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Southern Africa: US Policy and the Struggle for National Independence

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1. Introduction

The prospect of black majority rule in South Africa in the near future arouses as much excitement as it does a degree of anxiety. For, as a senior member of the National Liberation Movement of South Africa said (to me) the other day, the question of South Africa's Day of Liberation is no longer that of *when* (it is to be in the next two or three years¹) but *how* this outcome is to be achieved. As the theme of the Workshop — Whither South Africa? — indicates, the question *how* is to be answered in an analysis of the historical process in South Africa. Among other things, this includes an analysis of the following: the nature of imperialist (the US in particular) imperative in the Southern African sub-region, the dynamics of the class and racial conflict within South Africa itself and the character and course of the national liberation movement. The answer will be found in the totality of the historical situation within which Southern Africa, in the context of the global struggle between the US and the socialist bloc, finds itself at this historical conjuncture. An account must be taken of both the nature of the imperialist hegemony in the region as well as the broad parameters of political and socio-economic action that this tends to prescribe upon the struggle itself.

That the struggle in Southern Africa has come this far is no mean achievement: in the late 1960s and early 1970s, even some of the African nationalists tended to share the white settler belief that black majority rule was not in the offing. However, today we stand at an important juncture in which the final end of white settler colonialism in Southern Africa is now on the horizon. We need to remind ourselves always that such positive changes as our sub-region has experienced are the cumulative result of decades of resistance on the part of the oppressed and exploited peoples of Southern Africa. Yet there are some who would like us to believe that change is the result of benevolence and change of heart on the part of both the white settler colonial states and those of the international arena that had in various ways helped to sustain these systems of domination.

International opinion has changed and international pressure has accordingly come to bear on the apartheid regime. But this is so mainly because of the impact of the struggles themselves and the realization that the end of apartheid is both immanent and imminent. Indeed there will be more violence and the need for a more coordinated approach by the National Liberation Movement is imperative if black majority rule in South Africa is to be brought closer.

In short, it is the African peoples, through the many decades of struggle, that are changing apartheid and are about to dismantle it. The history of the struggle in Southern Africa as it has unfolded so far tends to contradict the theory of the "logic of protracted struggle" as one that is synonymous with total political independence and the basis for the transition to socialism.² The attainment of national independence in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe has not brought about the much expected economic freedom nor has it brought about lasting peace, security and genuine development for the mass of the people.

On the contrary, it has given birth to a situation which threatens not only the newly won political independence but has postponed the prospect of socialist construction in these societies. This is particularly true in the case of Angola and Mozambique where counter-revolutionary forces supported by South Africa and imperialism are on the rampage. There is as yet no sufficient evidence to suggest that the struggle for Namibia and South Africa will not end in a "negotiated settlement" that will constitute and symbolize a historical conjuncture in which imperialism and finance capital will for some time prescribe over these societies the broad parameters of constrained political and socio-economic action.

Thus, while important gains have been made by the national liberation in the sub-region, US imperialist counter offensive remains quite real and a potential threat. As we are meeting in this conference, there is yet another US diplomatic offensive, headed by State Department official Frank Wisner, in what appears to be a thrust towards finding a formula for a "negotiated settlement" in both Namibia and South Africa. The precedent of the Lancaster House Agreement on Zimbabwe should alert us to the fact that there is nothing startling about this prospect. But there is danger in stretching historical parallels too far, especially in a situation, such as South Africa itself, wherein the configuration of forces are so complex and the vested interests of imperialism so entrenched and the forces for change so dynamic. The outcome of a "negotiated settlement" in both Namibia and South Africa might be even more unfavourable to the National Liberation Movement than appeared to be the case in the Zimbabwe situation in 1979/80. The dynamics

of the post Lancaster House situation in Zimbabwe are sufficiently developed — at least to enable us to see the pros and cons of negotiations.³

What are the implications of the current internal upsurge in South Africa? What are the prospects and capacity of the African petty-bourgeois leadership to coordinate both the internal and external factors into a position of a unified strategy *vis a vis* both the white society and imperialism? What will be the nature of the relationship between the national liberation movement and the immense social forces — including the labour movement — that have been generated in South Africa? That is in the conditions of struggle who will resolve the problem of the masses? The mass upsurge in South Africa has already superceded anything we have seen in either Angola, Mozambique or Zimbabwe. In such a situation, can we rule out the possibility of new alliances between say, international capital, the white settler factor and the African petit bourgeoisie that will seek to contain these social forces?

In short, what is the likelihood of a black majority ruled South Africa constituting a challenge to imperialism or will it reinforce the current patterns of domination, insecurity and underdevelopment for the mass of the people? The questions are numerous and need to be considered carefully in a concrete analysis of the South African situation.

The purpose of this paper is to survey briefly US policy in response to the developments in the sub-region in general and South Africa in particular. The intention is not to accord imperialism with “apparently all conquering power, total clarity and unanimity of purpose, and almost omnipotent causal potency”, to quote Gavin Kitchin⁴ in his critique of those radical African scholars that have sought to emphasize the role of imperialism in the current historical conjuncture.

Nor does the analysis of the role of imperialism overlook the nature of the indigenous social forces or the expression of class and other social contradictions within the African countries themselves.

Our analysis is not oblivious of the role of the post-colonial state and the petit bourgeois class that leads it. But the concept of imperialist hegemony also includes within it the nature of the dominated society, its colonial legacy, the resultant class structure and the post-colonial state. It is not that imperialism thereby imposes a permanent solution in its favour and thereby subsuming all internal contradictions and antagonisms. On the contrary, these societies continue to be characterized by sharp conflict, both internal and even in antagonism to imperialism itself. But in seeking, as it always does, to bring about a political solution (stability) in its favour, imperialism tends, within a particular historical conjuncture, to prescribe upon the dominated society broad parameters of political and socio-economic activity.

