

# **Continuity and Change in U.S. Foreign Policy toward Southern Africa: Assessing the Clinton Administration**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper analyses the foreign policy of the Clinton (1993-2001) administration toward Southern Africa building on field interviews conducted with U.S. diplomats in Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The paper is divided into five sections, each of which highlights a specific trend in U.S. foreign policy toward Southern Africa: the centrality of trade in U.S. foreign policy; the 'regionalization' of foreign policy initiatives; bureaucratic dominance of the U.S. policymaking process; reassessments of direct U.S. involvement in African conflicts; and an uneven approach to democracy promotion. These trends are principally highlighted by drawing on the case studies of Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, although reference is also made to Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia. A final section offers general conclusions, including what one can expect from the newly inaugurated administration of President George W. Bush (2001-present).

*Keywords: U.S. foreign policy, Clinton administration, Southern Africa*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nelson Mandela's inauguration as president of South Africa on May 10, 1994 served as a crucial turning point in African history with important implications for the future of U.S. foreign policy toward Southern Africa. For decades American policymakers and their critics had viewed U.S. policy in Southern Africa through the prism of South Africa's inherently unjust apartheid system. Whereas members of the executive branch had a tendency to view South Africa's apartheid system as a necessary evil in America's global confrontation with the Soviet Union and its allies during the Cold War era, the U.S. Congress became the focal point of an anti-apartheid movement that demanded the imposition of comprehensive economic sanctions against the afrikaaner regime, a policy ultimately enacted into law in 1986 over the strenuous objections (and veto) of the Reagan administration. Mandela's election in 1994 -- five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the effective end of Cold War conflict in Africa -- signalled a sea-change in Southern African politics and international relations,

and raised expectations among Africanists both within the U.S. government and the wider African affairs community that Washington would pursue a more balanced, proactive set of policies no longer constrained by the racial and ideological blinders of anti-apartheid and anti-communism.<sup>1</sup>

The changes in policy expected by Africanists were seemingly captured in a speech that President William Jefferson Clinton gave in Gaborone, Botswana, on March 29, 1998, as part of his historic 11-day presidential visit to the African continent that also included stops in Ghana, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda. Clinton's (1998) speech described Botswana as an exemplary model of democracy and economic development led by a far-sighted and dynamic leadership, and suggested that democracy was making gains throughout the subregion, most notably in Namibia and South Africa. 'We have seen the promise of a new Africa whose roots are deep here in your soil, for you have been an inspiration to all who cherish freedom,' proclaimed Clinton before more than 5,000 people at the Botswana State House in remarks designed to highlight Botswana's special role as Africa's oldest democracy. 'Africa needs more Botswanas, and America is determined to support all those who would follow your lead.'

An important paradox embodied in Clinton's speech is that rhetoric praising Botswana's special role as a democratic model historically has led Botswanan policymakers to expect the further strengthening of U.S. - Botswanan bilateral relations, expectations which were further enhanced by the end of the Cold War and the decline of apartheid in South Africa. The Cold War's end particularly raised local expectations that the Clinton administration would make the promotion of democracy and human rights the cornerstones of a reinvigorated U.S. foreign policy toward the African continent, and in so doing recognize, build upon, and reward Botswana's special efforts in this realm, not to mention those of Namibia and South Africa, two other leading democracies within the Southern African region. To the chagrin of numerous Botswanan policymakers, however, a significant gap has existed between the rhetoric and the reality of the U.S. commitment to strong bilateral relations with Botswana. 'We realize, of course, that Botswana is not the country of greatest importance to America, and that during the Cold War Americans were preoccupied with communism,' explained one member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>2</sup> 'But the Cold War is now over, and democracy is supposedly one of your chief foreign policy goals, yet we are still not seeing the level of commitment to Botswana that would suggest that words are finally being matched by deeds.'<sup>3</sup> Another Botswanan diplomat was much more blunt: 'We are always the model, but we are always neglected.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the general literature on U.S. foreign policy toward Southern Africa, see Schraeder (1994). For an analysis treating the initial impact of the end of the Cold War, see Hull (1990).

<sup>2</sup> Confidential interview, Gaborone, Botswana, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Confidential interview, Gaborone, Botswana, 1996.

