that changes would ever occur in the Zaïrean political system as long as Mobutu remained in power. 'Every six months we are told Mobutu has seen the light', explained Representative Wolpe. 'Invariably those announcements are followed by a new wave of arrests, repression and corruption.'

At the centre of an ongoing and escalating debate within the US policy-making establishment was whether a Zaïre without Mobutu—the end result of those seeking a true alternative to his single-party regime—would lead to political chaos, ethnic separatism, and regional instability reminiscent of the 1960s when the country was faced with territorial disintegration. The consensus opinion within the national security bureaucracies was that, despite his shortcomings, Mobutu had contributed to domestic and regional stability and, most important, had served as a faithful ally in Africa during the Cold War era. 'The point is we need him', explained Irvin Hicks, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, who lauded Mobutu's 'important role' in US initiatives in Chad, Mozambique, and 'particularly Angola'. 'If we push Mobutu too hard, explained another State Department official, 'we will only have ourselves to blame for the political chaos and instability that surely will ensue'.

In one of the most serious challenges to Mobutu's 26 years of authoritarian rule, nearly 3,000 mutinous troops protesting the lack of pay touched off two days of violent riots in Kinshasa during September 1991 that quickly spread to regional capitals and cities, most notably in Shaba province, and left at least 30 dead and more than 1,250 injured. Fearful that the mobs were going to turn on Western nationals living within the country, c.750 French and Belgian troops intervened on 24 September with the blessing of Mobutu to ensure the evacuation of nearly 8,000 foreigners, including over 700 US citizens. Although the US did not directly take part in the rescue operation, several C-141 military transport planes were 'loaned' to France to facilitate the evacuation of foreigners living in the country. Two factors contributed to a lack of perception of crisis at the highest levels of the policy-making establishment, and therefore policy was largely left to the Africa specialists within the national security bureaucracies. First, the willingness of Belgium, aided by France, to take the lead in its former colony effectively precluded the necessity of deciding on the issue of direct military intervention by US forces. As indicated by Pentagon statements concerning the limited US role in the evacuation operation, this policy reflected French and Belgian desires to remain neutral in the growing conflict between Mobutu and opposition forces. 'The sole purpose of this activity is to assist in the protection and evacuation of Americans and other foreigners', explained a spokesperson for the Defence Department; 'it does not constitute an involvement in the internal affairs of Zaïre'.

The decline of the Cold War was of even greater importance in contributing to the lack of crisis atmosphere in the policy-making establishment. In sharp contrast to earlier conflicts, such as the 1978 Shaba crisis in which a perceived 'Communist threat' posed by the former Soviet Union and its Cuban ally served as the primary justification for active US intervention, the September 1991 riots and the possibility of Mobutu's removal from power were not perceived within the ideological context of Cold War competition. The obvious reasons for the lack of high-level concern were the decline of any perceived Soviet threat, as well as the resolution of regional conflicts which had become East-West flashpoints. In the case of Angola, for example, the MPLA's willingness to submit to internationally monitored multiparty elections that took place in December 1992 meant that the US no longer needed a regional ally capable of funneling US paramilitary aid to anti-Communist insurgents.

However, the decline of Zaïre's strategic importance to US interests in the aftermath of the Cold War did not mean that the US government or the Africa specialists of the national security bureaucracies were willing to accept the arguments of congressional activists who sought the removal of the Mobutu regime. Less than three weeks after Belgium and France intervened during the September 1991 riots, for example, a career Foreign Service Officer (FSO) in the State Department's Africa Bureau cautioned that any transition from the Mobutu regime to some sort of multiparty system had to proceed 'peacefully and, above all, slowly'. He explained that regardless of the fact that 'we are no longer faced with a communist threat, the destabilization of Zaïre—which borders nine other African countries—could have a tremendously negative impact on regional stability'. Although this FSO supported US involvement in gently prodding Mobutu to 'recognize the inevitable need to accept the growing involvement of opposition politicians', the approach was tempered by the strongly ingrained belief that a 'Zaïre without Mobutu could entail a Zaïre engulfed by chaos'. 'It is not in our interest that Mobutu suddenly disappear', explained another diplomat with extensive experience within the region. 'It may replace him is unclear and, meanwhile, the situation could prove chaotic'.