The analysis is presented not on the basis of some fatalistic acceptance of the inevitability of neo-colonialism in Southern Africa. It seeks to highlight the spectre of imperialism in the context of US policy in Southern Africa; but it does so also in the hope that as political analysts and activists we will be able to develop deeper insights into the current condition and thereby develop better and more effective strategies for advancing the struggle. In brief, there appears to be no effective alternative strategy to that of seeking to achieve national unity, regional unity and Third World internationalism, on the basis of a united opposition to (imperialist) policies that seek not only to forestall socialist construction, but even to undermine national independence. The attainment of black majority rule in South Africa constitutes a fundamental break with a past that has been characterized by insecurity for the people of the Southern Africa (and Africa); and lay the basis for an effective challenge to imperialism on a world scale. It is for this reason, perhaps, that others from a different perspective have concluded that the "sudden collapse of white rule in South Africa would lead to a catastrophe comparable to that of the Russian revolution itself".⁵ Then the imperatives of US policy in Southern Africa should be obvious: the attempt to avoid such a "catastrophe."

11. US Global Policy in Perspective

US policy in Southern Africa has to be understood as part and parcel of the global policy of a Super-Power that is bent on preserving the international capitalist system. In fact, V.I. Lenin's theory of Imperialism The Highest Stage of Capitalism⁶ is both self-explanatory and still relevant today. Elsewhere,⁷ we outlined the main features of imperialism as follows:

1. The gap in economic development between industrialized Western (and European settled) countries and those restricted to primary production. The gap is widening under continued imperialist domination.
2. The export of capital from the more developed countries to the less.
3. The division, especially in the late nineteenth century, of territories throughout the World by the more developed nations as part of the rivalry and competition for strategic and economic advantages. This competition for colonies led to two world wars.
4. The further concentration and centralization of capital and the integration of the world capitalist economy into the structures of the giant US based multi-national corporations or integrated monopolistic enterprises. These multi national corporations not only accelerate technological change but also control trade, prices and profits.
5. The decline in the period since the Russian Revolution of 1917 of national rivalries among the leading capitalist countries as an international ruling class is consolidated and constituted on the basis of ownership of control of the multi-national corporations; and as the world capital

market is internationalized by the World Bank and other agencies of the international ruling class.

6. The evolution of global imperialist foreign policy which corresponds to the global interests and perspectives of the multinational corporations.
7. The intensification of these tendencies (outlined in 4, 5, 6, above) arising from the threat of world socialism to the world capitalist system. — A number of US scholars have in recent studies shown that the US global policy has always been a grand and deliberate plan.

“In the real world, US global planning has always been sophisticated and careful, as you’d expect from a major superpower with a highly centralized and class conscious dominant social group. Their power, in turn is rooted in their ownership and management of the economy, as is the norm in most societies. During World War II, American planners were well aware that the United States was going to emerge as a World dominant power, in a position of hegemony that had few historical parallels, and they organized and met in order to deal with this situation.”⁸

This developed subsequently into the conception of “Grand Area” planning.

“The Grand Area was a region that was to be subordinated to the needs of the American economy. As one planner put it, it was to be the region that is strategically necessary for world control. The geopolitical analysis held that the Grand Area had to include at least the Western Hemisphere, the Far East, and the former British Empire, which we (the US) were in the process of dismantling and taking over ourselves . . . The Grand Area was also to include western and southern Europe and the oil producing regions of the Middle East; in fact it was to include everything, if that were possible. Detailed plans were laid for particular regions of the Grand Area and also for international institutions that were to organize and police it, essentially in the interests of this subordination to US domestic needs.”⁹

This is a policy based on real politik analysis of US interests; and in 1948 a Top Secret (PPS:23) document of The State Department made it clear that the questions of human rights, justice and economic and social progress for those dominated by the US was quite secondary in this regard.

“We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world benefaction. We should cease to talk about vague and . . . , unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.”¹⁰

Before becoming President of the United States, Ronald Reagan made a notable statement in connection with the liberation of Angola.

"I don't know about you, but I'm concerned — scared is the proper word — about what is going on in Africa," he said. "Many Americans have interpreted our interest in Africa as an extension of our own desire to achieve racial equality and elimination of injustice based on race. I am afraid that is a naïve oversimplification of what is really at issue."¹¹

These considerations have, with varying degrees of emphasis and intensity, prompted violent and horrific US intervention in various parts of the world: in Vietnam, the Caribbean and Central America, including the overthrow of a little country — Grenada. The outcome has been a "huge massacre": for example: from 1954 to 1965 the US "succeeded in killing maybe another 160 000 to 170 000 South Vietnamese, mostly peasants". From 1965 to 1975, the Vietnamese War left a death toll of ' maybe in the neighbourhood of 3 million ', and "perhaps a million dead" in Cambodia and Laos. Altogether 5 million people were killed, and "well over 10 million refugees" created by the American bombardment and ground operations, not to mention the physical devastation of the land and other resources.¹²

The figures are much larger if one were to include those resulting from US-backed coups in such countries as Indonesia (1965) which led to the massacre of "maybe 700 000 people, mostly landless peasants";¹³ and the Philippines which, if one includes the latest episode which saw the US stage managed replacement of Marcos by Aquino, has experienced more than 40 years of intermittent US intervention. Similarly, if one turns to Africa in general and to Southern Africa in particular: the series of acts of destabilization and the accounts of CIA operations in Africa ever since the Congo Crisis of 1960 and the related assassination of Lumumba, the overthrow of Nkrumah; and the well known pattern of destabilization of frontline and SADC states through the agency of the South African military machinery; and the support of such bandit groups as the MNR in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola.

The point can hardly be overstated: imperialism is aggressive by nature; and includes in its armour and weaponry all those policies and actions designed to attain its global objectives: political blackmail, economic blockades, manipulation of "aid" and the control of the international financial institutions (The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), etc.; in addition to open aggression, intervention, etc.