The critiques of U.S. foreign policy offered by Botswanan policymakers are echoed in varying degrees by their counterparts throughout Southern Africa, not to mention Africanists in the U.S. and the other northern industrialized democracies (Schraeder 1998a; Minter 2000). Part of the reason for these critiques is that the Clinton administration, like its Democratic Party predecessors (the Kennedy and Carter administrations) and liberal counterparts in other northern industrialized democracies (especially the Labor Party in Great Britain and the Socialist Party in France), was extremely critical of the Africa policies of its Republican predecessors and extremely vocal about the need for more enlightened U.S. relations with the African continent. Such foreign policy pronouncements not surprisingly led to raised foreign policy expectations among Africanists that, more often than not, remain unfulfilled (at least to the degree desired by proponents of change), ultimately fostering rising criticisms among groups previously presumed to be each administration's closest domestic allies. (Schraeder 1998b)

An equally (if not more) important reason for criticism was the Clinton administration's failure to craft a proactive set of policies that are both coherent and consistently applied -- a foreign policy failing typical of U.S. Africa policies regardless of whether one focuses on Democratic or Republican administrations. 'Policies instead remain highly reactive, particularly with respect to crises requiring humanitarian assistance,' explains Korwa Gombe Adar, a Kenyan specialist of U.S. foreign policy. (Adar 1998) In the case of Nigeria, for example, Adar argues that the Clinton administration missed an important opportunity when it failed to impose comprehensive economic sanctions against the authoritarian regime of Sani Abacha, despite the fact that such sanctions were imposed against other countries in Africa. Indeed, Adar (1998) rightfully concludes that 'perhaps the lives of [Ken] Saro-Wiwa and other democracy and human rights activists would have been spared if the [Clinton] administration had sent the right signal when the 1993 elections were annulled in Nigeria.'

The primary purpose of this article is to offer some retrospective thoughts on changes in the Clinton administration's (1993-2001) foreign policy toward Southern Africa -- an African region of special interest to the Scandinavian foreign policymaking establishment. The analysis builds upon a series of field interviews that were conducted during July 1996 with U.S. diplomats in Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. The article is divided into five sections, each of which highlights a specific trend in U.S. foreign policy toward Southern Africa: the centrality of trade in U.S. foreign policy; the 'regionalization' of foreign policy initiatives; bureaucratic dominance of the U.S. policymaking process; reassessments of direct U.S. involvement in African conflicts; and an uneven approach to democracy promotion. These trends are principally highlighted by drawing on the case studies of Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, although reference is also made to Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia. A final section offers general conclusions, including what one can expect from the newly inaugurated administration of President George W. Bush (2001-present).

## 1. CENTRALITY OF TRADE

The most notable development in Clinton administration foreign policy toward Southern Africa was the emergence and strengthening of trade and investment as the preferred tools of U.S. foreign economic policy. To its credit, the Clinton administration in 1996 unveiled the first formal, comprehensive trade policy for aggressively pursuing new markets throughout Africa (Department of Commerce 1996). This report included the formal launching of an interagency Africa Trade and Development Coordinating Group, which was jointly chaired by the National Economic Council (NEC) and the National Security Council (NSC). The centerpiece of this economic strategy was congressional legislation - - the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act -- designed to enhance U.S.-African trade. Although sharply criticized by African leaders, such as South African President Nelson Mandela, as well as influential members of the U.S. African affairs constituency, most notably the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), a compromise bill was passed by the both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate in 2000.

The formal announcement of the Clinton administration's trade policy was preceded by a series of highly publicized speeches rejecting Washington's past support for Europe's privileged economic role in its former colonies in favor of a more aggressive approach to promoting U.S. trade and investment. 'The African market is open to everyone,' explained former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen in a 1995 speech in Libreville, Gabon. 'We must accept free and fair competition, equality between all actors.' Toward this end, senior administration officials increasingly agreed that foreign policy should serve as the facilitator of U.S. private enterprise throughout the African continent. According to what was often referred to as the 'big emerging markets' strategy, regional economic leaders -- most notably South Africa in Southern Africa -- were to be courted by U.S. policymakers and private business.

An important outgrowth of the Clinton administration's aggressive trade policy was the intensification of economic competition between the U.S. and the other northern industrialized democracies in their search for economic influence and markets throughout Africa. This economic competition became especially pronounced in U.S.-French relations, most notably in the lucrative petroleum, telecommunications, and transport industries in francophone Africa. In the eyes of French policymakers, the penetration of American and other Western companies constituted 'at best an intrusion' and 'at worst an aggression' into France's perceived *domaine réservé* (privileged realm) throughout francophone Africa (Glaser and Smith 1994). All foreign observers agree, however, that Southern Africa constitutes the richest future African market. It is precisely for

this reason that France, the U.S., and the other great powers increasingly focused their economic sights on Southern Africa beginning in the 1990s.