It was the continued importance of the 'Mobutu or chaos' argument which led US officials to respond cautiously to Mobutu's efforts at maintaining himself in power, including his appointment (counter to the wishes of a vocal opposition) of the controversial Nguala Kari-I-Bond as Prime Minister in November 1991; his suspension of the National Conference on Democracy in January 1992; and his refusal to relinquish control over the Zaïrean military and intelligence services as a prelude to the holding of multiparty elections. 'We're not asking him to leave', explained Cohen in testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Africa. 'We feel that he should remain as Presi—
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dent so he can control the military force until there is an election at which point the people will decide." In short, Mobutu was perceived throughout the national security bureaucracies as both 'part of the problem' and 'part of the solution' to what may become an increasingly violent political situation in Zaire. If Mobutu, with his control of the security apparatus, including people who engage in covert operations...does not support a transition process", concluded Cohen, 'then it cannot succeed'.

SOMALIA AND AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESOLVING AFRICAN CIVIL WARS

The intensifying civil war in Somalia that led to the overthrow of Siad Barre on 26 January 1991 had the potential of becoming a crisis situation at the highest levels of the US policy-making establishment, especially after Ambassador James K. Bishop sent an urgent cable on 3 January 1991, warning that the lives of Embassy personnel were being threatened by armed groups in the 40-acre compound. Hasty moving up an evacuation plan for 5 January, two rescue helicopters and 70 Marines were dispatched from the USS Trenton, a warship stationed in the Indian Ocean. In a 400-mile flight that twice required mid-air refueling in the middle of the night, the Marine detachment took up positions at the US Embassy and airlifted over 60 people out of the country on 4 January. The following day, nearly 200 more people were evacuated by five helicopters launched from the USS Guam. At the end of the operation, representatives from at least 30 countries had been airlifted.

Despite the fact that President Bush had to authorize the rescue mission, the decline of Cold War tensions ensured that the escalating civil war in this former ally led to official neglect at the highest levels of the US policy-making establishment. Unlike the 1970s and 1980s, when the region had become an East-West flashpoint, the former Soviet Union was pursuing a policy of disengagement that underscored the importance of super-power cooperation in settling local conflicts. In addition to ongoing discussions, primarily at the level of the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and a counterpart in Moscow, a significant example of how super-power cooperation was replacing super-power conflict in a rapidly developing post-Cold War era was the evacuation of the Somali ambassador and 35 members of his staff by the US rescue mission. As summarized by one US official, super-power competition had become 'a thing of the past' in the Horn of Africa.

The net result of White House inaction was the delegation of policy to the national security bureaucracies, particularly the Africa Bureau. Severely constrained by congressional disapproval over the human rights abuses of the Siad Barre regime, the Africa Bureau presided over a reactive policy that emphasized the internal roots of the Somali conflict and the need for national reconciliation through peaceful means. This stance was reinforced by the simple reality that the armed groups opposed to the Siad regime professed a strong desire to maintain and in fact, enhance Somalia's relationship with the US should they emerge victorious. 'In short', explained a former member of the Africa Bureau, "a kind of win-win situation prevailed in which risk-averse bureaucrats could count on maintaining US influence regardless of whether the Somali Government or the guerrilla opposition emerged victorious'.