Yet it would be to miss the point if it were forgotten that the major objective of US policy is not aggression for its own sake, but in pursuit of a "stability" within which its economic and strategic interest will as far as possible be maintained intact. This is particularly so in relation to what the US perceives as the threat by the Soviet Union (and Socialist bloc) to its ' zones of influence ' and global interests in general. In this respect, the US will of

course exaggerate the "Soviet" or "Communist" threat in the context of the broad parameters of "East-West" or Cold War politics.¹⁴ It is perhaps more correct to view the Soviet "threat" as a clumsy pre-emptive act of US imperialism to justify its aggressive policies. In 1965, the US intervened in the Dominican Republic because of a perception that the election of Juan Bosch would lead to the creation of another Cuba. These pre-emptive actions have serious repercussions and further complicates the nature of Big Power politics (and the threat of Nuclear War). In the final analysis, Big Power politics become a factor in such situations as South Africa, even though it is largely acknowledged that the Soviet Union "is not a major actor in the southern African region".¹⁵

The amazing feature of US global policy from World War II onwards is a high degree of continuity. In fact, there appears to be no fundamental change — despite the fairly significant passage of time — in the nature and conduct of US foreign policy: from the TOP Secret document (PPS: 23) of 1948 (cited above) to the current "Reagan Doctrine". One writer describes the thrust of US policy under Reagan as follows:

"the Reagan Administration was moving in the direction of a strategy of confrontation with the Soviet bloc and with the socialist and radical regimes of the Third World, ... The Administration intended to apply pressure against the Soviet Union and against those countries which it regarded as Soviet 'surrogates'. This pressure would be diplomatic, economic and military. This new strategy was aimed at changing the world balance in favour of the US ... so far as to suggest that it would be aimed at forcing the Soviet Union to 'abandon Communism ... Soviet leaders would have to choose between peacefully changing their system in the direction followed by the West or going to war'".¹⁷

In July 1981, the new US Secretary for Defence, Caspar Weinberger outlined the main objectives of "US Military Strategy for the 1980s". According to Weinberger, the US "is and always should be, a global power, with global concerns and responsibilities" that are essential to its global interests. The task of the US Government, therefore, was

"to protect those interests wherever they are assailed, and, in view of our global role, we must defend and support a stable, peaceful international system".¹⁸

Therefore Soviet military power, which includes "the training and support of terrorists" and "the use of military assistance and proxies" was the most immediate, significant and dangerous threat to the national security of the United States". In short, the national security objectives of the United States

“included the usual aims of foreign and military policy: protecting US interests, supporting allies and friends, maintaining access to resources, etc.”¹⁹

The Reagan doctrine contains two new dimensions: the need “to contain Soviet expansion” and that of “intervening in areas that the United States deemed to be part of ‘The Soviet empire’ ”.²⁰ The strategy was to be pursued through both conventional and unconventional means. In the period 1981 to 1985, covert action and special operations as well as diplomatic, political and economic means were used “with increasingly close cooperation between the Department of Defence and the Central Intelligence Agency”.²¹

Commenting on the Reagan doctrine, the Magazine *Jeune Afrique* noted, “In a bid to limit the influence of the socialist countries in Africa the present Master of the White House is trying to strengthen, if not create from scratch, reliable pro-American strongholds throughout the whole of the African continent. He is also out to organize a defence system that is clearly directed against those ‘dangerous hotbeds of subversive activity’ — Libya, Ethiopia and Angola. This system relies on Morocco in the West, Egypt in the North, Sudan (before the overthrow of Nimeri in 1985), Somalia and Kenya in the East, Zaire in the center, and finally, South Africa in the South.”²²

Thus by late 1983, the US was engaged in at least seven major covert operations around the world, including those against Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Chad, Iran, Libya and Nicaragua, “all of which involved the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars”.²³ However for much of 1983 and 1984, this military strategy (“aimed at the systematic destabilization or overthrow of Third World governments”) was not publicly known until the explicit outline of the “Reagan doctrine” by Mr. Reagan himself in January 1985:

“we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives — on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua — to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth”.²⁴

In 1985, for instance, a decision was taken to support UNITA rebels in Angola even more openly. The support of South Africa and UNITA is part of the global plan. David B. Ottaway and Patrick Tyler observe that

“Conservatives have cast the Savimbi aid issue in terms of an ultimate test of the so called ‘Reagan Doctrine’, the administration’s declared objectives of aiding anti-communist ‘freedom fighters’ in their struggles against Soviet and Cuban backed governments”²⁵

III The Bases of US Policy in Southern Africa.

Within the context of the "Grand Area" global policy, it is difficult to accept the view expressed by some analysts that Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular "remains less central (despite mineral wealth) than the Middle East, South Asia and the Central America Caribbean region".²⁶ Equally unacceptable is the related view that because southern Africa "is not a primary concern" to US policy, "the movements of the region remain and will remain, relatively speaking, more on their own",²⁷ thereby implying a degree of indifference to Southern Africa on the part of the US. Recent events prove otherwise. The Reagan Doctrine as shown above, regards every part of the world (including the Soviet Union) as of major concern in terms of its imperial global interests.

As long as Africa was under the control of colonial powers, the US appeared to show a degree of "indifference" to Africa. That is, Africa's control by Europe was taken for granted until she began to rear her head. The nature and enormity of the US (and its allies) reaction to revolutionary pressures in Africa in the last two decades in particular is adequate evidence that the "indifference" was only apparent.