An important aspect of the burgeoning U.S. trade policy in Southern Africa is the willingness of the U.S. ambassador to serve as an advocate for U.S. business. In the case of Botswana, former U.S. Ambassador Howard F. Jeter was recognized as a very effective advocate of the Clinton administration's trade priorities throughout the sub-region. According to Michael A. Weaver, Manager of Plant Operations for a pipe-making subsidiary of Owens-Corning that opened in Gaborone in 1994, Ambassador Jeter and the more aggressive policy of the Department of Commerce contributed in no small part to his company's decision to locate in Gaborone. 'In the past the U.S. government was not as willing to serve as an advocate for business, and as a result Americans were here [Botswana] in name only, at least as concerns trade and investment,' explained Weaver. 'This definitely has changed under the Clinton administration -- they most notably aided us by helping to keep the local playing field level from the often unfair economic practices of our competitors, and working with and facilitating our access to key government officials interested in what we could bring to Botswana.'<sup>5</sup>

For its part, the Clinton administration was equally effusive concerning the Owens-Corning decision to locate their pipe subsidiary in Botswana. As underscored by Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown when he visited Botswana in early 1996 as part of a five-country tour of Africa designed to promote U.S. trade and investment, the creation of the Owens-Corning plant in Gaborone constituted an example of 'true partnership' between an American company and the Botswana Development Corporation that would be financially lucrative for both countries -- most notably due to the fact that Owens-Corning received a Botswanan government contract worth approximately \$75 million to fabricate all the pipe necessary for the completion of the North-South Carrier Project. In addition to the obvious job creation for Botswana and the financial benefits that will accrue to a U.S. company, Brown was especially pleased to note the collateral impact on job creation in the U.S. 'I understand that the resin and the glass [for fabricating the pipes] come principally from the U.S.,' explained Brown. 'So here we have a situation where there has been investment in Botswana, creating jobs in Botswana, and raw materials coming from the United States creating jobs for Americans.'<sup>6</sup> Other examples of high-profile deals brokered by the Clinton administration included the decision of Barden International (a U.S. firm headquartered in Detroit, Michigan) to open in March 1998 a multi-million dollar, right-hand drive GM vehicle conversion plant in Windhoek, Namibia (the largest U.S. investment in Namibia during the decade of the 1990s); the expansion of an existing, U.S.-firm operated oil field (Block Zero) in the Cabinda province of Angola (expected to yield billions in revenue);

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<sup>5</sup> Interview, July 19, 1996, Gaborone, Botswana.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in 'Secretary Brown's Visit to Owens Corning, Botswana - Saturday 24/02/96 - 08H00 AM.' Document provided by the U.S. Embassy, Gaborone, Botswana.

and the signing of a wide array of bilateral investment treaties, such as the December 1998 treaty signed with Mozambique (U.S. State Department 1999).

A more aggressive business policy was especially highlighted by the Clinton administration's willingness to participate in a variety of high-profile regional events, such as the African/African-American Summit. Originally conceived by the Reverend Leon Sullivan as a vehicle for strengthening cultural ties between African-Americans and their African counterparts, the African/African-American gathering has evolved into a burgeoning forum for encouraging trade and investment between the U.S. and Africa. The inaugural summit was held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, in 1991, followed by summits in Libreville, Gabon (1993), Dakar, Senegal (1995), Harare, Zimbabwe (1997), and Accra, Ghana (1999). The Harare meeting (which also included several coordinated events in Johannesburg, South Africa) was attended by more than 3,000 participants, including African heads of state from Botswana, Ethiopia, Senegal, Swaziland, and Uganda, as well as notable African-American politicians, such as two-time presidential candidate Reverend Jesse Jackson, David Dinkins, Marion Barry, and Coretta Scott King. The official U.S. government delegation was led by Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater, and was joined by Jack Kemp. The trade and investment exhibition of the summit was dedicated to the memory of Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, who took initiative in building U.S.-African relations before he died in a plane crash in Bosnia in 1995.

