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*Realpolitik and African Nationalism:
Labour Britain and Angola in the 1960s**

Abstract: *Salazar's dictatorship was the opposite of western democracy principles, but neither London nor Washington could forget the importance of Portugal as a NATO allied country. Moreover, white regimes in Southern Africa granted the stability necessary to pursue Anglo-Saxon interests. According to both Atlantic capitals, white settlers did not have any intention to give up and African nationalists did not have the military and economic strength to defeat them. When Salazar was succeeded by Caetano, Downing Street thought he would bring modernisation, by accepting foreign companies to develop the economy, especially in Angola where oil and diamonds were being exported, and also by at least accepting the principle of self-determination. However, emancipation and equality of races was something on which African nationalists and black independent States could not tolerate any compromise. Once the process of political independence had been started, the following step was the achievement of economic sovereignty on a basis that old times diplomacy and cold war estimates were no longer able to understand.*

Keywords: Portugal; Southern Africa; Angola; Decolonisation; Self-determination; African nationalism; British realism; American Tar Baby option; Cold War.

Introduction

«In the twentieth century [...] the most striking of all the impressions I have formed [...] is of the strength of this African national consciousness».¹ Through the so-called “Wind of Change Speech” before the South African Parliament on February 3, 1960, the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, marked a watershed moment for black nationalism in Africa. In a few words, Macmillan acknowledged that black people were claiming the sacred right to rule themselves. It was the first public statement of Britain's acknowledgement of majority rules questions in Africa. The address was received in quite different ways across the continent. Black nationalists in Southern Africa considered Britain's stand a promising call to arms, whilst other African Commonwealth countries started achieving independence. The first President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, claimed the importance of African unity to develop a continent endowed with so much wealth. Only a strong political union could bring about full and effective development of Africa's natural resources: «[...] Africans have, indeed, begun to think continentally.

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¹ *Harold Macmillan's "Wind of Change" Speech*, Made to the South Africa Parliament on February 3, 1960, in <http://africanhistory.about.com>.

[...] To suggest that the time is not yet ripe for considering a political union of Africa is to evade the facts and ignore realities [...]. The emergence of such a mighty stabilising force in this strife-worn world should be regarded [...] as a practical proposition, which the peoples of Africa can, and should, translate into reality».²

On the other hand, the descendants of white settlers in Southern Africa did not share the same point of view. As an example of that, suffice it to quote the South African Prime Minister, Henrik Frensch Verwoerd, who responded to Macmillan that doing justice meant to be just not only to black Africans, but also to the white man of Africa. He declared himself proud that the white people had «[...] brought civilisation here», and had «[...] made the present developments of black nationalists possible. By bringing them education, by showing them this way of life, by bringing in industrial development, by bringing in the ideals which western civilisation has developed itself».³

Another negative response to Macmillan's initiative came from Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, the dictator of Portugal. According to the Prime Minister of the Latin country, African elites did not exist in sufficient number and at all levels to justify the administration of government, as well as private enterprises. Therefore, he was persuaded that the new States in the black continent would run the risk of finding themselves in a situation of subjugation even worse. Such pace towards self-determination, he carried on in a statement of 1963, was based on two wrong premises, that is anti-white racism and the alleged unity of the peoples of the continent. That was the way to subordinate black people to the Arabs, while rejecting all that white men had brought. For these reasons, the Portuguese tyrant thought that the development of those territories would only be possible on a multiracial ground, with responsibilities in any field to the most qualified, regardless of their colour.⁴ Portuguese colonialists affirmed that it was possible to apply the principle of nationalism to territories where not even the embryo of a nationality had ever existed. Such a statement was based on the theory according to which no racial distinction was implemented in Portuguese overseas provinces and in no part of such lands

² K. NKURUMAH, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology, 1961*, in www.marxists.org.

³ *Hendrik Verwoerd's Response to the 'Winds of Change' Speech*, South Africa Parliament February 3, 1960, in <http://africanhistory.about.com>.

⁴ See A. DE OLIVEIRA SALAZAR, *The Civilized Man's Burden*, extracted from *The Road for the Future*, 1963, in R.H. CHILCOTE, *Emerging Nationalism in Portuguese Africa: Documents*, Stanford, CA, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1972, pp. 2-4.

there was anything but Portuguese nationalism. Lusitanian communities in Africa, it was stated, mingled whites and blacks with the same fervour and pride. In light of this, the white man in Lusitanian African colonies had to be obedient to the word of the Commandment and undertake the responsibility not to abandon the populations come into contact with civilisation. The Portuguese dictatorship did not want quit its possessions overseas, claiming to be representatives of the material and moral values of Western and Christian Catholic civilisation. Finally, we had better not forget what Salazar's supporters proudly said on their role against the communist threat in the Third World. In fact, the Portuguese Government was always ready to remind the Atlantic Powers that the necessities of the defence on Europe were not compatible with the African policies of the Soviet bloc.⁵ As a matter of fact, there was no chance for African nationalist claims to be hosted in the Latin capital, for even reformist colonialists shared the idea that Africa had gained when the Europeans implanted there the concepts of State and nation. As regarded in particular the area South of the Sahara, the Portuguese formula of assimilation was considered as the most beneficial for the black population. In consequence of that, the Portuguese were there to permanently stay, and the Africans who had chosen a path of detachment from the mother-country were by then heading either towards a kind of neo-colonial servitude, or a return to primitive conditions.⁶

Words like these reminded speeches addressed in South Africa, whose government had issued apartheid laws in 1948 as a pretext to implement the progress of each race keeping them apart from each other, thus protecting civilization and Christianity from what was regarded as barbarism and heathenism. Rather than separateness, Portuguese colonialism was based on the concept of assimilation, which in the XX century had acquired new roots in the so-called Lusotropicalism, a sociological theory published by the Brazilian scholar Gilberto Freyre. According to him, a common culture and social order among people of different ethnic groups and culture had been spread in tropical areas due to Lusitanian experience and experimentation. In light of this, Freyre wrote that tropical regions were becoming adapted to European life styles, not only through technology, but also and especially through political art. This was supposed to imply

⁵ Cfr. A.J. DE CASTRO FERNANDES, *Unity and the Nation*, extracted from *The Presence of Portugal in Africa, 1961*, *ibid.*, pp. 5-10.

⁶ See A. MOREIRA, *A Policy of Integration, 1961*, *ibid.*, pp. 12-18.

that foreign values were brought into harmony with native culture and habits, thus revitalising them.⁷ In a few words, the Brazilian sociologist viewed Lusotropicalism as a sort of capacity for miscegenation that the Portuguese were supposed to have, with a particular composition of cultural contributions from the native indigenous populations, the black slaves, and the Portuguese. One of the reasons was probably the fact that the Portuguese were already the product of a similar process of cultural and racial miscegenation. Freyre's ideas fitted nicely with the regime's strategy to present the Portuguese empire as a multiracial and multi-continental nation. He considered also that Lusotropical culture was a form of resistance against both the Soviet communist influence, and also the process of Americanisation. As an outcome, this theory was taught in Portugal at the social and political science institutes, feeding the popular perception of the exceptional character of Portuguese colonialism and the absence of racism in that.⁸

Actually, colonies like Angola and Mozambique, or "Overseas Provinces", as they had been renamed in 1951, were clearly seen as African and a different "constitution" was in force until 1961, when the "*Estatuto do Indigenato*" was abolished. With an economy based on forced labour, people had been divided into three legal categories: citizens, i.e. the Portuguese; indigenous or natives, also referred to as uncivilised, or unassimilated; and "assimilated". Officially it was possible for any African or mulatto to be classified as such. However, they had to undergo a probation period and exams in order to prove that they were Christian, dressed in European fashion, were monogamous, and spoke, read, and wrote fluent Portuguese. Moreover, they had to earn wages from a trade, maintain a standard of living similar to European ones and have no police record. They never amounted to more than one per cent and the main reason for that was due to the extremely small number of Africans having access to institutions able to impart Portuguese civilisation in a colony where still in 1950 ninety-seven per cent of children over the age of 15 were classified as illiterate. Apart from that, although the system was not legally based on race, its implementation was, as any mulatto who did

⁷ See G. FREYRE, *Integration and Lusotropicalology*, extracted from *Portuguese Integration in the Tropics, 1961*, *ibid.*, pp. 19-22.

⁸ See M. VALE DE ALMEIDA, *Portugal's Colonial Complex: From Colonial Lusotropicalism to Postcolonial Lusophony*, Queen's Postcolonial Research Forum Queen's University, Belfast, April 28, 2008, in <http://miguelvaledalmeida.net>.

not live in the bush and all whites were automatically classified as civilised, thus deducing their cultural level from their complexion, while Africans who had a high level of culture and lived in a European style were denied such a status if they only showed a few hints of their original ethnic identity. In brief, assimilation meant the complete annihilation of African culture and practices. Finally, assimilated people were only recruited in the lowest ranks of the public administration.⁹

On the other hand, if we have a look at African nationalists' documents we easily realise how harsh the legacy of European domination was. As concerned in particular Angola, two principles were first contested. The former said that no black person could own land, and that was why all the good land had gradually passed into the hands of white farmers; the latter had established forced labour after the abolition of slavery in 1878. Following these principles, a third one had been set up in modern times, which denied any cultural expression of Angolan identity on grounds of the country being no longer a colony, but an overseas province of Portugal.¹⁰ Moreover, rejecting allegations identifying African independence struggles with a mere subjugation to international communism, the Angolan poet Mário de Andrade wrote that until then two factors had essentially prevented the development of a successful national liberation movement. In the first place, he said, the isolation imposed by the colonial system and by the tyrannical regime in Portugal herself had been able to keep Angola as one of the most obscure and silent zones in Africa. Secondly, secrecy had deprived political organisations from contact with the masses. At the same time, the Salazar regime had raised a propaganda system portraying its African colonies as an example of territorial integration and cultural assimilation, thus making them the only places in the continent where the fight for independence had never acquired a legal character.¹¹ The fracture between Portugal's colonialism and African struggle for independence was becoming wider and wider. As an evidence of this, suffice is to quote what Viriato da Cruz stated in 1960: «[...] The nature of Portuguese colonialism is such that it cannot permit the peaceful methods we

⁹ See G.J. BENDER, *Angola under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality*, London, Heinemann, 1978, pp. 149-153.

¹⁰ See *Le colonialisme et l'Afrique*, extracted from «A Voz da Nação Angolana», I, 1, September 15, 1960, in CHILCOTE, *Emerging Nationalism*, cit., pp. 142-144.