Many studies have documented the history of US — Africa relations in the last forty years;²⁸ and we have elsewhere detailed the outline of US — Southern African relations.²⁹ More recently, the architect of current US Africa policy, Chester Crocker, summarized his country's broad objectives in Africa. Addressing a State Department Foreign Policy Conference, in Washington, on 2nd June, 1981, he stated:

"The Reagan administration recognizes that Africa is a region of growing importance to US global objectives — economic, political, strategic, human and so forth. We cannot afford to neglect a region where our interests are so clearly growing and I would simply refer here in passing to the obvious facts of our long history of involvement with Africa : to the many links of culture and a blood that ties an important portion of our own citizenry to Africa; to our growing import-dependence on fuel and non-fuel minerals produce in Africa, to Africa's growing place as a focus of world politics and its growing role as an actor in World politics".³⁰

Accordingly, the intention is to "support regional security in Africa" and to:

"cooperate with our allies and friends in Africa to deter aggression and subversion by our global adversary. We intend to assure the US and our allies fair commercial access to essential fuel and non-fuel minerals and other raw materials produced in Africa, and at the same time to promote the growing engagement of the American economy and the American private sector in Africa's growing economy".³¹

He viewed US interests in Africa as "wholly consistent and compatible with the interests of the African States themselves". Therefore, according to Crocker, the presence of Cuban troops in Africa is "inimicable to our objectives and to African interests also".³² Implicit in the entire policy statement is the view that Africa as a whole is "rightfully" a US sphere of influence. What complicates US policy is South Africa's policy of apartheid, which has increasingly become a human rights issue in international politics with public opinion dead set against it. Until South Africa moves away from apartheid US designs were "restrained" compared to either South East Asia or Latin America. But as has already been pointed out, this is not to say that Africa has not had its share of the onslaught of US imperial policy nor that the future will not see emerge a pattern of action similar to that already prevalent in Latin America and South East Asia. Much appears to hinge on how the US perceives the South Africa developments. That is, can apartheid be abolished and still keep South Africa within the US sphere of influence?

In examining the thrust of US policy in Southern Africa it is also important to mention the relationship between the rise of imperialism and the historical phenomenon of white settler colonialism in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. White settler colonialism can be described as a particular expression of imperialist domination or as colonialism par excellence. In the imperialist scheme of things, South Africa became and has remained the main fulcrum in the definition of the sub-region as we know it today; that is imperialist operations in this part of the world have been largely centred there. From the fifteenth century onwards, Southern Africa was recognized as constituting a vital strategic centre on the route to India and the rest of the Asian and the Far Eastern sub-continents. It was *historically* inevitable perhaps, that South Africa should feature prominently through the three successive stages of capitalist imperialism: mercantile imperialism, free trade imperialism, and modern monopoly imperialism. All these cover the modern history of Southern Africa, from 1652 when the first Europeans arrived at the Cape, to the present.

It is usual to associate Southern Africa with those immense material and human resources that have also been the basis of its misfortunes in terms of the history of imperialism and colonization in the sub-region. Numerous studies have highlighted the extent of US and Western investment in Southern Africa: between 1943 and 1978 US direct investment in South Africa grew from US\$50 million to \$2 billion an increase of 4 000 per cent; had reached US\$7 200 million by 1980; that US\$3 000 million are sent out of South Africa every year as profits and dividends for overseas international monopolies; that Britain and America account for about 70 per cent of the total foreign investment in South Africa; and that there are now 350 US companies involved in South Africa; and so on and so forth.³³

Similarly, there is more than ample documentation about the pattern and rate of investment in South Africa on the part of the other western and NATO countries, notably Britain, West Germany, France and Japan. Indeed there is also relationship between such investment and the industrial and military build up in South Africa; i.e. the extent to which all this has helped to buttress the apartheid state. More recently, studies have shown the relationship between US and Western investment on the one hand, and South Africa's growing military technology and nuclear capability on the other.³⁴ All this has constituted the basis of South Africa's policy of "Total Strategy" that involves, inter-alia,

"a militarized national security system, integrating all branches and levels of the state machinery, industry, business, the educational system and all other institutions to ensure that political control remained in white hands, more specifically in the hands of the Afrikaner group of the ruling class."³⁵

All this links up closely with the strategic role of South Africa within the overall context of US global policy. There are numerous studies of US policy in Southern Africa but most of these rely heavily on an analysis of the National Security Study Memorandum 39 (or NSSM 39) of 1969, a US policy document that outlined the Nixon-Kissinger strategy on Southern Africa. The editors of a popular version of this study have dubbed it *The "Kissinger Study of Southern Africa"*. The authors emphasize that the policy is based on a careful consideration on the part of US of its strategic and economic interests in the sub-region. These interests are, in turn, related to US global interests as a whole, creating a link between those historically important strategic economic considerations that were outlined in an earlier section with regard to the historical development of Southern Africa on the one hand; and the current objectives and imperatives of US imperialism, on the basis of the NSSM 39 document, and its NATO allies.

The editors have summarised the "real world considerations" affecting US policy towards Southern Africa as follows:³⁷

the Strategic importance of Southern Africa, particularly with the closing of the Suez Canal following the 1967 Middle East War and the increased Soviet naval activities in the Indian Ocean;

the US need to use overflight and landing facilities for military aircraft heading to and from Indo China;

significant investment and balance of trade advantages to both Britain and the US in South Africa;

South Africa's status as the major gold supplier in the capitalist world and its importance in guaranteeing the useful operation of the two tier gold price system;

or the basis of the foregoing, therefore, the objectives of US policy in Southern Africa were stated as follows:

- to improve the US standing in black Africa and internationally on the racial issue;
- to minimize the likelihood of escalation of violence in the area and risk of US involvement;
- to minimize the opportunities for the USSR and Communist China to exploit the racial issue in the region for propaganda advantage and to gain political influence with black governments and liberation movements;
- to encourage moderation of the current rigid racial and colonial policies of the white regimes;
- to protect economic, scientific and strategic interests and opportunities in the region, including the orderly marketing of South Africa's gold production.