The renewal of U.S. trade ties with South Africa -- perceived in Washington as the most advanced and the most lucrative economy on the African continent - - served as the focal point of the Clinton administration's business initiatives in the Southern African region. As discussed below, an important regional dimension of U.S. foreign policy was to ensure that South Africa's economy is closely 'knitted' to those of the other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, thereby enhancing the rise of a regional market that would be more attractive to U.S. investors and capable of absorbing greater levels of U.S. exports.<sup>7</sup> 'The economic logic behind such an approach, especially if we focus on the case of Botswana, is obvious,' explained Steven M. Lauterbach, Public Affairs Officer (PAO) at the U.S. Embassy in Gaborone. 'A market of only 1.4 million people cannot expect by itself to be a target of U.S. trade and investment -- the Botswanans and other members of SADC must realize that their economic futures are tied to that of South Africa, and that U.S. businesses will be more likely to invest in a regional market offering more lucrative profits for U.S. businesses.'<sup>8</sup> The Owens-Corning project is a perfect case in point. Although based in Gaborone, this subsidiary is taking advantage of economies of scale throughout the SADC region. As a result, contracts were

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Peter M. Olson. Democracy Officer, Regional Center for Southern Africa, U.S. AID, U.S. Embassy, Gaborone, Botswana, July 19, 1996. See also Tilton and Cason (1996).

<sup>8</sup> Interview, July 18, 1996, Gaborone, Botswana. For a discussion of opportunities and constraints in the post-apartheid era, see Chipasula and Chilivumbo (1993).

signed to provide pipeline to the Hartley Platinum Mine and the Pungwe Water Scheme in Zimbabwe, and to the Namibian Department of Water Affairs for a variety of national projects.

An analysis of trade statistics clearly demonstrates why South Africa plays such an important role in U.S. economic calculations concerning Southern Africa. Since the easing in 1991 of economic sanctions associated with the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, U.S. exports to South Africa have increased dramatically, including a 25 percent increase in 1995, and are expected to continue at such a pace throughout the first decade of the new millennium (Department of Commerce 1996). Indeed, the 1995 figure for U.S. exports to South Africa -- \$2.75 billion -- represented 51 percent of all U.S. exports (\$5.4 billion) to the African continent. The only other countries in Southern Africa to even approach such trade levels were Angola and Zimbabwe, which absorbed \$159 million (2.9 percent) and \$122 million (2.3 percent), respectively, of U.S. exports during the same period. In sharp contrast, Botswana absorbed approximately one-half of 1 percent (\$29.5 million) of U.S. exports to the region, with only Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi maintaining smaller bilateral trade relationships with the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. REGIONALIZATION OF FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES

The regionalization of foreign policy initiatives serves as an important component of U.S. foreign policy toward Southern Africa. In an attempt to do 'more with less,' the Clinton administration moved the now defunct Southern Africa Regional Program (SAREP) from its original headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe, to Gaborone, Botswana, and renamed it the Initiative for Southern Africa (ISA). SAREP was originally conceived as a vehicle for supporting cross-national development projects of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), a regional organization designed to enhance cooperation among the Front-Line States (FLS) and reduce their economic dependence on the apartheid regime of South Africa. With the end of apartheid, the ISA was presented as the cornerstone of U.S. support for SADC, the regional successor to SADCC which includes South Africa in its membership and is headquartered in Gaborone. According to Brian Atwood, former Director of USAID, the ISA reflects the U.S. vision of 'the promise and potential of the Southern Africa region upon the transition to democracy in South Africa, the end of the conflicts in Mozambique and Angola, and the movement toward more open economies and political systems throughout the region.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Figures provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

<sup>10</sup> Statement provided by the U.S. Embassy, Gaborone, Botswana.

The primary logic behind the creation of the ISA as the coordinator of U.S. activities in the SADC region was to avoid the obvious duplication of activities (and costs) that would accompany the funding of major U.S. initiatives in each of these countries, a factor which is especially relevant now that the U.S. has terminated bilateral development aid programs in Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. The ISA's specific connection to SADC was also consistent with an emerging U.S. tendency to rely upon regional African organizations to take the lead in a variety of economic, political, and even military sectors, as witnessed by the Clinton administration's support for SADC to take the lead in military intervention in Lesotho after the breakdown of civil order after the elections of 1998. Unfortunately, the ISA and its predecessor, SAREP, remain confronted by the same budgetary logic leading to the decreased levels of U.S. bilateral aid to individual Southern African countries. Whereas funding for what in essence constitutes one ongoing organization increased from roughly \$50 million in 1994 to a peak of \$85.3 million in 1995, funding had declined to \$32.4 million in 1996 with a request for only \$24.8 million in 2000.<sup>11</sup>