¹¹ See M. DE ANDRADE, *Angolan Nationalism*, extracted from «Tribuna Socialista (Paris)», 6-7, February-March 1963, *ibid.*, pp. 184-192.

should like to pursue in order to obtain our independence. The hatred our people have for Portuguese colonialism can explode at any moment».¹²

The economic backwardness caused by the existence of forced labour and the spoliation of all rights and liberties guaranteed by the Universal Declarations of the Rights of Man was also denounced by Holden Roberto, leader of the União das Populações de Angola (UPA): «[...] The African worker is obliged to abandon everything [...] for the compulsory accomplishment of work for a Portuguese master. For twelve months this unhappy deportee is some sort of beast of the field [...]. Upon his return [...], he all too often finds his home and family in a pitiable state and his lands confiscated on the pretext that they had been abandoned».¹³

1. *The Kennedy Legacy: The Beginning of the National Liberation War and the Atlantic Reactions*

Angolan nationalists were persuaded that the “wind of change” that had seized the whole continent had become a sort of new balance of power in the world. The only risk of altering this equilibrium could come from anachronistic opposition to the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples. In view of this national awakening, they believed it was by then appropriate to invite Portugal to recognise the right of self-determination of all people subject to Portuguese colonial administration.¹⁴ In a situation like this, it had become inevitable for all tension to burst into flames. The fuse was lit on January 3, 1961, in cotton plantations in the region of Baixa de Cassanje, Malanje, in Northern Angola. The peasants boycotted the cotton fields where they worked, demanding better working conditions and higher wages to Cotonang, a company owned by Portuguese, British and German investors. Challenging the authorities, the peasants burned their identification cards and attacked Portuguese traders. The following day, the Portuguese military responded by bombing villages in the area. The point was that cotton growing

¹² V. DA CRUZ, *Speech to Second Conference of Solidarity with Afro-Asian Peoples*, April 11-15, 1960, *ibid.*, pp. 202-204.

¹³ See H. ROBERTO, *Memorandum to the United Nations*, 1960, *ibid.*, pp. 66-70; H. ROBERTO, *Press Statement, 1961*, *ibid.*, pp. 70-73.

¹⁴ See M. DE ANDRADE-V. DA CRUZ, *Appeal to the United Nations*, September 13, 1960, *ibid.*, pp. 236-239.

was a risky enterprise, for the plant had been introduced in areas where fertility was too low to grow commercial harvest, which could also entirely fail due to drought or locust plague. As a consequence of this, very few white farmers were interested in this activity, so much so that the government decided to compel Angolan subjects to grow cotton, despite regular spasms of starvation. Already in 1945 alarm reports had reached Lisbon, but Salazar responded that such a problem was only a product of Bantu imagination, and ordered to pursue the cotton policy with vigour and drive “lazy” Africans to work even harder.¹⁵ On February 4, 1961, fifty nationalist militants in Luanda stormed a police station and São Paulo prison, killing seven policemen. Forty of them were killed, and none of the prisoners were freed. The government held a funeral for the deceased police officers, during which the Portuguese citizens committed random acts of violence against the ethnic black majority living in Luanda's slums (*musseques*). The transformation crossing Africa in those years made Portugal face huge problems in Angola, where the black middle-class was very small. Moreover, nationalist leaders themselves had different ideas on the post-colonial society to build up. Some colonial students, for example, kept covert ties with white communists, but had developed a kind of socialism linked to Protestant Christianity of Methodist schools in Luanda. Instead, exiles in Kinshasa shared a capitalistic ethos acquired in Baptist missions both in Angola and in colonial Congo. This had led to the formation of two rival political parties – that is *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) and the *União dos Povos de Angola* (UPA), known as *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA) from 1961 – competing with each other, as well as the Portuguese, in the forthcoming war for independence. As an outcome of this, any sign of Angolan insubordination was met with excessive panic and repression, and the regime let white settlers get armed as vigilantes and then conscripted an expeditionary force to restore colonial authority.¹⁶ In the meantime, a dip in the coffee market had meant that workers were not being paid on time. Hence, they peacefully marched to ask for their arrears, but again this caused white panic and gunfire. Counter-attacks were this time orchestrated across northern border and on March 15, the UPA launched an incursion into Angola from its base in Congo,

¹⁵ See D. BIRMINGHAM, *A Short History of Modern Angola*, London, Hurst & Company, 2015, p. 70.

¹⁶ See D. BIRMINGHAM, *Empire in Africa: Angola and Its Neighbors*, Athens, OH, Ohio University Press, 2006, pp. 90-91.

taking farms, government outposts, and trading centres, killing officials and white and black civilians. It was the start of the Portuguese Colonial War.

Meanwhile, the process of decolonisation gained pace. In April 1960 Eric Louw, Foreign Minister of South Africa, had predicted that white rule would soon be confined to the colonial territories of Southern Africa, including South Africa. Colonial powers were being accused of relinquishing the white man, thus allowing communist penetration into the continent. Verwoerd added that British colonial rule was now running away from Africa, adopting “non-racialism” as a euphemism for promoting black interests.¹⁷ Such discrimination policies in Southern Africa were seen as a threat to British colonial rule, but it was also impossible to ignore the antagonism between Africans and Europeans that the apartheid was provoking.¹⁸ As concerned the Americans, they were persuaded that the white minority would be able to maintain dominance for a few more years, as Africans were still too weak and unorganised.¹⁹ In a National Intelligence Estimate of August 1961, we can read that Pan-Africanism was regarded as a mystical concept based on black racial kinship and glorifying African personality and culture, but with no concrete programme to implement. Nevertheless, no African leader could reject those concepts, while the most aggressive Pan-Africanists considered freedom as a means to eliminate all special ties to the West, and at the same time appeared quite willing to follow communist models and establish close relations with the Soviet bloc. This was exactly what concerned the American intelligence services, as communist influence in the continent was reported to have grown substantially in the last two years, through diplomatic missions, arms aid, and economic assistance. According to the report, Moscow regarded Africa as a particularly vulnerable area and felt it was possible to alienate it from the West. As concerned the Southern part of the continent, the Bloc could exploit a good ability to identify itself with African socialists ready to governmental direc-

¹⁷ See J. BARBER - J. BARRATT, *South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security, 1945-1988*, Cambridge-Melbourne-New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 76.

¹⁸ See R. HYAM - P. HENSHAW, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War*, Cambridge-New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 311.

¹⁹ See *National Intelligence Estimate: The Outlook for the Union of South Africa*, July 19, 1960, Secret, in www.foia.cia.gov.

tion of the economy.²⁰ This strategy in a way signalled a return to the Leninist idea of separate revolutionary paths, supporting anti-colonial nationalist movements, which Stalin had neglected as part of the capitalist world, on the assumption that they might in time develop into socialist revolutions. On one hand, the General Secretary proclaimed that Moscow had to support national liberation wars. On the other hand, national liberation struggles could easily become local wars, then escalating to general war. This was a powerful warning for caution in the use of violence.²¹

Since the very beginning of the war, the Angolan question was reproducing locally the global confrontation between the two superpowers. In fact, while the UPA openly rejected Marxism, the MPLA, led by Agostinho Neto, regarded socialism as the only way to get independence.²² Kennedy had met Roberto for the first time in 1959, who also impressed other officials like Robert Kennedy, Dean Rusk and Adlai Stevenson. He won financial support on grounds of his assurances that his political party was an anti-communist movement threatened by communist-oriented factions in Angola. In 1961, he began receiving an annual retainer, channelled through the CIA station in Leopoldville, in the former Belgian Congo.²³ So serious was the situation, that the two main colonial powers issued tripartite talks with the United States. Salazar's stubbornness was absolutely worrying for the Western governments, so much so that they were afraid of grave consequences in case the Portuguese should lose control in Angola, since other African States could be tempted to intervene, thus opening opportunities for the Soviet bloc. In light of all this, reforms were thought to be necessary, but first of all the three allies agreed that Lisbon was supposed to issue a statement of intention on the right of self-determination, in order to have a good effect on African public opinion.²⁴

²⁰ See *National Intelligence Estimate: The Probable Interrelationships of the Independent African States*, August 31, 1961, NIE 60/70-2-61, Secret, in www.foia.cia.gov.

²¹ See F. ERMARTH, *The Soviet Union in the Third World: Purpose in Search of Power*, April 1969, Santa Monica, CA, The Rand Corporation, in www.dtic.mil.

²² See F. SALVATORE, *Gli Stati Uniti e il continente africano negli anni Sessanta. Dal terzomondismo di John F. Kennedy al "Keeping Africa off the Agenda" di Lyndon B. Johnson (1961-1968)*, in A. DONNO-G. IURLANO, eds., *L'amministrazione Nixon e il continente africano: tra decolonizzazione e guerra fredda (1969-1974)*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2016, p. 28.

²³ See W.W. SCHNEIDMAN, *Engaging Africa: Washington and the Fall of Portugal's Colonial Empire*, Lanham, MD, University Press of America, Inc., 2004, p. 25.

²⁴ See *Tripartite Talks on Portuguese Africa*, May 4, 1961, in THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES (thereafter TNA), Kew, London, FO 371/155445, Secret.

Social and economic reforms were not enough without some change in the political outlook, though no-one in the Western capitals really believed that Portugal's colonial policies could be modified without a change in government. Concerning this point, the Americans showed themselves convinced there was no military solution to the problem of Angola, which could be sorted out only through the injection by the Portuguese of some new element.²⁵ However, it seemed there was nothing to do in front of the Portuguese government saying they were ready to sink or swim with their African possessions.²⁶ In order to realise how awkward the Atlantic powers' position was, we just have to quote what African leaders communicated in those same days. Despite the wave of nationalism in the continent, President Nkrumah wrote to Prime Minister Macmillan that Portugal was resorting to genocide to stop the march of time. In light of this, the old nations of the world were asked to come to terms with Africa, which could no longer be subject to such an outdated domination by the weakest and most decadent State in Europe, as Portugal was defined.²⁷

How sensitive the question of Angola was is shown in a speech addressed by the Ghanaian President to the national assembly of his own country. The avalanche of nationalist fervour crossing Africa had by then touched Angola, and talking about Euro-Africa was nonsense. Instead, it was Portugal which depended on her colonies, since twenty-three per cent of her total export went to her African colonies within a system excluding other competitors.²⁸ On the other hand, having to deal with Commonwealth relations the British Prime Minister clarified that his government's aim was to help dependent territories advance as rapidly as possible towards full nationhood, while at the same time pressing the Portuguese to follow the same course.²⁹

²⁵ See *Tripartite Talks in Oslo: Portuguese Africa*, 9 May 1961, in TNA, FO 371/155445, JP 1023/10, Secret.