A decline in the perceived need for military access to Somalia in the wake of decreased Cold War tensions constituted another important reason for official US disinterest in shoring up the Siad regime. In an interesting conclusion to a long-simmering policy debate over Somalia's strategic importance to the US, the naval facility at Berbera turned out to be completely unnecessary for the massive deployment of US troops and matériel associated with Operation Desert Storm. Although Somalia's strategic location—the cornerstone of strategically oriented proponents seeking close US-Somali ties—had made it a potentially important player in what in 1991 constituted the largest US military operation abroad in the post-Vietnam era, the Berbera base was simply stripped of its fuel stocks and left dormant by military planners. This turn of events seemed to validate the position of critics who had asserted throughout the 1980s that even if one accepted strategic rationales for ensuring US military access, the Somali bases were unnecessary when other, more extensive facilities were available in the region.

When the Somali civil war intensified and turned into an all-out struggle for control of Mogadishu that, by February 1992, had resulted in more than 30,000 casualties, the White House ignored growing pressures for US involvement and delegated authority for fashioning a response to the Africa Bureau. In sharp contrast to the massive US-led military intervention that would occur at the end of 1992, the Africa Bureau oversaw a two-track policy that sought to limit US involvement in what one PSC described as a 'clan-based quagmire destined to last years, if not decades'.

First, the Bureau argued, the US should support the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to place the UN in the forefront of a multilateral effort designed to meet the humanitarian needs of the Somali peoples.

A clear desire to avoid direct involvement in the policies of clan warfare was demonstrated by a US vote on 17 March 1992 for a Security Council resolution related to Somalia only after a proposal for a UN-sponsored peace-keeping mission had been removed. Although a State Department official claimed that congressional concerns over 'dramatically rising costs' associated with peace-keeping operations throughout the world was a major factor, Africans pointed to decisive US support for a UN peace-keeping mission in war-torn Yugoslavia, and accused the US of adopting double standards on the issue.

The second element of the Africa Bureau's two-track policy, already evident in the immediate aftermath of Siad Barre's departure from office, was that Britain, and especially Italy, should take the lead in their former colonial territories. This policy stance was applied not only to the resolution of intra-clan fighting, but also to the disruptive conflict involving the secessionist Somaliland Republic. As demonstrated by its involvement in the 'national reconciliation' talks held in Djibouti during 1991, for example, the Africa Bureau carefully avoided statements that went beyond the desires of either Italy or Great Britain, and therefore favoured the preservation of the Republic of Somalia as constituted at its independence in 1960.

ETHIOPIA AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC POLITICS IN HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

When guerrilla advances during the first four months of 1991 made it clear that the Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam was on the verge of being overthrown, the US intensified its involvement in negotiations between the Ethiopian government and the opposition by sending a high-level delegation to Addis Ababa that included the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Irving Hicks, Robert C. Frasure (a member of the National Security Council), and a former Senator, Rudy Boschwitz, who acted as Bush's personal envoy. In addition to meeting with Mengistu, both Hicks and Frasure traveled to Khartoum to meet the heads of the two principal opposition movements: Isas Afewerkil, leader of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF); and Meles Zenawi, the head of the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The level of US involvement in these negotiations intensified when, after Mengistu surrendered from power on 21 May 1991, Cohen flew to London to mediate personally between the opposition factions and a collapsing Ethiopian government.

The net result of US involvement was a significant contribution to a transfer of power which largely avoided the bloodshed and clan conflict. As part of an agreement that was publicly endorsed by Cohen on 28 May 1991 the TPLF took control of...
Addis Ababa and began putting together a coalition Government. A critical element of the May agreement was US support for a UN-supervised referendum in Eritrea within a period of roughly two years to determine if the people of the territory desired independence.

The decision to support regional self-determination through the ballot box—fully cognizant of the fact that the outcome would be an independent Eritrea—represented a significant change in US Africa policies. Rather than giving unswerving support for the territorial integrity of the Ethiopian empire as had been the case from the 1950s to the 1980s, the US endorsed a policy that questioned the hallowed Organization of African Unity (OAU) concept of territorial integrity. Regardless of the referendum’s outcome, the Africa Bureau made it clear that foreign assistance beyond humanitarian relief depended on the establishment of some type of legitimate democracy in Ethiopia.