A noteworthy aspect of the ISA's short history to date was the decision to move the headquarters of what was originally known as SAREP from Harare to Gaborone. Members of the Zimbabwean Ministry of Foreign Affairs were predictably unhappy with this decision, and their Botswanan counterparts not surprisingly expressed praise.<sup>12</sup> The official reason for ISA's relocation was that Gaborone is the headquarters for SADC, and therefore should be the site of the principal U.S. liaison office for regional cooperation. A more important, unspoken reason for the shift, however, was the desire to counter the perception of the Botswanan policymaking elite of declining U.S. interest relative to other countries within the region, especially in light of declining aid levels, the closure of the bilateral U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) office, and the termination of all bilateral development aid to Botswana. Although no U.S. official admitted the need to 'compensate' Botswana for past 'losses,' Wendy A. Stickel, Deputy Director of USAID's Regional Center for Southern Africa which administers the ISA, nonetheless explained the decision to locate the ISA in Gaborone as part of a desire to 'send a strong signal' to the Botswanan policymaking establishment that they have played an 'exemplary role' within the region.<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting to note that the decision to move the ISA -- which had significant implications for U.S. relations with Botswana and Zimbabwe -- not surprisingly was made by USAID Director Atwood after a period of internal bureaucratic debate. Whereas proponents of maintaining the center in Harare underscored the need to reward Zimbabwe's historic contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle, they simply did not carry the same bureaucratic clout as proponents of Botswana who could point to that country's historic commitment

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<sup>11</sup> Statistics provided by USAID, Washington, DC.

<sup>12</sup> Confidential interviews, Gaborone, Botswana; and Harare, Zimbabwe, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Interview, July 17, 1996, Gaborone, Botswana.



to multiparty democracy and free-market enterprise -- especially in the emerging post-Cold War/post-apartheid environment. As aptly explained by Peter Benedict, Director of USAID in Harare, the transition to democracy in South Africa in 1994 meant that Zimbabwe's perceived shortcomings, most notably the maintenance of an increasingly corrupt and authoritarian single-party regime, could no longer be downplayed in bureaucratic debates over allocating scarce resources.<sup>14</sup> This perception was strengthened throughout the State Department and the other bureaucracies of the executive branch at the beginning of 2000 as a result of the Mugabe regime's manipulation of racial (white-black) tensions to deflect rising internal dissension with an increasingly authoritarian and economically bankrupt regime.

### 3. BUREAUCRATIC DOMINANCE OF THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS

A further trend of the post-Cold War era is the rising importance of U.S. bureaucracies in the formulation and implementation of policy. The White House and Congress historically have been uninterested in the day-to-day management of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa relative to other regions of perceived greater concern, most notably Europe, the former Soviet Union and its successor states, and the Middle East. As a result, their involvement in policymaking related to Africa has been sporadic, most notably during times of crisis and extended humanitarian crisis.<sup>15</sup> In order to best understand continuity and change in U.S. foreign policy toward Southern Africa, one must therefore focus on the policies and interactions of the African affairs bureaus of the traditional national security-oriented bureaucracies, such as the State Department, the Defense Department, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as well as of their counterparts within the economic and cultural realms, most notably the Department of Commerce.

One important result of what can be referred to as bureaucratic dominance of the policymaking process is the tendency toward promotion of the status quo in favor of existing policies, even after a new administration takes office. The impact of this bureaucratic reality was clearly demonstrated by the Clinton administration's early policy toward Angola. During the presidential campaign of 1992, candidate Clinton called for 'strong' U.S. support for whoever emerged victorious in Angolan presidential elections to be held in September 1992. Yet when Savimbi rejected his initial defeat in these elections (which international observers regarded as 'generally free and fair') and returned the country to civil war, the newly elected Clinton administration delayed recognizing the MPLA

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<sup>14</sup> Interview, July 9, 1996, Harare, Zimbabwe.

<sup>15</sup> See Schraeder (1994). For a recent analysis of this trend as applied to U.S. foreign policy toward Somalia, see Schraeder (1998c).

(Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) government until May 19, 1994. The primary reason for the delay was the continuation of a failed pro-Savimbi policy advanced by one portion of the State Department that stood in sharp contrast to a growing recognition in other quarters of Savimbi's unwillingness to accept anything short of total victory -- if not in the electoral arena, then on the military battlefield. According to the latter interpretation, the proper policy response, which would have been warmly accepted by the Africanist community in both the U.S. and abroad, should have been 'prompt recognition' of the Angolan government immediately following the elections to leave no doubt in Savimbi's mind that the U.S. 'fully supported the democratic process.' (Human Rights Watch 1994)

During the Clinton administration's second term in office, however, the constellation of bureaucratic forces gradually evolved in favor of more forcefully supporting the MPLA regime and decreasing historically close ties with Savimbi's guerrilla movement -- most notably after the breakdown of the Lusaka Protocol peace agreement and the reemergence of full-scale warfare between Savimbi's guerrilla forces and the MPLA regime. The cornerstones of this new bureaucratic constellation of forces were twofold. (Prendergast 1999) First, the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs under the leadership of Susan Rice captured the sentiment of the national security bureaucracies when it proclaimed profound American disbelief at Savimbi's refusal to abide by the painstakingly negotiated Lusaka Protocol peace agreement. Any remaining bureaucratic clout that Savimbi enjoyed with his traditional bureaucratic patrons -- the Pentagon and especially the CIA -- was effectively terminated. Second, and perhaps of even greater importance, the Commerce Department has served as the focal point of an increasingly trade/investment oriented strategy which recognizes the importance of the Angolan oil industry to U.S. national security interests. New oil discoveries in Angola have ensured a dramatic increase in oil production to nearly 2.5 million barrels of oil per day by 2015 (more than Kuwait's current production). (Prendergast 1999: 3) It is estimated that this expansion will require between \$40-60 billion in private investments, and that the companies getting in the ground floor will realize outstanding profit margins. Most important, the U.S. currently imports nearly 7 percent of its daily oil needs from Angola -- a figure that is expected to double by 2004. (Prendergast 1999: 3) In short, a bureaucratically inspired consensus around Angola's economic importance ensured the emergence of a new policy that was embraced by the Clinton White House.

The Defense Department's approach to security in Southern Africa further highlights the importance of bureaucracies in the day-to-day fashioning of policy. From the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to the Office of International Security Affairs (the de facto State Department of the Pentagon), the military establishment agrees that Southern Africa is marginal at best to U.S. security concerns in the post-Cold War era, and therefore military commitments should be minimal at best in an era of declining military resources. As a result, U.S. bilateral military aid to the Southern African region represented a paltry 1

percent of all U.S. bilateral aid provided to the region from 1965 to 1996, and reached its peak during the 1985-89 period when the combined yearly average for all countries was \$4.6 million. Although a focus on bilateral (i.e., government-to-government) military aid obviously masks significant Defense Department involvement in the U.S.-funded paramilitary war in Angola during the 1970s and the 1980s, as well as earlier support for Portuguese counterinsurgency campaigns in their colonies prior to 1974, it nonetheless captures the bureaucratic mindset of Defense Department officials that extensive, long-term U.S. military commitments in Southern Africa should be avoided.<sup>16</sup>

However, one area of military cooperation consistently supported by the Defense Department in Southern Africa and all other regions of the African continent is the training of local military officers in the U.S. under the auspices of the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program.<sup>17</sup> The following amounts were budgeted in 2000 for the Southern African region: Angola (\$100,000); Botswana (\$450,000); Lesotho (\$75,000); Malawi (\$335,000); Mozambique (\$180,000); Namibia (\$175,000); South Africa (\$800,000); Swaziland (\$75,000); Zambia (\$150,000), and Zimbabwe (\$300,000). Whereas at first glance these amounts appear to be relatively insignificant, the cumulative impact of this program over time in some cases has been nothing less than extraordinary. In the case of Botswana, for example, U.S. Embassy personnel are extremely proud of the fact that 85 percent of the Botswanan officer corps has received military training in the U.S., and has returned to Botswana presumably more inclined to be sympathetic to U.S. interests within the Southern African region.<sup>18</sup>

The IMET program, which constituted the centerpiece of extremely small U.S. military aid programs throughout Southern Africa during the 1980s and the 1990s, is indicative of an approach that emphasizes the cultivation of personal ties between the officers of the host country and their American counterparts. 'In a continent that for three decades was plagued by military coups d'état and the establishment of military based regimes, as well as the ongoing influential role of militaries in transitions to democracy in the post-Cold War era,' explained Lieutenant Colonel James Oliver Smaugh, Chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy in Gaborone, 'it seems only logical that we seek to ensure close ties with the military leaders of tomorrow.'<sup>19</sup> Although Smaugh emphasizes that the most important goal of the IMET program is to create an officer corps respectful of civilian control over the military, and therefore capable of strengthening the democratization process in Southern Africa, it is clear that the promotion of a cohort of pro-U.S. military officers presumably sensitive to U.S. foreign policy interests constitutes the true essence

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Scott (1996).