²⁶ See *Record of Conversation between Secretary of State, Mr. Dean Rusk, and M. Couve de Murville after Dinner*, May 7, 1961, in TNA, FO 371/155445, JP 1023/8, Confidential.

²⁷ See *Inward Telegram No. 692 to Commonwealth Relations Office from Accra: Angola*, May 26, 1961, in TNA, DO 195/182, 242/34/3, Cypher, Priority, Confidential.

²⁸ See *Angola: An Address to the Ghana National Assembly by President Kwame Nkrumah on May 30th, 1961*, in «Ghana Today», June 7, 1961.

²⁹ See *Message to O. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah from Mr. Harold Macmillan*, June 30, 1961, in DO 195/182, 242/34/3, Secret.

Such a posture was becoming a font of criticism among Afro-Asian States for not being able to adopt repressive measures against the Lusitanian country.³⁰ As an evidence of this, we can quote a seminar of Portuguese colonies held in New Delhi on October 23, 1961, during which Afro-Asian delegates discussed several measures to bring Lisbon's colonialism to a speedy end, from United Nations intervention to force Portugal to grant independence to her colonies, to material support to liberation movements by breaking off diplomatic and trade relations with the Salazar regime³¹.

At the same time, the third All-African Peoples' Conference in Cairo in the previous March had given a definition of "neo-colonialism", describing it as the survival of the old colonial system in emerging independent countries, which had become victim of an indirect form of domination by political, economic, and technological means. According to Soviet specialists, neo-colonialism in Africa was being implemented through the setting up of NATO military bases and the recognition of puppet regimes, or by driving newly independent countries into political or economic associations, such as the French Community or the Commonwealth itself. Having said this, the Soviet authorities were making any effort to persuade African leaders that the continent would have no future unless severing all links with the capitalist system. The only major voice of dissent towards such an anti-Western tide was the so-called Brazzaville Group, including both Marxist and non-Marxist advocates of African socialism, who did not necessarily reject the conception of neo-colonialism, but disputed that all ties with the West were a threat to national independence.³²

The point was that in 1951 Portugal and the United States had signed a defence agreement, providing Washington with base rights in the Azores for a five year period, both in peacetime and in wartime. The Azores were of paramount importance for the Americans, as in that period around seventy-five per cent of all U.S. military air traffic

³⁰ See *Inward Telegram No. 4741 from Foreign Office to Washington: Angola*, July 12, 1961, in TNA, FO 371/155446, Cypher and By Bag, Confidential.

³¹ See *Delegates from Portuguese Colonies Appeal for Help*, October 23, 1961, in «Indiagram», Press Release No. 103, Information Service of India, London.

³² "The Theory of 'Neo-Colonialism' as Developed in the Soviet Union and in Africa": *FO Research Dept Paper*, 28 November 1961, CO 1027/405, no. 9, in R. HYAM – WM R. LOUIS, eds., *British Documents on the End of Empire*, series A, vol. 4, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, part II, *Economics, International Relations, and the Commonwealth*, London, The Stationary Office, 2000, doc. n. 383, pp. 251-256.

to Europe and the Middle East stopped over in that base. Therefore, while President Kennedy was not willing to have his African policy held hostage to such an old-fashioned version of colonialism, at the same time the Administration believed there was a serious risk for the United States to be denied access to the facility. Throughout his mandate, Kennedy was always tilting between Africanists and Europeanists within the Administration, but the State Department aimed at dispersing exaggerated suspicions on American involvement with Angolan dissidents.³³

To tell the truth, the CIA staff were thinking of more persuading strategies towards Lisbon, in order to make the Portuguese accept a sort a “Commonwealth Plan” to grant self-determination in Africa. The programme, as arranged by Paul Sakwa, was based on the assumption that the Latin country was not economically and military strong enough to face the guerrilla in Africa. Therefore, the only thing to do was unfolding a plan to grant self-determination to Angola and Mozambique within eight years, with a consequent referendum to let the colonies decide which kind of relationship to maintain with the mother country. Sakwa himself, however, was sure that Salazar would never accept such a plan.³⁴

Apart from this, the Pentagon and the Secretary of Defence, Robert S. McNamara, were concerned about anything able to jeopardise American military interests in Africa, as any action undertaken by the U.S. would likely alienate in some degree either Portugal, or South Africa. Therefore, it was pivotal for the Americans to avoid any initiative prejudicing the relations with either side in such a dispute.³⁵ Such a realistic policy became even more important for the Atlantic powers if we read what the British Ambassador wrote after being back from Angola in November 1962. Speaking about the white settler population, in fact, the diplomat said the Europeans were passionately attached both to the land where they lived, and to the idea of Portugal as their permanent mother country, unless the Lisbon Government proved themselves not able either to eliminate

³³ See SCHNEIDMAN, *Engaging Africa*, cit., pp. 30-33.

³⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

³⁵ See *Letter from Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara to Secretary of State Dean Rusk*, July 11, 1963, in K. MOKOENA, ed., *South Africa and the United States: The Declassified History*, The National Security Archive, New York, NY, The New Press, 1993, doc. n. 4, pp. 62-63.

the pan-African threat, or to come to terms with it before Portugal as a whole got exhausted.³⁶

To this we may add that according to the Foreign Office the Africans were bound to find communism as an attractive theory to their problems, especially because of its ability to put the blame for anything wrong on past colonialism or current imperialism. However, the Soviets were not the only ones interested in the destabilisation of the African continent. In the 1960s, in fact, the Chinese were showing a certain tendency to exploit opposition groups in areas of potential violence, though their influence was on a much smaller scale than that of Moscow. Apart from this, the British were concerned about the communist bloc's ability to capture the allegiance of the younger generations of African leaders and scholars.³⁷

As we can see, Portugal and the Atlantic powers had something in common, which in the end overcame the difference on colonialism. The need to keep communism away from Africa did not allow Western democracies to really struggle to end racial discriminations. Moreover, Angola looked like the perfect Cold War theatre, with different nationalist movements based also on different ethnic groups. In particular, in the early 1960s the MPLA, which had been founded in Luanda, drew its main support from the Mbundu, the country's second largest ethnic group, and also attracted some *mestiço* intellectuals. Instead, the UPA was mainly supported by the Bakongo population in the extreme North-West of the country. Being the third largest group in Angola, the Bakongo were also spread in a large part of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo.³⁸ UPA activities in the former Belgian colony were also a way for the United States to better support Roberto, as in 1963 the White House had implemented a military aid mission in Leopoldville, soon to be re-called Kinshasa, with the aim of training the military to reach the necessary ability to grant national security. That year in May, the strong man of Zaire and advocate of any opposition to communism, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, being the Commander in Chief of the Army had visited the White House,

³⁶ *Sir Archibald Ross to Lord Home: Sir Archibald Ross' Visit to Portuguese Africa*, November 23, 1962, Section 1, in TNA, FO 371/161641, JP 1631/15, Confidential.

³⁷ See "Countering Communism in Africa": *FO Circular Despatch (No. 101, by C.F.R. Barclay) to British Representatives in Africa*, November 9, 1962, CO 1027/382, in HYAM - LOUIS, eds., *British Documents*, cit., doc. n. 387, pp. 262-264.

³⁸ See T. HODGES, *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State*, Lysaker, Fridtjof Nansen Institute, 2004², pp. 7-8.

while the CIA officer in the Congo, Lawrence Devlin, was already thinking of a coup to let then Mobutu run a military government. The Americans wanted to turn Zaire into a stronghold against the growing Soviet influence in Africa and were persuaded that only a strong leader would be able to keep all ethnic groups of the country together. Finally, within Washington's political circles the "African Domino Theory" was being given credit. According to this postulate, if the United States had abandoned the Congo, probably the Soviets would have filled the vacuum, then other African States would have negatively perceived any identification with the West.³⁹

In the meantime, on April 3, 1962, Roberto had established the *Governo Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio* (GRAE), with the aim of seeking early recognition. Among the principles of GRAE there was an appeal to African unity in order to make the battle for independence anywhere in Africa the struggle of the whole continent.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the MPLA complained about the existence in Angola of a capitalist sector dominated by the colonists and foreign capital and monopolies. Instead, the African sector was poor, pre-capitalists and deprived of all means of growth. Since peasants formed the most exploited and largest social class in Angola, the MPLA had to make sure that they were sufficiently represented in the groups waging the battle within the country. Eventual negotiations with the Portuguese government were supposed to be based on certain minimal conditions, such as recognition of the right of Angola to self-determination and then independence, withdrawal of all armed forces, and safeguarding of territorial unity and integrity. As regarded foreign policy, Neto claimed a posture of positive neutrality as the only possible orientation in a world full of threats.⁴¹ From Russian sources, however, we know that Mario de Andrade had flown to the Soviet Union in 1958 and then 1960. In the latter occasion he spoke about the contradictions with Roberto's UPA, calling it a «[...] racist organisation and due to its ties with the USA, a reactionary one».⁴² Finally, the experience of Chinese communists and Maoist ideology were at the core of national liberation patterns. In fact, by advocating revolution every-

³⁹ See L.A. NITCHER, *Compagni di Guerra Fredda: Richard Nixon e Mobutu Sese Seko*, in DONNO - IURLANO, eds., *L'amministrazione Nixon e il continente africano*, cit., pp. 158-159.

⁴⁰ See *The GRAE Declaration of Principles*, in CHILCOTE, *Emerging Nationalism*, cit., pp. 109-111.

⁴¹ See *First National Conference of the MPLA, Léopoldville, December 1962*, *ibid.*, pp. 251-265.