Several factors accounted for the pro-active US response to events in Ethiopia. First, both the Mengistu Government and the opposition sought a greater role for Washington as a mediator. These positive signals coincided with rising pressures within the national security bureaucracies, particularly the Africa Bureau, to avoid the policy disasters that had occurred in Liberia and Somalia. In both cases, US-supported leaders were driven from power by coalitions of armed forces which, after achieving initial victories, presided over the escalation of ethnically or clan-based violence. Having ‘learned’ that policies of inaction potentially entail far greater costs than may initially have been apparent, the Africa Bureau sought preventative action in order to avoid another humanitarian disaster in Africa. ‘We want to see law and order’, explained a diplomat who was stationed in the US Embassy in Addis Ababa during 1991, ‘What we want to do is facilitate a soft landing and prevent the kind of bloodshed that affected Liberia and Somalia’.56

The decline of Cold War competition in the Horn of Africa served as a second element in the calculations of Ethiopian and US officials. Several segments of the US policy-making establishment, concerned with both the hardline Marxist position of the Mengistu regime and the armed opposition, made support for either side highly unlikely during the 1980s. The decision of both sides to modify their attachment to Marxism in the face of Soviet retrenchment at the end of the 1980s removed a major obstacle to the re-establishment of closer ties with Washington. This had happened five years ago, we wouldn’t have been involved because in the Cold War, it would have been hard to work with the Marxists, explained Cohen. ‘Even two years ago’, he continued, ‘it was hard for me to work with Swapo’, a reference to the difficulties of dealing with a guerrilla movement that was perceived as having a strong attachment to Marxism prior to taking power in Namibia.57

The end of the Cold War was also an important reason for the new US position concerning the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. During the Cold War era when unimpeded access to the US telecommunications base at Kagnew and to other facilities in Eritrea guided US foreign policy toward Ethiopia, support was given to national security bureaucracies for the territorial status quo remained virtually unquestioned since it was feared that an independent Eritrea would terminate access to what at the time was considered to be one of the most valuable US telecommunications centres in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. With the decline of the Cold War, such justifications for Ethiopia’s territorial integrity no longer rang true. Although portions of the national security bureaucracies, such as the CIA and, to a lesser extent, the Pentagon questioned whether an independent Eritrea would be financially insolvent and potentially susceptible to ‘radical’ foreign powers, such as Libya, the Africa Bureau successfully argued for a policy that supported the pursuit of self-determination through legal means. This position was based on the simple facts that the EPLF, which had been fighting for Eritrean independence for over 30 years, militarily controlled the entire region, and that the TPLF, although in favour of maintaining the territorial integrity of the country, was willing to recognize Eritrean independence if a majority of the population in the territory truly desired that.

An equally important aspect of the pro-active US response was the episodic involvement of the highest levels of the policy-making establishment, including Bush, despite the fact that the White House never perceived the unfolding events in Ethiopia as constituting a crisis in the Cold War mould. For example, the need to create an orderly transfer of power in Ethiopia captured the attention of the White House when it became clear that a humanitarian disaster on a par with the 1983-85 famine was in the making. Already, faced with a domestic uproar over the plight of Iraq’s Kurdish population, the White House sought to avoid the public criticism that resulted from the Reagan Administration’s slow response to the conditions contributing to the 1983-85 famine. An integral aspect of this approach was a political calculation that domestic demands for higher levels of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia, already annually topping $150m since 1984, would multiply dramatically in the event of ongoing civil war and bloodshed in a post-Mengistu era similar to what was occurring in Liberia and Somalia.58