<sup>17</sup> Interviews, July 17, 1996, Gaborone, Botswana; and July 11, 1996, Harare, Zimbabwe.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Smaugh, July 17, 1996, Gaborone, Botswana.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

of U.S. military activities within the region. Apart from the IMET program, the Defense Department has adopted a relatively low-key approach to military involvement in Southern Africa that nonetheless includes a wide array of other activities, including the transfer of excess military stocks and weapons programs to select Southern African countries, and the funding of Joint Combined Training Exercises (JCET), such as the biannual Blue Crane military exercises carried out in conjunction with SADC members.

#### 4. UNEVEN APPROACH TO DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Entering office at a period in which democratization movements were multiplying throughout the African continent, the Clinton administration also was expected by Africanists to make democratization one of the critical elements of its Africa policies. A variety of observers warmly noted that 'democracy' was one of the 'common threads' linking Clinton's campaign speeches during the presidential elections, and strongly greeted his statement in a Milwaukee, Wisconsin campaign stop that 'we should encourage and nurture the stirring for democratic reform that is surfacing all across Africa from the birth of an independent Namibia to the pressure for democratic reforms in Kenya.'<sup>20</sup> The Clinton administration even went as far to codify U.S. support for the democratization process into an official doctrine -- the 'policy of enlargement' -- intended to replace the outmoded strategy of containment (Lake 1993). Toward this end, the Clinton administration clearly made democratization an important aspect of policy pronouncements concerning Africa, and several cases, such as U.S. support for South Africa's transition to a post-apartheid democratic system, indicate that this rhetoric was transformed into viable policies.

As demonstrated by Clinton administration policy toward Congo-Kinshasa, however, democratization rhetoric did not always conform with actual policies. The cornerstone of administration policy was a permutation of the 'Mobutu or chaos' thesis that dominated State Department, Pentagon, and CIA thinking from the 1960s through the 1980s. (Schatzberg 1991) This bureaucratically inspired consensus embodied the firm belief that 'chaos' -- meaning territorial disintegration, regional instability, and ultimately, communist expansion into the heart of Africa -- was the only alternative to Mobutu's continued hold over power. The Mobutu or chaos thesis suggested the necessity for a strong (but not necessarily democratic) leader if the region is to avoid socio-economic and political-military chaos. 'Regardless of the fact that we are no longer faced with a communist threat,' explained a member of the State Department's Africa Bureau, 'the destabilization of Zaire [Congo-Kinshasa] -- which borders nine other African countries -- could have a tremendously negative impact on

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Cason and Martin, 'Clinton and Africa,' 1993, p. 3.

regional stability.’<sup>21</sup> With the experiences of Somalia and Rwanda still etched in their minds, the Africa specialists of the national security bureaucracies successfully argued for the need to tread softly as, according to another member of the State Department's Africa Bureau, the situation in Congo-Kinshasa ‘could easily turn into a Somalia and a Rwanda rolled into one, although this time in one of Africa's largest and most populous nations.’<sup>22</sup>

It was particularly striking during interviews to hear members of the State Department's Africa Bureau argue that, like his predecessor at the beginning of the 1990s, Kabila was both ‘part of the problem and part of the solution’ to resolving the crisis in the Great Lakes region. Once again returning to current manifestations of the ‘Mobutu or chaos’ thesis, there was a tendency for U.S. diplomatic personnel to argue against pushing Kabila too hard or too fast for fear that U.S. efforts would intensify an already chaotic political-military situation. Indeed, as is the case with U.S. support for other members of the ‘new bloc’ of African leaders, initial U.S. support for the Kabila regime placed a heavy premium on his promise to create a ‘responsive and accountable’ (but not necessarily democratic) government capable of restoring order and ensuring the territorial integrity of the nation. In this regard, U.S. policy toward Congo-Kinshasa continues to emphasize (in the following order): stability, territorial integrity, and the cessation of transborder threats, even if the successful achievement of all three comes at the short-term expense of democracy.