⁴² V. SHUBIN, *The Hot "Cold War": The USSR in Southern Africa*, London, Pluto Press, 2008, p. 8.

where, and not only in industrialised societies, Maoism seemed fitter for the Third World.⁴³

The Marxist doctrine added economic independence to self-determination, and what had to be confronted, Maoism introduced, was the double-edged sword of imperialism. Hence, in its anti-colonial war the MPLA looked at the experience of other revolutionary movements, like those fighting in Angola and in Vietnam.⁴⁴ During his following visit to the Soviet capital, in July 1962, de Andrade was concerned about the Congolese government putting several obstacles to MPLA activities, as well as UPA's efforts to absorb the MPLA into the National front for the Liberation of Angola.⁴⁵ Moreover, by reading a few interviews we find out that in those times MPLA militants saw the United States as their main enemy, though Western Germany, giving weapons to Lisbon, and France, creating political difficulties for the liberation movements, were supporting Portugal a lot.⁴⁶

When the struggle for independence began, Angola's economic and social structure was typically colonial, as manufacturing industry accounted for only 13 per cent of GDP. Agricultural production, the extractive industry, and international trade were the most important GDP contributors. The main exported good was coffee, together with other unprocessed agricultural goods (sisal, maize, sugar, cotton, and wood). Mined goods, such as diamonds and iron, contributed another 17 and 4 per cent, respectively. Portugal was Angola's principal supplier, followed by Great Britain and the U.S., while the latter was Angola's main export client. The Benguela railway line was the main traffic link for mineral wealth of Katanga, in South Congo, and Northern Rhodesia, soon to

⁴³A few years later Downing Street issued a memorandum on communist activities in Africa, stressing that the subversive effort, which in the past had been mainly guided by metropolitan communist powers of former colonial powers, was being given new strength through direct Soviet bloc or Chinese intervention and establishment of diplomatic relations with newly independent States. All this with the aim of gaining influence. The new way to pursue such a target was based on a flexible pattern of steady erosion, according to which adjustments could be made, from encouragement of revolution to favour local communist fractions, to State-to-State relations between communist powers and black independent countries. See "Communist Subversion in Africa": *British Memorandum (from Sir A. Douglas-Home, T 161/64) for the Prime Minister of Nigeria*, April 23, 1964, PREM 11/4609, in HYAM - LOUIS, eds., *British Documents*, cit., doc. n. 390, pp. 273-277.

⁴⁴See S.N. YADAV - I. BAGHEL, *Nationalism in Portuguese Africa*, New Delhi, Jnanada Prakashan, 2010, pp. 156-157.

⁴⁵See SHUBIN, *The Hot "Cold War"*, cit., p. 9.

⁴⁶See *Interview to Lúcio Lara, Luanda, 16 April 1996*, in T. SELLSTRÖM, ed., *Liberation in Southern Africa: Regional and Swedish Voices*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitute, 2002², p. 18.

become independent and called Zambia, to reach the Atlantic Ocean. To lessen international criticism and to rally internal support in Angola and in Portugal, the colonial masters realised that reform measures to foster economic growth and development in Angola were urgently needed. Hence, Angola's economy was formally integrated into the Portuguese Economic Area, but colonial rules had protected Portuguese manufacturing industry and prevented Angolan really independent industrial take-off. In brief, reforms were implemented to respond to the main allegation that Africans were second-class citizens and, apart from revoking the Statute of Natives, reform the educational system, recognising it as a weapon in the struggle against nationalists, assuming direct responsibility of the total Angolan population. Finally, African labourers were no longer forcibly recruited through government officers. Instead, relying on the Africans' constant need of cash income to pay taxes and buy life necessities, the administration licensed private recruiters to go into villages and enlist men to work in plantations, or mines, fisheries and so on.⁴⁷ As concerned the British comment on the situation, despite everything the Ambassador leaving his office wrote that the Portuguese were the least race-conscious of all Europeans. This meant they were less hit by prejudices against coloured people. In consequence of this, Sir Archibald Ross said that in Angola there was no sign of racial legal segregation, for no white and black facilities had been institutionalised. Instead, the dividing factor along colour lines concerned economic and social areas. Very few Africans, in fact, were qualified to work in top business or government positions.⁴⁸

2. *Wilson's Labour Britain: idealism vs realism*

As a confirmation to American and British uncertainties, in July 1963 Kennedy solved the question of the Azores through the formula of the "best of two worlds", introducing a relatively moderate posture towards Portugal and a tough policy towards South Africa.⁴⁹ In the same period, the CIA was monitoring Nasser's activities in Africa, trying to expand Egyptian influence in the continent and establish diplomatic and political ties.

⁴⁷See YADAV - BAGHEL, *Nationalism in Portuguese Africa*, cit., pp. 210-212.

⁴⁸ See Sir Archibald Ross's *Valedictory Despatch*, October 28, 1963, in TNA, FO 371/167436, 1012/G, Confidential.

⁴⁹See Z. LAÏDI, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, IL, 1990, p. 19.

By claiming the role of anti-colonial champion, the President of the United Arab Republic was trying to achieve a larger role in the struggle against Portuguese and South African governments.⁵⁰ This strategy responded to the theory of the three circles introduced by Nasser in the late 1950s, according to which Egypt was surrounded by an Arab, an African, and an Islamic circle, all of them overlapping. After all, the continent in which Egypt is situated is Africa, and at the time of Nasser's writing the massive decolonization had not yet taken place. All this was confirmed by the warm welcome given in Cairo to GRAE representatives, while other Arab countries, like Iraq, started to officially recognise the Government in exile.⁵¹ The Afrikaner government of South Africa saw the Egyptian leader as a source of new imperialism in Africa, as well as the symbol of old nationalism. Hence, had Nasser been left unchallenged, this would have encouraged other nationalists in the continent to be more ambitious and adventurous. On the contrary, if the West had sought to frustrate Nasser by force, it would have turned him into a hero and thus fanned the fires of nationalism.⁵² Despite the American Administration's opposition to racial discrimination, the main question for the White House was to prevent the black continent from shifting to the East.⁵³ In particular, with the entry of the Chinese the State Department was persuaded that Red China was embarking on a major political offensive in Africa, making an effort to identify herself with African movements and increase her influence among nationalist groups by generous offers of assistance, including in Portuguese territories, at the same time asserting Chinese communist revolutionary ideology over that of the USSR. Actually, in those days the Chinese were favouring the establishment of the International United Front, which also included European countries not associated with American policies. Chou En-Lai was careful to

⁵⁰See *Central Intelligence Agency Special Memorandum: Nasser's Policy and Prospects in Black Africa*, Office of National Estimates Special Memorandum nn. 1-64, in www.foia.cia.gov.

⁵¹See *Monthly Summary of the Activities of the Angolan Exile Political Parties in Congo/Leopoldville: February 1964*, March 25, 1964, in TNA, FCO 141/14056, *Northern Rhodesia Government Secretariat*, (1021/64), 58/230/01, Confidential.

⁵²See O. ABENGURIN, *The Arabs and the Southern African Problem*, in «International Affairs», LX, 1, Winter 1983-1984, p. 98.

⁵³On December 31, 1962, exactly when the Agreement on the usage of Azores expired, the Portuguese government had formally let Washington know that, as long as renewal negotiations were in progress, the American would be allowed to use the base. However, without a renewed formal and written agreement, they were always subject to the risk of being forced out, thus limiting their chances to put pressure on Lisbon.

show an image of China as a revolutionary country, but at the same time willing to cooperate with non-aligned States. In particular, Beijing offered the Africans a five-eight formula, that is five principles for Sino-African political relations and eight principles for economic relations. The package included: a) China as leader of the struggle against old and new imperialism; b) Chinese aid on the most favourable terms to establish self-sufficient and diversified economies; c) support to African desire to observe non-aligned policies; d) greater unity of Africa and the Asian world.⁵⁴

In order to avoid all that, it was better for Portugal at least to issue a public statement endorsing self-determination, thus allowing the United States to make an effort to urge again the Africans to participate in discussions with the Portuguese and press for change in Portuguese territories. Instead, by refusing to advocate such a principle, Portugal was not serving American interests.⁵⁵ In a few words, in order not to lose the area to Soviet and Chinese manoeuvres the State Department was practically in favour of supporting the nationalist movement in Angola, thus preventing the communist powers to plunge in. In brief, there was no alternative to covert activities and secret funding to GRAE leaders, in addition to Roberto. Withdrawal of subsidies could mean abandonment of any guidance or influence in the nationalist movement.⁵⁶ The Johnson Administration believed that failure to respond to self-determination aspirations of Portuguese Africans would result in changes detrimental to the interests of the United States as well as to Portugal.⁵⁷ This was completely useless, as Salazar remained adamantly opposed to any public statement on self-determination, adding that nationalist pressures were from outside Angola and Mozambique, but they would promptly develop internally if Portugal were to make public utterance on self-determination. He also claimed stability offered by Portuguese administration in Africa with that offered by newly-independent African

⁵⁴See T.Y. ISMAEL, *The People's Republic of China and Africa*, in «The Journal of Modern African Studies», IX, 4, December 1971, pp. 512-513.

⁵⁵See *Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Portugal*, January 17, 1964 in NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (thereafter NARA), College Park, MD, Record Group 59 (thereafter RG 59), Central Files, POL 10 PORT/UN, Confidential.

⁵⁶See *Memorandum from the Deputy Director for Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Scott) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams): Minutes of Meeting of the Special Group of 12 March 1964*, March 16, 1964, in NARA, RG 59, INR/IL Historical Files, Special Group Files, S.G. 114, Secret, Eyes Only.

⁵⁷See *Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Portugal*, April 16, 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, POL 10 PORT, Confidential, Priority.

States. Finally, he made clear and explicit his belief that American efforts were misdirected and could only lead to instability and retrogression.⁵⁸

In the meantime, however, the nationalists were becoming increasingly radical, admitting pro-Communist elements into the organizations. Hence, the most immediate problem for Washington was trying to prevent the nationalists from mortgaging their future to the Communists and from reaching a stage where they would no longer be disposed to negotiate a moderate and evolutionary settlement. United States long-term interests in the area required that a new approach be made to unblock the stalemate and thus prevent the future situation from being gravely jeopardized, at the same time permitting Portuguese presence to remain in some form. The State Department believed clandestine assistance was necessary, aiming at setting up an extensive political organization within and outside the territories. This organization was to be based on non-racial principles and obtain the adherence of as many elements as possible of the populations concerned, in order to set in motion forces favourable to the cause of self-determination and capable of bringing pressures to bear on Portugal to change her policies.⁵⁹

As a matter of fact, in the 1960s the Cold War confrontation was generating a battle of ideas in Southern Africa on the appropriate path to progress and modernity. In this part of the continent, socialism appeared to provide the road to true liberation through the transformation of the national economy. By transcending ethnic rivalries, it seemed it could give a solution to the flawed economic legacy of colonialism and providing an ideological vehicle for the transformation of land ownership.⁶⁰ The U.S. Administration was first of all interested in fighting the presumed communist threat, above all in the Congo. Pronouncements on self-determination were tempered by concerns about the risk for independence to offer new opportunities for Moscow. In light of this, Portuguese colonialism was seen as a threat to national interests only as it might provoke

⁵⁸See *Telegram from the Embassy in Portugal to the Department of State*, April 18, 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, POL 15-1 PORT, Confidential.