The strategic and economic resources of Southern Africa have made the US a major actor in Southern African affairs. From the visit of Kissinger himself to the present, US involvement surpasses even that of the former colonial master of the sub region, Britain. Thus, the 1970s witnessed the heavy hand of the US in the "detente" exercise and particularly after the Portuguese coup of 1974 that led to the success of the Liberation Movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. Perhaps more than Britain itself, the US was quite instrumental in the Lancaster House Agreement on Zimbabwe of 1979-1980. Option Two of the Kissinger memorandum had proposed:

"Broader association with both black and white states in an effort to encourage moderation in the white states, to enlist cooperation of the black states in reducing tensions and the likelihood of increasing cross border violence and to encourage improved relations among states in area."³⁸

It has also been argued, by those who designed the policy, that Option Two was based on the belief that "blacks cannot gain political rights through violence" and that therefore only a combination of persuading the whites into "acquiescence" and "increased economic assistance" could bring about constructive change. It has been noted that NSSM policy document showed a "complete lack of concern over the aspirations and fate of the African people"; that the US "had no genuine interest in solving racial and colonial conflicts in Southern Africa"; and that in general the US became involved "not out of commitment to fundamental human rights and basic democratic principles but 'because other countries have made it so'."³⁹

As has already been pointed out, the content and impact of such a policy will easily put paid to the view that the US regards Southern Africa and South Africa in particular as being of lesser (economic and strategic) importance than other regions of the world. In fact such a view is invariably based on a superficial rather than a holistic analysis of US policy in the sub region.

There is therefore even the belief that became, in the words of some US official sources, "American investment in South Africa is so small", that the US has no real leverage on the South African regime in terms of desired changes towards the abandonment of apartheid; and that therefore the US can ultimately disengage from South Africa without detriment to both its regional and global interests.

This view of course is a luxury which is contradicted by recent US concerns and actions. The following analysis reveals a South African state increasingly losing the initiative, as its narrow social base is further undermined by the rising tide of international opposition to apartheid. Let me now briefly consider whether or not South Africa is indeed a "sub-imperial" power. Ruy Mauro Marini was, perhaps, the first writer to use the concept of "Sub-Imperialism" in his account on "Brazilian sub-imperialism"⁴⁰ Marini's definition of "Sub imperialism" is essentially "the form which dependent capitalism assumes upon reaching the stage of monopolies and finance capital."⁴¹ But within the context of the overall imperialist strategy of trying to contain revolution and so keep the capitalist system intact, Brazilian "sub-imperialism" represents the counter revolutionary role that Brazil plays in Latin America on behalf of the US. Viewed in the latter context, it is not surprising that the concept of "sub-imperialism" came to be applied in a similar characterization of South Africa and other clients of the US.

South Africa's economic strength in the sub-region and the fact that most of the frontline and SADCC states are in fact dependent upon it for trade, transport and even employment puts it in a strong position as a regional power. Second, it has the military strength and capacity to invade and occupy neighbouring states in the sub-region without incurring penalties. As has been explained above, sometimes its aggression is part and parcel of the US policy in the region and would tend to justify Dan Nabudere's view that "it is the US imperialist running all over, telling Vorster and Smith what to do".⁴³

On the other hand, the concept of sub-imperialism might connote a relative degree of independence, on the part of the sub-imperial power, power from the imperialist centre, in which case the US cannot always dictate to such a force as South Africa. This poses a considerable problem from the point of analysis and in the attempt to determine precisely the nature of the power relations between the US and South Africa. Indeed, the US might at times find it convenient, in terms of providing itself with a degree of latitude in its attempt to reconcile its South African and global policies, to view South Africa as ultimately having its own independent policies, regardless of those of the US. But this is rendered false by the US vote in the United Nations.

Invariably, the US with its allies or without will always vote to frustrate concerted action by the UN.

From an analytical point of view, US — South African relations are currently based on a coincidence of interests in Southern Africa. That is why the US insists that the solution of the South African question must be in the context of its global design. But this observation of US — South Africa relations is quite distinct from that which the US and South Africa as almost synonymously determined to “protect apartheid together”.⁴⁴ This is incorrect and reflects a gross misunderstanding of US policy in Southern Africa. It arises out of a confusion of the means and goals of such a policy, the failure to realize that US policy in Southern Africa is based on the pursuit of a political solution within which its economic and strategic interests remain intact and in keeping with its global design. Besides, there are occasions when South Africa’s actions have caused even Reagan to feel “a moral responsibility to speak out . . . to emphasize our concern and grief over the human and spiritual costs of apartheid . . .”.⁴⁵

IV. US Policy, the Frontline/SADCC States and the Liberation Struggle

An analysis of US-South Africa relations in the Reagan era does help to highlight certain contradictions in US policy. This has been highlighted in recent years when the US seems to need to be seen to be committed to human rights in response to the growing international opposition to apartheid. Therefore the US has simultaneously sought to ensure a “solution” in South Africa that is compatible with US regional and global interests while paying lip-service to human rights. In its newly self-appointed role of the policeman of human rights throughout the world, the US cannot ignore the gross injustice perpetrated by apartheid. It cannot therefore be seen to be openly decrying human rights abuses in other parts of the world while keeping silent on the question of South Africa’s denial of political rights to the great majority of its inhabitants. In fact it was on the occasion of the 36th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (on 11th December, 1984) that Reagan was compelled to make the above cited (note 45) statement. Observers believe that this statement marked a significant “turn about” in Reagan’s previous position of “quiet diplomacy” on South Africa.⁴⁶

The human rights issue becomes increasingly glaring to the US and its allies in the light of two other factors. First, the increasing unrest and violence within South Africa itself and the consequent rising stature of the National Liberation Movement. This is a crisis that has led gradually to the collapse of South Africa’s “Total Strategy” policy, both internally and externally.

In fact the "Total Strategy" has not only failed but also assisted in mobilizing blacks, within South Africa itself and in the frontline states, against the apartheid state. The Nkomati and other similar attempts at "agreements" with black states are also part of this Total Strategy; but they have had the opposite effect of fueling the anger of the black masses of South Africa. It should be recalled that even the frontline States as a whole were compelled to give only a limited blessing to the Nkomati Accord. President Nyerere himself stated that "it is humiliation for African States to sign agreements in the form of Nkomati with apartheid South Africa . . . Africa did not want any more Nkomatis . . ." ⁴⁷

But while the Nkomati Accord might have been a blow to the ANC⁴⁸ and all progressive forces, it has since prompted the latter into a more careful consideration of the home situation and, it would appear to have given birth to new strategies and tactics. Much will depend on their ability to link within a broad strategy for national liberation the increasingly favourable home situation, the human rights movement at home and abroad, and the armed struggle. At any rate, the home situation alone is quite formidable and renders the "Nkomatis" quite ineffective as part of South Africa's strategy.