The potential contradictions in the Clinton administration's support for democratization were nicely demonstrated by a comparison of Clinton's first (1998) presidential trip to Africa with that of an earlier trip by Secretary of State Albright in December 1997. Clinton's itinerary was purposely whittled down to emphasize his administration's commitment to democratization throughout the African continent. Indeed, four of the six countries visited -- Botswana, Ghana, Senegal, and South Africa -- remain among the leading democracies on the African continent. If one focuses on the countries visited by Albright, however, a very different and undemocratic picture emerges of U.S. priorities in Africa. Six of the seven countries -- Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Congo-Kinshasa, Angola, and Zimbabwe -- remain ruled by leaders who seized power by the barrel of the gun rather than by democratic elections. According to critics, the message sent by the Albright visit was that the Clinton administration's true priority was the cultivation of strategically located, pro-U.S. regimes capable of maintaining stability where civil wars and ethnic conflicts once raged.

The often contradictory nature of the Clinton administration's support for democratization in Africa was clearly demonstrated by the State Department's budget request to the U.S. Congress for the funding of all U.S. foreign operations (i.e., diplomacy) in 2000. At the beginning of each budget request for individual countries, a priority is typically placed on one of three major sets of objectives: promotion and strengthening of democracy; promotion of U.S. trade

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Schraeder (1994: 107).

<sup>22</sup> Personal interview.

and investment; and humanitarian concerns. In the case of Mozambique, the budget request underscored the overriding importance of humanitarian concerns over democracy promotion, emphasizing the necessity of first and foremost responding to natural disasters -- an acceptable priority for most Africanists. In the case of Botswana, an emphasis was placed on strengthening democratic practices in that historically democratic country. However, in the case of Angola, a country still beset by internal civil war, an emphasis was first and foremost placed on promoting U.S. trade and investment, followed by the strengthening of democracy. The inherent potential problem with this latter case, similar to the nature of U.S. policy during the Cold War era, is that when the strategic objective of maintaining access to Angolan oil clashes with the normative goal of democracy promotion, oil access will presumably win out over democracy. In short, proponents of a clear-cut policy in favor of democracy promotion decried the Clinton administration's selective application of this standard, especially in countries deemed of overriding economic importance to the United States.

## CONCLUSION: TOWARD THE FUTURE

Three concluding marks capture the essence of evolving U.S. foreign policy toward Southern Africa. First, The Clinton administration's presidential visit to the African continent in 1998 -- two years into his second term in office -- clearly heralded rising U.S. interests in Africa, as well as setting a standard by which all future administrations will be judged. In this regard, as was the case with his predecessor, President Bush is highly unlikely to make a presidential visit Africa prior to the presidential elections of 2004. Africa simply is not at the top of the foreign policy hierarchy of a new administration that in any case will focus principally on domestic affairs in preparation for the 2004 elections. Second, it is important to note that rising U.S. interests in Africa -- at least as outlined and pursued by the Clinton administration -- remain principally economic in nature, leading to our second theme and perhaps the greatest change in U.S. foreign policy toward Africa during the second half of the twentieth century: the growing centrality of U.S. trade and investment in shaping the contours of U.S. Africa policies. Although U.S. policy toward some countries (e.g., the Sudan) continues to exhibit a Cold War mindset (i.e., containment of the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism), economics increasingly are at the forefront of the U.S. diplomatic agenda in all regions of the world, including Southern Africa. This economically based agenda, at least in the case of Africa, has been firmly embraced by the new Bush administration, which has underscored a desire to implement and strengthen the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. It is precisely for this reason that U.S. political-military strategic thinking increasingly has emphasized the necessity of African countries to take the lead in resolving conflict on the African continent. This mindset was

firmly imbedded in Clinton administration thinking after what is still referred to as the U.S. 'debacle' in Somalia in 1993 (when 18 soldiers were killed and dozens wounded as part of 'Operation Restore Hope'), and has been even more firmly embraced by a new administration whose senior policymakers (most notably Secretary of State Colin Powell) have a tendency to view the world in a geopolitical fashion. The Bush administration will be willing to aid in such endeavors (witness support for ACRI), but typically will look to either regional organizations (e.g., SADC in Southern Africa) or regional hegemony (e.g., South Africa) to take the lead in their respective regions. In short, U.S. foreign policy toward Southern Africa will witness a high degree of continuity at the beginning of the new millennium despite the emergence of a new Republican administration under the leadership of President Bush.

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