⁵⁹See *Action Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams) to Secretary of State Rusk: Portuguese African Territories*, April 29, 1964, in D.S. PATTERSON, gen. ed. - N.D. HOWLAND, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, (thereafter FRUS), vol. XXIV, *Africa*, Washington D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 1999, doc. n. 418, Secret, Special Handling, in www.state.gov.

⁶⁰See S. ONSLOW, *The Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Nationalism and External Intervention*, in S. ONSLOW, ed., *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation*, Abingdon-New York, NY, Routledge, 2009, pp. 19-20.

radical revolutions.⁶¹ In a word, it was in the United States' interest not to abandon the more moderate nationalist movements in the face of Soviet and Chinese competition. On the other hand, the Portuguese authorities continued receiving reports of large shipments of arms coming from a variety of communist countries and entering the Congo for the use of Holden Roberto, thus showing concern on the use of Congolese territory as a safe haven in launching attacks against Angola. By reading documents, we can easily see how different from the reality the Portuguese portrait of Angola was. According to Lisbon, in fact, Angola was a sort of island of peace and contentment in a sea of African turmoil, and the whole population was enjoying social, economic, and health benefits, while racial integration was complete. The only threat was personified by the non-nationalist, communist-backed rebel movement.⁶²

Keeping overseas provinces was also considered as a way for Portugal to express her personality. According to British analyses, Portugal had not shared the major colonial powers' liberal background, which had led them to feel a sense of guilt for the past and develop the "wind of change policy". Being isolated from political democracy, the Lusitanians had kept their colonial tradition largely intact. The British report from Luanda, we have to observe, was not so optimistic about the future of nationalist movements, regarded as divided along tribal lines and backed by other African governments and the Afro-Asian Bloc in the United Nations. The latter, in particular, was thought to have ability to blackmail the West, though the most responsible members seemed to recognise the implications of tribal divisions and the impossibility of immediate self-determination. On the contrary, independence was seen as a kind of backward step, as African predominance could result in tribal anarchy, while European Angolans would try to resist African domination under such conditions and press for a greater share of autonomy from the mother country on a Southern Rhodesian model. However it was, in the mid 1960s Angola was starting to develop quite a respectable economy, as oil had been found off the enclave of Cabinda and in the vicinity of Luanda, while diamonds

⁶¹See W. MINTER, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique*, London-New Jersey, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg-Zed Books, 1994, p. 143.

⁶²See *Memorandum of Conversation: Portuguese Ambassador's Call on the Secretary*, June 30, 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation, Lot 65 D 330, Confidential.

were the second most valuable export.⁶³ This new situation gave Portugal, in case of sanctions against South Africa, the chance to export oil towards the Afrikaner neighbouring government, as it was difficult for the United Nations to impose a sort of blockade on the high seas against tankers.⁶⁴

On grounds of archive documentation, we can say the two Atlantic powers shared a very similar assessment of the situation in Africa, agreeing that Soviet penetration of the continent was a serious threat. As concerned Southern Africa in particular, an attractive package of proposals had to be prospected to countries bordering with the area, in order to persuade them to approach the problem in a more moderate mood.⁶⁵ Overall, we can say that U.S. interests in the area could be summed up in three categories: a) mutual nuclear deterrence between Washington and Moscow; b) sea-routes protection; c) political and military influence in the area.⁶⁶ At the same time, despite ongoing modest support for Holden Roberto, Washington was becoming more reluctant to back UN resolutions critical of Portugal and the CIA even attempted to appease Salazar with bomber aircrafts to be used in colonial wars.⁶⁷ By establishing direct military ties with France and West Germany, CIA analysts wrote, Salazar had shown that he was not totally dependent on the U.S. in that field, and he had also broken the political isolation of his country from the rest of Europe. In light of that, efforts to move the dictator towards public acceptance of even the principle of self-determination were becoming more and more difficult. Moreover, short of a colonial disaster, which at the moment did not appear likely, there was little chance for Portuguese opposition to oust the leader and change something. Even in that case, the CIA predicted that any successor regime would be determined to retain Angola and Mozambique as much as Salazar, who believed that “Afri-

⁶³See *Mr. Stewart to Sir Archibald Ross (Lisbon): First Impressions of Angola*, JP 1013/14; *Sir Archibald Ross to Mr. R.A. Butler: Comments on Her Majesty's Consul-General's First Impressions of Angola*, JP 1013/12, Portuguese Africa, Section 1, May 21, 1964, in TNA FO 371/176932, Confidential.

⁶⁴ See *Cabinet Defence and Oversea Policy (Official) Committee: Working Party on Sanctions against South Africa – Oil Supplies from Angola: Note by the Secretaries*, 6 July 1964, in TNA, CAB 148/11, D.O. (O) (S.A.) (64) 10, Confidential.

⁶⁵See *Cabinet Defence and Oversea Policy (Official) Committee – Sub-Committee on Africa: Anglo-U.S. Talks on Africa, 22-24 March 1965. Note by the Foreign Office*, April 2, 1965, in TNA, CAB 148/46, *Meetings and Memoranda 1-15*, O.P.D. (O)(A)(65) 14, Confidential.

⁶⁶See W.J. FOLTZ, *United States Policy toward Southern Africa: Economic and Strategic Constraints*, in R. LEMARCHAND, ed., *American Policy in Southern Africa: The Stakes and the Stance, Second Edition*, Lanham MD-London, University Press of America, 1981, pp. 293-294.

⁶⁷See G. BENDER, *Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of a Failure*, *ibid.*, p. 67.

can nation” was another name for chaos.⁶⁸ In addition, there were also economic reasons why Portugal wanted to retain her African colonies, as Angola was an important source of foreign exchange and provided protected markets and investment opportunities. Roberto’s policies and long range intentions were believed to be uncertain by Washington’s experts, and in Africa he was regarded as a leader willing to keep ties with the West.⁶⁹ The outlook for Portugal looked positive also because the GRAE army was showing its increasing ineffectiveness, racked by mutinies and deserted by many, as well as largely cut off from its own forces inside Angola where nationalist activity had virtually ceased. Therefore, American diplomats on the spot believed the decline of GRAE could be very unhappy for the West, as the most likely alternative leadership to Roberto was the pro-Chinese Viriato da Cruz.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the kind of socialism as defined by the MPLA had little in common with African socialism, as – quoting what Agostinho Neto used to say – it didn’t only aim at getting rid of former colonial societies to turn into egalitarian and independent nations, but it also wanted to hand over the means of production to those who produced, thus insuring the just distribution of goods. According to this classical scientific interpretation of socialism, focusing on the uniqueness of the African personality produced the effect of ignoring the real problem to radically transform the society of the continent. In the Angolan socialist view, the intransigence of Portuguese colonialism had precluded a more evolutionary approach to independence, such as in the former British and French colonies. Rather, it had dictated the adoption of a more revolutionary doctrine of socialism with the task of eradicating any vestige of the old regime. Hence, the reconstruction of a country implied much more than its simple economic reorganisation. Having said this, the most important influence on Angolan socialism was certainly the revolutionary thought of Amílcar Cabral from Cape Verde, who argued that although classes did exist in colonial Africa, they were of marginal importance to the dynamic of colonialism, which was instead the clash be-

⁶⁸See *Central Intelligence Agency: Special Memorandum No. 9-64 - Salazar’s Current Prospects*, June 8, 1964, Secret, in www.foia.gov.

⁶⁹See *Special National Intelligence Estimate: Short-Term Prospects for the African Nationalist Movement in Angola and Mozambique*, July 1, 1964, SNIE 71-64, Secret, Controlled Dissem., in www.foia.gov.

⁷⁰See *Information Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Central African Affairs (O’Sullivan) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams): Deterioration of the Angolan Liberation Movement*, November 2, 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files, POL 30–2 ANG, Secret.

tween European and African cultures.⁷¹ According to Cabral, cultural oppression under the guise of a policy assimilation was the cutting edge of colonialism, rather than political and economic oppression. Therefore, it was not class, but cultural interest and identification that had to serve as the rallying point of resistance. By asserting their being African, the people took their first step towards the organisation of an armed struggle.⁷² In 1964, the Soviets embraced Dr. Neto as a more credible nationalist, though a couple of years previously he had been to Washington to argue the issue of Angola's independence, saying that it was wrong to call the MPLA a communist movement. Although he proclaimed himself a Marxist, in fact, Neto felt more nationalist and was ready to accept help from anywhere, including the West.⁷³

As concerned the British, we can say the new Labour Government's primary aim towards Portugal was threefold. First of all, keeping Portugal firmly within the Western alliance, as a member of NATO and as a power with possessions in Africa, was pivotally important. London wished to maintain facilities not only in continental Portugal, but also in the Azores and possibly in Southern Africa. Secondly, it was desirable to keep, and possibly expand, the British share in Portuguese markets and investments. Finally, there was the desire to maintain Lisbon's interest and co-operation with EFTA. This stance became even more urgent in view of the fact that France was establishing powerful assets in Portugal.⁷⁴ For the British, moreover, taking into account some Commonwealth leaders' posture had become of paramount importance. In particular, it seemed that the President of Tanzania had given approval for the liberation struggle to be waged from Tanzanian soil, once that turmoil had been spread to Mozambique as well.⁷⁵ The

⁷¹The MPLA did not consider Africa as the centre stage of its foreign relations, nor did it warm to the activities of the Organisation of African Unity. Actually, it was not until 1978 that Agostinho Neto, then President of Angola, made his first appearance in an OAU summit. See O. OGUNBADEJO, *Angola: Ideology and Pragmatism in Foreign Policy*, in «International Affairs», LVII, 2, Spring 1981, p. 260.

⁷²See K. BROWN, *Angolan Socialism*, in C.G. ROSBERG - T.M. CALLAGHY, eds., *Socialism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Assessment*, Berkeley, Regents of the University of California, 1979, pp. 297-303.

⁷³See G. MWAKIKAGILE, *Nyerere and Africa: End of an Era*, Pretoria-Dar el Salaam, New Africa Press, 2010⁵, p. 331.