The human rights issue imposed itself on US Africa policy. For instance, Chester Crocker in 1981 emphasized the US concern about the race issue in South Africa.⁴⁹ To some extent, this view tends to be reinforced by the conduct of the African states themselves. The basic economic, political and military vulnerability of Africa in general and the frontline and SADCC States in particular has generally meant that, individually or jointly, they have had to operate within the orbit of the US policy and imperialist hegemony in Southern Africa. The acceptance of the pre-eminent role of the US has also allowed the frontline and SADCC States substantial diplomatic and negotiating leverage with the US and its allies with respect to Africa's central objective of the decolonization of Namibia and South Africa.

These states have acted as a kind of bridge between the National Liberation Movement and the US and its allies. The violence and upheavals that have accompanied the liberation struggle have had an adverse economic and military effect on them. This explains why they have been keen to negotiate for, and on behalf of the National Liberation Movement. Their negotiating position is invariably enhanced by the rising successes of the struggle for national liberation. Sometimes this strategy of the frontline and SADCC States has meant that they have had to arm-twist the National Liberation Movement into compliance with whatever formula might be seen as the most appropriate for producing a solution that will bring about national independence.

This is in fact what happened over the Zimbabwe issue in 1979-1980.⁵⁰ It is currently happening with regard to Namibia. It will certainly happen with regard to South Africa, if and when the circumstances appear ripe enough for fully fledged negotiations. The extent to which there is usually consensus between the Frontline States and the leadership of the National Liberation Movement is, of course, quite pertinent and interesting when one considers the likely developments towards black majority rule in Namibia and South Africa. Both this level of consensus and the growing stature of the National Liberation Movement of South Africa is enough basis for the possibility that soon both the South African state and the US will soon negotiate with the ANC.

The negotiating position of the African states has been greatly strengthened by the development of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). SADCC has developed — and continues to do so — on the basis of its strong relationship with the US and Western countries.⁵¹ But SADCC's value is essentially in the political arena, especially the success with which it has mobilized the US and its allies into the isolation of apartheid South Africa. As had been stated elsewhere,⁵² SADCC has in some respects become, for North America and Western countries who have economic links with South Africa, "a soft option, a face-saving commitment, a dubious counter-balance to their involvement in South Africa".⁵³ It will, however, become an increasingly harder option with the developments in South Africa itself and the sub-region generally.

The last SADCC meeting in Harare, in January, 1986 was a good illustration of the growing diplomatic leverage of the frontline and SADCC in their dealing with the US and its allies on the question of Namibia, South Africa and the sub-region as a whole. The Harare SADCC meeting ended with the SADCC Chairman Mmusi criticising the US for giving aid to the UNITA bandits. The meeting was a significant political and diplomatic victory for the frontline and SADCC States, enhancing the isolation of South Africa and even embarrassing US policy in Southern Africa. A recent report on this meeting is an appropriate summary to this feature of US-African relations in this period.

"Though SADCC was fully aware that it risked a serious breach with the US, it decided that a clear message had to be sent to Washington. SADCC Executive Secretary Simba Makoni noted that America cannot be friends with Savimbi and friends with Angola and SADCC at the same time", a view that was greatly strengthened by the unexpectedly political tone of speeches by donor country representatives. Even before arriving in Harare, the head of the Canadian delegation . . . condemned American support for UNITA and announced an increase in Canadian aid for Angola . . . A record 37 countries attended the

Conference, and over half were represented by Ministers or Secretaries of State. Eight socialist countries attended — more than before, including China and the Soviet Union. And 25 international agencies were there . . .”⁵⁴

The Lesotho coup “actually strengthened SADCC’s resolve when the Lesotho Minister “Stressed that Lesotho remained committed to SADCC, and that it will continue to pursue an independent foreign policy”. Furthermore, most donor nations supported the demand for sanctions against South Africa; and the EEC signed an agreement with SADCC recognizing the latter’s primary in regional development”.⁵⁵

The Liberation Movements (ANC, PAC and SWAPO) were also represented for the first time since 1980. In a speech read on their behalf by SWAPO President Nujoma, the Liberation Movements expressed solidarity with SADCC:

“It has become imperative that we translate our common recognition that SADCC and the national liberation struggle are two sectors of a single front into action. Only by harmonising our actions can both SADCC and the Liberation Movement realize our common cherished goals”.

The speech also criticized “the American, British and West German imperialist regimes” for “condoning racist oppression in Southern Africa as well as providing assistance to armed bandit gangs trying to destabilize the legitimate governments of the frontline states, notably the People’s Republic of Angola”.⁵⁶

VI. Towards a New US Policy in Southern Africa?

This paper has sought to analyse US policy in Southern Africa in terms of both its global setting and the unfolding situation in Southern Africa, with particular reference to South Africa itself. With regard to Southern Africa in particular, the policy has for the last two decades been based on Option Two of NSSM 39 of 1969 and the belief that the African people would not attain majority rule through violence. The success of the liberation struggles in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, of course, exposed this illusion. Yet there was no substantive change in the direction of the US policy in the sub-region, reinforced as it was in the belief that the South African regime remained predominant in Southern Africa.

In fact, the policy of “constructive engagement” of the Reagan era was based on this assumption.