The delicate process associated with the emigration of Ethiopia’s Falashas, c.14,000 of whom found themselves stranded in Addis Ababa while awaiting departure for Israel, also engaged the White House’s attention, not only because of congressional concerns with the Mengistu regime’s practice of trading visas for arms (i.e., Falashas for weapons from Israel), but also due to a private appeal to Bush from the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzak Shamir. Desirous of avoiding the political fallout that could have accompanied any deterioration of the personal safety of the Falashas stranded in Addis Ababa, Bush dispatched Boschwitz as his personal envoy and, in the aftermath of Mengistu’s departure from power, sent a letter to Acting President Tsefaye Gebre-Kidan, requesting that the group be allowed to emigrate. The highly publicized event and other appeals were a two-day airlift on 24-25 May 1991, dubbed Operation Solomon, in which more than 14,000 Falashas were flown to Israel in exchange for $35m in ‘exit’ fees.59

Evolving Security Interests in the ‘New World Order’

The prominence of the above four cases suggests that the Bush Administration’s policies during its second and third years in office largely constituted reactive responses to ‘hold-overs’ from the Cold War era. Apart from US involvement in South Africa and Ethiopia, priorities were also heavily influenced by those Cold War cases in which US domestic policies played an important role. A more activist Congress had become an integral element of Washington’s Africa policies by the beginning of the 1990s in part due to the growing strength of an African constituency, such as the Congressional Black Caucus; but more notably due to the lack of interest in Africa by the highest ranking members of the Bush Administration. For example, the Black Caucus and other interests in African issues played a crucial role in reversing the Bush Administration’s decision to cut development aid to Africa and were, in fact, were able to increase the levels of development aid provided from 1990 to 1992.

Despite the generally reactive nature of the Bush Administration’s involvement in Africa, two often-stated themes suggested the basis for a more proactive policy. First, the Bush Administration underscored the increasing necessity of the US and the other major powers to act as facilitators in helping to resolve conflict in Africa.36 Citing the efforts in Southern Africa of the former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, the Bush Administration helped facilitate Namibia’s independence on 21 March 1990.
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Bush Administration officials also noted the importance of promoting democratisation. For example, Cohen insisted that the US ‘can and will remain engaged’ in the democratization efforts that were intensifying throughout Africa in 1990 and 1991. ‘The United States stands ready to assist’, Cohen explained. ‘We have reservoirs of talent, experience, and financial resources that can have a real and lasting impact’.4 Indeed, the approach of the 1992 Presidential elections almost precluded the possibility for wide-ranging initiatives during that year due to the prevailing assumption that African issues would yield little of benefit to a Republican Administration seeking re-election.

After the election the White House became engaged in larger strategic concerns, such as the rising perception of the need to contain Islamic revivalist movements that were emerging in the post-Cold War international environment. One example was the Bush Administration’s response to events in Algeria in 1991. It remained silent when the Algerian army annulled the country’s first democratic elections and assumed control of the country in a military coup d’état. The primary reason for this silence was the Administration’s opposition to the expected alternative of a Government dominated by an Islamic revivalist party, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).5 In short, the Administration’s actions suggested that the logic of containment of the former Soviet Union may be in the process of being replaced by a variant focused on the fundamentalist Islamic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa.

NOTES

2. For a discussion of these and other themes, see Peter J. Schraeder, ‘Removing the Shackles? United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa After the End of the Cold War’. In Donald Rothchild and Emound Keller, eds. Africa in the New International Order: Restructuring State Sovereignty and Regional Security; Lyane Rienner, 1996.
5. Clough, op. cit.
6. Much of the following material is drawn from the case studies presented in Peter J. Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change; Cambridge University Press, 1994.
8. Representative Howard Wolpe quoted in Pear, op. cit.
15. Friedman, op. cit.
20. See Krauss, op. cit.
21. Personal interview.
25. Personal interview.
28. Ibid.
31. Personal interview.
33. Personal interview.
34. Ibid.
40. See Donald Rothchild, ‘Regiona Peocaiming in Africa: The Role of the Great Powers as Facilitators’, In John W. Harbison and Donald Rothchild, eds. op. cit.