⁷⁴See A.D.M. Ross to P.G. Walker, November 3, 1964, in TNA, DO 213/27, 35/707/14, *Tanzanian Attitude towards the Portuguese Territories*, 1041/64, n. 106, Confidential.

⁷⁵The outline of what became Tanzanian foreign policy had been formulated by the Tanganyika African National Union since 1960 and could be summarised as: a) socialism and progressive reforms on the national front; b) pan-Africanism and federation with Africa; c) neutralism, with reliance on the United Na-

Portuguese determination to resist in her African possessions had actually developed Nyerere's opinion that the NATO alliance was at least providing moral support.⁷⁶ Concerning this, the President of Tanzania wrote to Harold Wilson, who had been appointed Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in October 1964, that the question of the Portuguese territories had by then become the most dangerous situation, but also the one in which some new approach was likely to be fruitful. The real danger was that nationalists were by then ready to accept weapons from anyone, including of course communist countries. In that case, the West could decide to assist Portugal against communism, thus making the conflict escalate in a process seeing Africa and the West bitterly hostile to each other. Nyerere's position on this issue was clear: the Portuguese colonies had to be set free, possibly in a peaceful way. However, if this was not possible, Africa as a whole had to join the struggle by whatever means necessary. This optimistic stance was also due to the fact that Portugal could not cope with heavy military expenditures over a long span of time. Therefore, the Tanzanian leader suggested that the major Western Powers persuade Portugal to accept the United Nations or the Organisation of African Unity as Trusteeship Authority for her colonies, with a timetable for independence.⁷⁷ The harsh fact, however, was that as long as Salazar was in power everybody knew there was no chance for the Portuguese to realise that their time in Africa could not last long. It was also true, Wilson replied to Nyerere, that quick independence could lead to complete chaos, due to the inexperience of African ruling classes.⁷⁸ Moreover, Britain's position was made more difficult by Portuguese complaints about the will not to be attacked in the United Nations or in any other organisation by allies supporting false and irresponsible charges in favour of the Afro-Asian bloc.⁷⁹

The cessation of violence was also of paramount importance for the Johnson Administration to reach agreement for a peaceful resolution and start a process of self-determination, thus keeping the Soviets away from the area. The Americans proposed

tions, on the global stage. See P. BJERK, *Postcolonial Realism: Tanganyika's Foreign Policy under Nyerere, 1960-1963*, in «The International Journal of African Historical Studies», XLIV, 2, 2011, p. 219.

⁷⁶See *Telegram No. 54 from Dar Es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office*, January 11, 1965, Cypher/OTP, in DO 213/27/35/707/14, Immediate, Confidential.

⁷⁷ See *Letter from J.K. Nyerere to H. Wilson*, April 10, 1965, in TNA, DO 213/27, 35/707/14, (2) EP, 13/45/1, Secret.

⁷⁸ See *Letter from H. Wilson to J.K. Nyerere*, June 1, 1965, in TNA, DO 213/27, 35/707/14, Secret.

⁷⁹See *Despatch to Sir A. Ross, Lisbon*, undated, in TNA, DO 213/27, 35/707/14, Confidential.

an eight-year transition period leading to free and open plebiscite observed by UN and OAU representatives. In return, neighbouring African states were supposed to pledge assurances not to allow subversive elements to organize or operate from their territories against Portuguese territories, as well as not allowing to flow across their territories to such elements. During the transition period, the United States could provide and encourage other NATO allies to provide economic and technical support for Portuguese efforts to develop African territories.⁸⁰ Such a proposal was based on the estimate that, since the Portuguese were in a relatively strong position in both Angola and Mozambique, it was thought there was an opportunity for Portugal and the Africans to reach agreement for a peaceful resolution. In case of violation of the accords, the United States was considered as responsive to requests for arms purchases, whether from Portugal or from the African side.⁸¹ Actually, we also have to say that U.S. Ambassadors in Portugal in those years were all espousing the Portuguese point of view. As an evidence of that, Admiral George W. Anderson, appointed by Kennedy and still serving in the days at issue, had visited Angola and Mozambique the previous year, stating that he had been impressed by the Portuguese civilising presence in Africa.⁸² All this was taking place while Southern Rhodesia unilaterally proclaimed independence from Britain, on November 11, 1965. From a Portuguese point of view this was reason for relief, as President Kaunda of Zambia had to face a lot of problems arising from the Rhodesian question and for a considerable span of time the Americans thought he would be able to allow the Angolans to establish a base in his country, since he had to keep open the chance to use the Benguela railway through Angola, in case the traffic through Rhodesia were cut off. What leaves us impressed, however, is that the Central Intelligence Agency reported that there was no evidence the communist powers were ready to intervene in such a critical area. Ironically, it was the rivalry among Africans that prevented most communist efforts from being successful, beside problems of great distance and

⁸⁰See *Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Portugal*, June 9, 1965, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, POL 10, PORT, Secret.

⁸¹See *Circular Airgram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Portugal: Instructions to Lisbon to: (1) Reply to Foreign Minister's Complaints of U.S. Policy; (2) Reaffirm U.S. Interest in Azores Base and Loran-C Negotiations; (3) Introduce New U.S. Proposal for a Peaceful Resolution of the Portuguese African Question*, August 23, 1965, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files, POL PORT-US, CA-2167, Secret.

⁸²See W. MINTER, *Portuguese Africa and the West*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 97.

logistics. A break in the game was thought to be possible only after Salazar's death.⁸³ Such positions were made easier thanks to the American policy makers' mentality, who until the collapse of Portuguese rule in Africa used to divide the continent into black Africa and white-dominated Africa, without clearly perceiving the link between policies towards Southern Africa and their repercussions on black independent countries.⁸⁴ As concerned the Russians, it was also true that they aimed at being politically involved in the continent, namely seeking friends and allies, and consequently undermining the links between not only Africans and the West, but also those with China. Communist leaders tended to see the world by classifying countries according to the nature of their ruling class and the relative progress along the path of socialism, as well as their attitude towards capitalism.⁸⁵ Actually, the Sino-Soviet split worked in favour not only of revolutionary movements, but also of more conventional nationalist groups, thus undermining African unity, especially in Angola.⁸⁶

At the beginning of 1966, it seemed the general outlook in Southern Africa was favouring the Portuguese. From an economic point of view, in fact, American interests were growing due to Gulf Oil investments drilling black gold in Cabinda.⁸⁷ As regarded external support to nationalists, although it was impossible for Kinshasa to openly suppress GRAE, the government of Zaire was imposing restrictions seriously impeding the activity of Angolan nationalists. Much more important for Lisbon, however, was the rebellion in Southern Rhodesia, since the survival of a white-dominated regime in Salisbury was thought to be of paramount importance for the white minority in Angola too, though it was not profitable at all to harm relations with neighbouring Zambia. Moreover, in those days a series of *coups d'état* had taken place in several West African countries, thus preventing them to focus their attention on geographically distant is-

⁸³ See *Office of National Estimates: Central Intelligence Agency Special Memorandum No. 28-65: A New Look at the Prospects for the African Nationalist Movements in Angola and Mozambique*, November 17, 1965, Secret, in www.foia.cia.gov.

⁸⁴ See H. BIENEN, *U.S. Foreign Policy in a Changing Africa*, in «Political Science Quarterly», XCIII, 3, Autumn 1978, p. 448.

⁸⁵ See R.D. GREY, *The Soviet Presence in Africa: An Analysis of Goals*, in «The Journal of Modern African Studies», XXII, 3, September 1984, pp. 513-514.

⁸⁶ See T.H. HENRIKSEN, *People's War in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau*, in «The Journal of Modern African Studies», XIV, 3, September 1976, p. 390.

⁸⁷ See W.J. FOLTZ, *United States Policy toward Southern Africa: Economic and Strategic Constraints*, in «Political Science Quarterly», XCII, 1, Spring 1977, p. 62.

sues.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the Portuguese acquired anxiety over the security of the Eastern frontier with Zambia, due exactly to the particularly sensitive Rhodesian crisis, which might convince Dr. Kaunda to allow Angolan rebels to establish bases on Zambian territory.⁸⁹ By reading records, we can easily realise how interested Britain was in keeping stability in the area. The breakout of a real revolution was something to absolutely avoid, as the largest British investments in Africa were in Nigeria, Ghana and Zambia. Therefore, Britain had become vulnerable if action had been taken against these investments – dealing particularly with raw material industries – in one of the afore mentioned countries. Apart from this, Commonwealth African States, such as Zambia, had gross sterling holdings.⁹⁰ In addition, London took almost twenty per cent of Zambian exports, as well as the same percentage of her copper. The other main export from Zambia was tobacco, though it could be easily replaced by non-African supplies.⁹¹

3. *The Last Days of Salazar*

On March 13, 1966, Jonas Savimbi and Antonio da Costa Fernandes founded the União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA), eventually gaining an exile base in Zambia. Savimbi had been originally affiliated with Roberto as GRAE Foreign Minister, but later he moved his followers to the South-East of the country, heavily drawing UNITA leadership from Angola's majority Ovimbumbu ethnic group and its policies were originally Maoist, maybe influenced by Savimbi's early training in China. They aimed at rural rights and recognized ethnic divisions. Savimbi also knew his way around the diplomatic circuit, having been a student in Portugal as well as in Switzerland.⁹² What he blamed to Roberto was the confusion among the ranks of nationalists in

⁸⁸ See *Luanda Despatch No. 2 to Lisbon*, January 17, 1966, in TNA, DO 213/76, *Internal Affairs in Angola: Political and Military*, 2-EA56/129/2, 1012, Confidential.

⁸⁹ See *Luanda Despatch No. 4 to Lisbon*, April 13, 1966, in TNA, DO 213/76, 2-EA56/129/2, 1201, Secret, U.K. Eyes Only.

⁹⁰ See *Cabinet Official Working Party on Economic Implications of United Kingdom Policy in Southern Africa: African Countries other than South Africa and Rhodesia*, August 12, 1966, Misc. 122 (66) 7, in TNA, OD 31/030, CSA 220/3/03A, Secret.

⁹¹ See *Cabinet Official Working Party on Economic Implications of United Kingdom Policy in Southern Africa: Inter-Departmental Study on the Effect of Possible Action from Zambia and Other African States – Note by the Board of Trade*, August 12, 1966, Misc. 122 (66) 4, in TNA, OD 31/030, CSA 220/3/03A, Secret.

⁹² See BIRMINGHAM, *A Short History of Modern Angola*, cit., pp. 75-76.