After reviewing Chester Crocker’s paper, “South Africa : Strategy for Change”, published in *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1980/81, Michael Kitching and Helen Clough reached the following conclusion:

"Constructive engagement was a product of his (Crocker's) assessment that the Botha regime's secure domestic and regional position, deriving from the nation's relative economic and military self-sufficiency, limits the effectiveness of such pressures as economic sanctions or arms embargoes."⁵⁷

The second assumption of this policy was the belief that, on the basis of Prime Minister P.W. Botha's statement in 1979 that whites must "adapt or die", that South Africa was really prepared to dismantle apartheid, accept Namibia independence, and develop good relations with South Africa's neighbours. A crucial common denominator between Crocker and Botha was also the question of linkage between Namibia independence and the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. It was for obvious reasons an issue attractive to both. But for Crocker, it has been argued, it provided him with the argument he needed to enlist a State Department that would otherwise have had little interest in the Namibia issue:

"By holding out the prospect of a roll back of Cuban and Soviet influence in Southern Africa, Crocker was able to get Secretary of State Alexander Haig and the White House committed to according Namibian independence a place on the administration's foreign policy agenda."⁵⁸

In turn, Crocker hoped, Namibia independence thus attained "would boost US credibility throughout Africa", deal a major diplomatic blow to the Soviet Union, and "give the Botha government confidence to move faster with its internal reform program, which would in turn confirm the merits of constructive engagement".⁵⁹

Given the changes in the balance of power in South Africa brought about by the collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the independence of Zimbabwe, the Botha regime's "Total Strategy" was bound to fail. Against the background of mass unrest in South Africa, the Botha regime could not easily give up Namibia as an important buffer zone. Nor did it have time to reform apartheid to the point which it would be acceptable to the majority of the oppressed inside South Africa itself.

In fact by late 1984, the Namibian issue was overtaken by the South African situation itself, with the US now pushed into the position of applying pressure against South Africa. Thus, from a previous position in which South Africa was perceived as predominant on the sub-region and quite stubborn, there emerged one wherein the US tended to acknowledge that it can in effect tell South Africa what to do.

On April 16, 1985, US Secretary of State George Shultz made a policy statement that might be interpreted as representing this shift from the con-

structive engagement policy. There was still the recognition of South African white opinion as "vital" key to change. But there was equally the recognition that blacks had clearly become a factor "saying they are no longer willing to live under a system that denies them fair political participation; both demography and economics are on the side of these challenging the old order." There were, he said, limits to what the US could do.

"Nevertheless, we are not without potential to affect events. While the Soviets can fan conflicts and supply the implements of war to pursue them, they cannot produce solutions. That peacemaking role can only be played by a power that has a working relationship and influence with all the parties, including, of course, South Africa".⁶⁰

Shultz went on to list the results so far of this peace making role and positive influence on South Africa which he said led to the Nkomati Accord of March 1984, and "helped Angola and South Africa agree" on a plan for the withdrawal of South African forces from Angola and control of SWAPO and Cuban troops in Southern Angola. This "helped bring about" understanding between Lesotho and Botswana, on the one hand, and South Africa on the other, averting potential conflict". And the policy also:

"helped move Mozambique away from heavy dependence on the Soviet camp and closer to true non-alignment. We demonstrated to Mozambique that its best interests are served by closer cooperation with the West, and by rejection of confrontation with South Africa. The trend of our relations with Mozambique is positive and needs further encouragement."⁶¹

Shultz's policy statement constituted an important public assertion of what its aims are in Southern Africa. The policy now is to move quickly to "reconcile" all antagonistic forces in the sub-region in the interests of US policy and in order to foreclose opportunities for the growth of Soviet influence. As we have already outlined above, the Frontline and SADCC States themselves tend to give credence to this position. They will invariably complain about aspects of US policy — particularly with regard to South Africa — but, as a US diplomat explained to me, "No one is saying to us get out of the region . . . No one has told us to pack our bags and go . . . They want the US to be constructively engaged in Southern Africa."

There has been much controversy about US decision to support UNITA in Angola. But it is significant that even in the US this decision is being seen as an "aberration", a departure from this new policy that seeks to "reconcile" all forces in the sub-region within a US framework that keeps out the Soviet Union and forestalls the development of Socialism in any of the states in the region. The "left wing" (which, it is said, is where Crocker now stands

in relation to the "hawks") of the US State Department argues that the decision to aid UNITA is a bad one particularly at a time when even the Angolans had shown a willingness to negotiate with the US.

"Opponents of US involvement in Angola who include 500 academic specialists on Africa who have petitioned congress to block aid to Savimbi, are warning that the United States is heading for an entangling, and inevitably damaging, alliance with South Africa that will have repercussions for American foreign policy in black Africa".⁶²

Conclusion

As the struggle intensifies in South Africa and the Botha regime is seen to have lost control, it is possible that the US State Department will see "reason" and modify their posture in keeping with the advice of their advisers "on the ground" in Southern Africa. We can expect a greater level of agreement between the US and the Frontline/SADCC States, provided the US is seen to exert more and more pressure on South Africa. Those in the US calling for greater accommodation with the Frontline and SADCC States will argue that neither are really "flaming communists"; and that "all that the Africans want is black majority rule and the sooner they are allowed to get it, the better for Southern Africa and the US itself".

These are the bases for a "negotiated settlement" on South Africa. The possibility that the Namibia question will be resolved sooner rather than later is but one indicator that the US is now determined to put pressure on South Africa. But it could also be the first step towards an attempt to get the South African State to negotiate with the national liberation movement, seek safeguards for the whites, and impose direct and indirect constraints on the new state so as to ensure "stability".

The point which is often cited about the large white population that has its roots in South Africa can often be exaggerated; and might even be suggestive of a racist (or inverted racist) posture that sees history from the point of view of the white factor alone. At any rate population sizes and ratios are quite relative; and Zimbabwe is both an indicator that this could also happen in South Africa and a "model" that both the US and the Africans might be considering in terms of a future South Africa.

At any rate, there is now growing opinion, in both South Africa and the US, that only the involvement of the National Liberation Movement in any kind of "talks" will help stem the rising tide of unprecedented mass unrest.