Angola and the lack of mobilisation of popular masses. According to Savimbi, the GRAE had not been able to issue a programme involving all active Angolan revolutionary forces, beside having practically given up the military struggle. This was also due to the inculcation of the mercenary spirit among the soldiers, by paying them a salary each time they returned to Zaire after their incursions into Angola. Because of this habit, soldiers had been turned into a frontier army,⁹³ rather than thrusting far into the territory they were supposed to liberate from colonialism. Finally, the leader of the FLNA was being portrayed as a little more than an American and Congolese puppet.⁹⁴

Concerning British analyses, the problem dealt with a possible joint international economic pressure on South Africa and Portugal. This is what the British government was wondering, as we can see from the number and length of the reports issued in those days. In that case, Britain's economy would not have been harmed so much, and the most important imports coped with diamonds, wood, and cork. It was regarded as unlikely, however, that all African States take action to inflict the maximum possible damage on such a reliable commercial partner as the United Kingdom.⁹⁵ The point we always have to keep in mind is that for the British it was necessary to make a distinction between the moral condemnation of racially discrimination and a more practical approach to the issue, according to which it was impossible for Britain to take action against white regimes, unless failure to act became more harmful for London's interests in Africa. In a word, no economic warfare against South Africa and Portugal was possible for the Atlantic Power, though in Portuguese Territories the verdict for white rule was less certain, due to a thinner settlement of the Europeans. The fear dominating British policies in those years dealt with the necessity sooner or later to be forced into a position and choose between one side or the other, thus sacrificing interests in an area of the continent and perhaps elsewhere. All this left Downing Street with no other choice than siding with both parties, trying not to alienate any commercial or political partner

⁹³The frontier was continuously crossed to enter and leave the war zone in order to smuggle in arms, ammunition, medicines and other stuff into the guerrilla bases. See I. BRINKMAN, *Routes and War for Independence in Northern Angola (1961-74)*, in «Canadian Journal of African Studies», XL, 2, 2006, p. 212.

⁹⁴ See J. SAVIMBI, *Resignation Statement*, August 16, 1964; *Where Is the Angolan Revolution?*, October 1964, in CHILCOTE, *Emerging Nationalism*, cit., pp. 154-161.

⁹⁵See *Cabinet Official Working Party on Economic Implications of United Kingdom Policy in Southern Africa: Report to Ministers - Note by the Secretary*, August 26, 1966, Misc. 122 (66) 16, in TNA, OD 31/030, CSA 220/3/03A, Secret.

in the region and bearing the risk to be accused by both sides of inconsistency and insincerity.⁹⁶ Such an allegation could have been even more serious, now that it seemed rebels in the North and in the South-East of the country were being armed and trained by the Chinese. This opened a new scenario which had not appeared in the old rebellion five years previously, with possible explosive African material within the international community.⁹⁷ In view of what just mentioned, it was not by chance that the British Joint Intelligence Committee issued a report stating a long term outlook for the Southern Africa region. According to the documentation provided, there was little doubt that black African States would seek to maintain support against apartheid regimes, but it was also true that their policies would unlikely be uniform. As concerned communist powers, London's experts stated that they had till then shown little interest towards that part of the planet, but at the same time it seemed likely that they would back African liberation movements as an easy way to embarrass the West. However, even so it appeared extremely difficult for African liberation movements to successfully challenge the existing order, as the dominant factor was supposed to be the determination of white minorities to keep their privileges.⁹⁸ Actually, British experts did not doubt that one day Angola would gain independence, but at the same time they thought that in some parts of the country the Portuguese were already able to set up some form of multi-racial society. A model like Brazil was believed to be quite likely, though it would meet the antipathy of surrounding African countries, whose leaders were more inclined to the idea of a complete black Africa South of the Sahara. However, Foreign Office comments were that for some years to come independence based on majority rule would only bring to anarchy. In addition, democracy was something still un-experimented in Portugal herself. With the passing of Salazar a gradual easing of the authoritarian regime was possible, but certainly this could not lead to a liberal evolution in the colonies. This was made even more serious by the fact that Angolan Africans were not regarded as able to con-

⁹⁶ See *Report from P.H. Gore-Booth to the Secretary of State: Policy towards Southern Africa*, November 29, 1966, in TNA, FO 953/2483, PLA Planning Staff, Secret.

⁹⁷ See *Despatch No. 15 from Mr. Stewart to Sir A. Lambert (Lisbon): Angola – State of Internal Security*, December 30, 1966, in TNA, FCO 25/269, *Portuguese Africa - Political Affairs-Internal - Angola: Internal Security*, JP 1/4, Secret.

⁹⁸ See *Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee: The Prospects for Southern Africa up to 1976*, February 27, 1967, in TNA, CAB 163/55, *Africa - Southern Africa: Political-Economic Threats to S. Africa*, JIC (67) 28 (Final), Secret, UK Eyes Only.

tribute to the success of independence, since most of them were still illiterate and superstitious. On the other hand, the economy was booming and the European population was growing at a remarkable rate. This allowed Whitehall analysts to comment that a sufficiently determined European population in Southern Africa could without difficulty control an indigenous community twenty times as big.⁹⁹ That was why Downing Street was in favour of the right of self-determination for Portuguese Territories, but any claim of immediate independence would not be backed by the British Executive.¹⁰⁰

As concerned the American Administration, President Johnson had committed himself to ending racial discrimination in the United States, while his country still had economic and strategic ties with Pretoria. In fact, the CIA warned that South Africa was a major supplier of minerals for the West, especially gold and uranium. As a consequence of this, black South Africans were turning towards radicalism and “black consciousness”, a movement which paralleled that of “black power”.¹⁰¹ In the meantime, CIA reports noticed that liberation movements in Southern Africa would be probably suffering lack of indigenous support, without any chance to expand insurgency operations sufficiently enough to shake white regimes.¹⁰² As concerned the Soviet Union and communist China, though seeking to expand their influence by providing limited military and financial assistance, they were not thought to be willing to engage in direct military intervention. What leaves us rather perplexed after reading some American records is the fact that, though clearly reported that defence expenditures for Angola and Mozambique were running to over forty per cent of the Portuguese budget, apparently no-one was aware that a small country like Portugal could have never afforded such a high level of expense without in a few years running the risk of going bankruptcy. Perhaps comments

⁹⁹See *Luanda Despatch No. 7 of the 25th of August, 1967 to Her Majesty's Ambassador in Lisbon*, September 2, 1967, in TNA, FCO 25/278, *Angola - Political Affairs; Political Development*, 1012, Confidential.

¹⁰⁰*Minister of State's Talk to the Africa Centre on 16 October: Portuguese Territories*, undated, in TNA, FCO 25/291, *UK Policy on Portuguese Africa: Political Affairs - Bilateral*, JP 3/5, Unclassified.

¹⁰¹See T. BORSTELMANN, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, Cambridge, MA and London, Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 200.

¹⁰²From this point of view, Angola was an exception compared with other African countries in the area. Having her own ports and railways, and becoming relatively well-off due to oil production, Luanda had never been integrated into the regional economic network dominated by South Africa and, apart from diamond trading, she had received very little investment from South African firms. See O.E. KAHN, *Cuba's Impact in Southern Africa*, in «Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs», XXIX, 3, Autumn 1987, p. 43.

like these were also due to the frontline States' economic dependence on Rhodesia and Portuguese Africa. Even the government of Zambia, which was so dedicated to the cause of liberation, was behaving in quite a circumspect way, despite recent infiltrations into Rhodesia by African guerrillas.¹⁰³ Presumably, such a skeptical view of African chances to overthrow white regimes was also the outcome of what American protégés like Holden Roberto had communicated to U.S. officers on the spot. In particular, the President of GRAE expressed doubts based on the belief that the African States were incapable of working together for the common good of Africa.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, he had expressed deep apprehension about the ideology promulgated by a number of African governments, being not convinced that the OAU could be a cohesive force.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, the violent struggle undertaken by blacks in Southern Africa, seen as the only way to achieve freedom denied by white regimes, persuaded a lot of liberal politicians and church leaders to withdraw their sympathy to African liberation movements.¹⁰⁶ From a strategic point of view, instead, Angola and Mozambique were viewed as able to affect the whole balance of power in white Southern Africa and on a global level the relations between East and West. African governments in the two Portuguese provinces, in fact, would have extended Black Africa to the borders of Rhodesia and South Africa, thus augmenting the possibility of guerrilla actions against gold and diamond resources of Pretoria and Rhodesia's chrome. As a matter of fact, for a couple of years already the Gulf Oil Company had been drilling in the Cabinda enclave and in 1968 was planning to start production, with the outlook to stretch the output area to the Congo republics, thus involving international majors able to supply both metropolitan Portugal and the

¹⁰³See *National Intelligence Estimate: The Liberation Movements of Southern Africa*, November 24, 1967, NIE 70-1-67, Secret, Controlled Dissem., in www.foia.cia.gov.

¹⁰⁴It may be argued that African States mistook Kennedy's rhetoric, encouraged by the fear that the Soviet Union would gain influence in the continent, for policy, misestimating that the high ideological confrontation between the superpowers would increase their leverage on the West over Southern African issues. See A. GUELKE, *Southern Africa and the Superpowers*, in «International Affairs», LVI, 4, Autumn 1980, p. 651.

¹⁰⁵See *Airgram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State: Comments by GRAE President*, October 26, 1967, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files, PORT 30-2 ANG, Confidential.

¹⁰⁶See T.J. NOER, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1985, p. 181.

Republic of South Africa.¹⁰⁷ Of course, this allowed the Portuguese to be more confident in the future, as oil revenues were supposed to be used to finance the colonial war and the Americans were expected to treat Lisbon more charitably.¹⁰⁸

In view of the available documentation, we cannot be surprised if the British government was practically obliged to keep an ambiguous stance. Potentially one of the richest countries in the region, with a vast array of mineral reserves and geographically located in both Southern and central Africa, Angola was at the crossroad of an important trading network from Zambia and Zaire, which after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba had become Washington's main ally in the area.¹⁰⁹ Despite all declarations of intent on the right of self-determination and the consequent diplomatic support at the United Nations, London could not really afford to undermine relations with white regimes in the area, as they were economically and strategically too important for the West. According to scholars studying Soviet policies towards Africa, it is important to bear in mind, supposed communism or anti-communism, as well as a pro-Soviet posture or an anti-Soviet one, had rarely been a pivotal factor influencing African nationalism. On the other hand, where these labels mattered more was in determining the source of foreign aid. As a "marxist" organisation, in fact, the MPLA had failed to win Western support, but had managed to receive Soviet funds.¹¹⁰ In particular, Neto had met Ernesto Che Guevara for the first time in Brazzaville in early 1964 when, despite the poor military record he had managed to impress the Cuban leader sufficiently enough to persuade him to promise military and political support for the MPLA. Moreover, in the late 1960s the MPLA was developing a consistent ideological outlook reflecting Marxist-Leninist thought and by 1968 the leadership had by then decided to set up a sort of vanguard party to lead the coalition of groups within the movement itself. Actually, several main MPLA representatives stressed that such a line should be neither pro-Chinese, nor pro-Soviet. Rather, it was a question of assembling a genuine nationalistic and scientifically

¹⁰⁷The Portuguese dictator welcomed foreign participation as long as it did not become a way to denationalise the colonies. See A.K. SMITH, *António Salazar and the Reversal of Portuguese Colonial Policy*, in «The Journal of African History», XV, 4, 1974, p. 654.