The question, however, is whether the National Liberation Movement will be able to coordinate this storm in its future; what alliances it is likely to forge in the pursuit of state power; and what the role of the US and its allies

is likely to be in such situation and depending on how it perceives its long-term interests both regionally and globally. But these are some of the questions that this workshop will seek to answer.

Notes:

1. He thought 1990 was a bit too far; 1987 or 1988 was a more realistic forecast.
2. For a critique of the romantic rendition of the armed struggle see Ibbo Mandaza, "Introduction" in Ibbo Mandaza ed. *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition, 1980-86*, CODESRIA Book Series, Dakar, London, Harare, 1986.
3. *Ibid.*
4. "Politics, Method and Evidence in the 'Kenyan Debate' ", in Henry Bernstein and Bonnie Campbell (Editors). *Contradictions of Accumulation in Africa: Studies in Economy and States* 1985.
5. Michael Howard, cited by Bernard Magubane, "South Africa: 'A Luta Continua' ", Paper presented at the Sixth AAPS Bi-Annual Conference, 1985, p.5.
6. Progress Publishers, Moscow.
7. Ibbo Mandaza, "Conflict in Southern Africa", Paper prepared for the United Nations University Project on *Peace, Development and Regional Security in Africa*, 1983, p.9.
8. Noam Chomsky, "Intervention in Vietnam and Central America", *Monthly Review*, 37, 4, p. 3.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.* p. 4-5.
11. Africa Report, Vol. 25, No. 4, July-August 1980, p.4. The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy in 1978 issued a publication entitled *Grand Strategy for the 1980s*. One of the articles, written by General Maxwell D. Taylor, formerly US Chief of Staff and President of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, spoke directly of the "growing appreciation" on the part of the United States "of the future economic importance of the resources of the region" (i.e. Africa). This, of course, had nothing to do with the concern for the interests of African peoples. See pp 3-17.
12. *Ibid.* p. 12.
13. *Ibid.* p. 13.
14. See, for example, such alarmist analyses as that by Colonel Robert F. Collins (US Army), "Soviet Influence in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Military Review*, Vol. LXV, No. 4, April 1985.
15. Sean Gervasi, "The Reagan Doctrine and Southern Africa", Notes for a Paper to The Colloquium on *Security and Development in Southern Africa*, Paris, 1986.
16. *Time Magazine*, 4 August, 1985 p.9
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Jeune Afrique*, No. 1138, 27 October 1982, p. 33.
23. Sean Gervasi, *op. cit.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *The Guardian*, February 16, 1986.
26. William G. Martin and Immanuel Wallerstein, "Southern Africa in the World Economy, 1870-2000: Strategic Problems in World Historical Perspective", Paper for the International Colloquium on *Security and Development in Southern Africa*, Paris, 24-25 February, 1986.
27. *Ibid.*
28. See, for example, L.A. Jinadu, *Human Rights and US African Policy Under President Carter*, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Monograph Series No. 5, 1980.
29. Ibbo Mandaza, "Conflict in Southern Africa", *op. cit.*

30. *Official Text of the International Communication Agency, Tuesday, June 9th, 1981.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. Ibbo Mandaza, "Conflict in Southern Africa", *op. cit.* p. 14.
34. See, for example, "Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa", Report of United Nations Seminar, London, 1979.
35. M.M. Ncube, "The US South Africa and Destabilization in Southern Africa", *Journal of African Marxists*, 6 October 1984, p. 32.
36. Mahomed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen, Spokesman Books, Nottingham, 1975.
37. *Ibid.* p. 24-25
38. *Ibid.* p. 84
39. *Ibid.* p. 26
40. *Monthly Review*, 23, 9.
41. *Ibid.* p. 15
42. See, for example, Mohammed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen, *op. cit.*; Ibbo Mandaza, Imperialism, "the 'Frontline' States and the Zimbabwe Problem," UTAFITI (Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Dar es Salaam), 5, 1 (1980), p.p. 129-163; Rod Bush, "Editor's Introduction: The United States and South Africa in a period of World Crisis", *Contemporary Marxism*, 6, 1983, p.p. 1-13.
43. *Imperialism, the Social Sciences and the National Question*, Tanzania Publishing House: on behalf of the African Association of Political Science (AAPS), Dar es Salaam, 1977, p. 60.
44. This is the wrong conclusion drawn by M.M. Ncube, "The US, South Africa and Destabilization in Southern Africa", *Journal of African Marxists*, 6 October 1984.
45. Cited in *The Herald*, Harare, 12 December 1984.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *The Herald*, Harare, 24 November 1984.
48. Thabo Mbeki, Member, National Executive, ANC, in a televised interview of the *Monthly Forum* of the AAPS Zimbabwe National Chapter, Harare, 7 November 1984.
49. See note 30.
50. See, for example, Ibbo Mandaza, "The Post-White Settler Colonial State in Zimbabwe", in Ibbo Mandaza (ed.), *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition*, *op. cit.*
51. See, for example, Thandika Mkandawire, "SADCC Cooperation: Problems and Prospects", Yash Tandon, "SADCC and the Preferential Trade Area (PTA): points of convergence and divergence", and Ibbo Mandaza, "Some Notes and Reflections on SADCC", in T.M. Shaw and Yash Tandon (editors): *Regional Development at the International Level*, AAPS/CPSA publication, London, 1985.
52. Ibbo Mandaza, "Some Notes and Reflections on SADCC", *op. cit.*
53. *Ibid.* p. 139.
54. *Africa Confidential*
55. *Ibid.* I was also present at this SADCC meeting.
56. Consultative Conference of SADCC, Harare, 30 January, 1986.
57. Helen Kitchin and Michael Clough, "The United States and South Africa: Realities and Red Herrings", *Significant Issues Series*. Vol. VI, No. 6, p. 3.
58. *Ibid.* p. 4.
59. *Ibid.* p. 5.
60. US's Special Report, 16/4/16/85.
61. *Ibid.*
62. David B. Ottaway and Patrick Tyler, "Agencies at Odds Over Savimbi's Chances", *The Guardian*, Feb. 16, 1986.