¹⁰⁸See *Luanda Despatch to Her Majesty's Ambassador in Lisbon: Oil and Politics in Angola*, February 29, 1968, in TNA, FCO 25/310, *Cabinda Oil: Fuel and Power*, JP 12/4, Confidential.

¹⁰⁹See M. HOLNESS, *Angola: The Struggle Continuous*, in P. JOHNSON - D. MARTIN, eds., *Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War*, Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986, p. 73.

¹¹⁰See C. STEVENS, *The Soviet Union and Angola*, in «African Affairs», LXXV, 299, April 1976, p. 139.

socialist movement. Despite this, the first guerrilla fighters had been already sent to Cuba for training two years previously and seventy to eighty per cent of arms came from the Soviet Union.¹¹¹ As regarded Cuban-Angolan relations in particular, soon after independence, in December 1975 Fidel Castro stressed the common ethnic features of the two populations, as a lot of Cubans were the ancestors of African slaves, who had fought in the Liberating Army of Cuba.¹¹² Havana had been particularly interested in Guinea-Bissau's revolution and the ideas of Amilcar Cabral. As an evidence of this, Cuban commandos were first sent to Africa to assist Cabral's struggle, beside setting up a military training team in the People's Republic of Congo, where also the MPLA had its headquarters.¹¹³ Responding to the allegations that the Cubans were acting as a Soviet proxy, Castro said that the Russians had never requested Havana to send soldiers to make war on their behalf.¹¹⁴

British exports to Angola for 1966 totalled about 8.5 million pounds with a heavy share of vehicles and tractors and covering eleven per cent of the market and placing Britain as third supplier to Angola, after metropolitan Portugal and West Germany. Apart from oil, coffee and diamonds were the largest exported commodities, while secondary industries included building material, shipyards, and quite a thriving fishing industries. The logical outcome for the British was the will to open new markets to their enterprises.¹¹⁵ Moreover, Angola offered at least three good ports with convenient access to the Northern hemisphere, thus making believe that, whatever form of government in the future, Luanda was probably to emerge as one of the wealthiest parts in the continent. In the late 1960s, in fact, new factories were being opened in the mineral and motor sector, which gave Britain a positive outlook for exports. The question was even more serious for the UK was competing with other Western countries like Sweden and the Federal Republic of Germany, which already enjoyed a larger share of the Angolan

¹¹¹See D. OTTAWAY - M. OTTAWAY, *Afrocommunism*, New York, NY, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981, pp. 100-102.

¹¹²See F. CASTRO, *African Blood Flows through Our Veins*, December 1975, in M.A. WATERS, ed., *F. Castro-R. Castro-N. Mandela: Cuba & Angola. Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own*, New York, NY-London-Montreal-Sydney, Pathfinder, 2013, p. 31.

¹¹³See C. LEGUM, *A Study of Foreign Intervention in Angola*, in C. LEGUM - T. HODGES, eds., *After Angola: The War over Southern Africa*, London, Rex Collings, 1976, p. 20.

¹¹⁴See F. CASTRO, *Angola: An African Girón*, April 1976, *ibid.*, p. 37.

¹¹⁵See K.R. WELBORE KER, *Trade Prospects in Angola*, undated, in TNA, FCO 25/302, *British Interest in Angola: Economic/External Affairs - Economic Development*, JP 6/17, unclassified.

market.¹¹⁶ As concerned Angolan insurgents, in 1968 British records showed rather a negative outlook for them, as no charismatic leader had until then emerged as someone able to give unity and international prestige to the nationalist movement. For reasons like this, and also because of the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the population, London's experts believed that Angolan rebels had failed to win the support of people in any strategic area.¹¹⁷ Nothing was going to change, reports from Lisbon stated, as long as Salazar was in power. Instead, political separatism among the white population of Portuguese overseas territories was feared once the old dictator went. By the summer of 1968 the colonial army seemed to have arrested the deterioration of the situation, also thanks to the hostility among nationalist movements. The Portuguese government derived encouragement from several factors, such as continued American preoccupation for the war in Vietnam and the consequent reduced interests in African affairs, the poor performance of black independent States and their lowered romantic support to anti-colonial struggle. However, no-one seemed seriously concerned for Portugal's defence expenses, which covered by then forty-four per cent of the whole State budget. What is interesting, besides, is the observation according to which the development of a more democratic regime in Portugal was supposed to make the Lusophone presence in Africa profitable for Britain, due to the Western Power's investments in the area and also to the fact that the Portuguese approach to racial questions was not regarded as morally repugnant.¹¹⁸

A little room for manoeuvre was being given by Dr. Salazar's health, which let Western diplomacy think that he was ready to give up and leave the government to more liberal wings of his entourage. However, his charisma among his followers was intact. This implied that Portugal's African posture was not going to change, since even those of the new generation who were increasingly frustrated over home policies, strongly supported the idea of Portugal in Africa. After all, the cost of the wars in Africa

¹¹⁶See *Luanda Despatch to Her Majesty's Ambassador in Lisbon: The Ambassador's Visit and British Exports to Angola*, 20 August 1968, in TNA, FCO 25/291, *UK Policy on Portuguese Africa: Personal Affairs - Bilateral*, Confidential.

¹¹⁷See *Letter from British Consulate-General, Luanda*, March 12, 1968, in TNA, FCO 179/616, part B, *Portuguese Overseas Territories*, Confidential.

¹¹⁸See *Sir Anthony Lambert to Mr. Stewart: Portuguese Africa: the State of the Wars and Prospects for the Future*, August 30, 1968, in TNA, FO 179/616, JP 1/13, *Portuguese Africa, Section 1*, Confidential.

were still tolerable to the Portuguese in both human and fiscal terms, even though more and more people might be coming to accept the inevitability of future political adjustments there. What was taken for granted was that any succession to Salazar would require the support of the armed forces.¹¹⁹ Salazar underwent emergency brain surgery on September 6 and ten years later he lapsed into a coma. The President of the Republic announced on the 26th that the doctors had determined the Prime Minister would not recover. In consequence of that, he appointed Marcello Caetano at the head of the government. The first moves of the new Administration, to tell the truth, did not match American and British hopes on a more liberal approach towards African questions, as Foreign Minister Nogueira, speaking on behalf of the newly appointed Premier, said that Portugal's policy with respect to overseas territories would not be changed at all.¹²⁰

4. *Caetano and Nixon's Tar Baby Policy*

Once Salazar was out of scene, the British Labour government studied the various options left in Southern Africa, also in light of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting and the consequent relations with African leaders. A new moderate optimist view was expressed on the Caetano Administration, which therefore deserved some time to settle in and develop a more realistic and flexible policy. As concerned allegations on Portugal taking advantage of her membership of NATO, the Cabinet replied that in case of expulsion from the Western Alliance due to Lisbon's African policy, it would become much more difficult to put pressure in the desired direction of self-determination. To tell the truth, by simply reading economic data Whitehall would have been perfectly able to realise that it was extremely difficult for the Portuguese to change their mind on questions like those. As a matter of fact, for a dictatorial junta like that in power in Lisbon for about forty years it was impossible to give up Portugal's biggest market for exports.¹²¹ Hence, hoping that the new Premier would have recognised the right of self-

¹¹⁹See *Telegram from the Embassy in Portugal to the Department of State: The Twilight of the Salazar Era*, July 24, 1968, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1, PORT, 1125Z Secret, Limdis, No-form.

¹²⁰See *Telegram from the Embassy in Portugal to the Department of State*, October 8, 1968, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL PORT-US, 1800Z, Confidential, Limdis.

¹²¹See *Cabinet Defence and Oversea Policy (Official) Committee: Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting – Problems of Southern Africa. Note by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, December 1968, in TNA, CAB 148/84, OPDO (68), *Memoranda 17-34*, vol. II, OPDO (68) 30, Confidential.

determination to what was not even regarded as a colony was not a realistic way to see the problem. Being so persistent on the moral suasion towards the Latin ally was probably just a way to put the problem off and let white minorities in Southern Africa reach a settlement with the Africans without renouncing their hegemonic position. Actually, despite some slight improvement in domestic issues, such as students being allowed to mildly demonstrate and the return from the exile of the leader of the Socialist opposition, Mario Soares, nothing seemed changed in the government's attitude towards Angola. In a speech delivered in the National Assembly, Caetano repeated that Portuguese settlers in Africa were Africans regardless of their complexion and that the government could not abandon them, being responsible for the security and well being of all its citizens, as well as committed to defend all civilisation against imperialist aggression. Moreover, nothing dissuaded the Prime Minister from believing that Southern Africa needed the white man.¹²²

As concerned the Americans, at the end of the Johnson's mandate, the State Department had left a detailed analysis on Southern Africa. The real dilemma was always the same, that is how to conciliate indigenous claims with the safeguarding of American geo-political interests. Washington's aims in the area could be summed up as follows: a) encouraging substantial and long-term changes; b) reducing violence and confrontation; c) minimising the negative outcome of violence on national interests.¹²³ Racial tensions gave communist countries excellent opportunities at a very low price, through funds to nationalist movements and assistance to black States.¹²⁴ What influenced the Americans' assessment most was the belief that the liberation movements of the area were not regarded as capable of overcoming the resistance of the white regimes for at least a few more years to come. Moreover, the Americans had investments amounting to more than

¹²²See *Mr. Welbore Ker to Mr. Stewart: Portugal. Two Months under Professor Marcello Caetano*, December 6, 1968, in TNA, FCO 46/251, *Portuguese Facilities: Defence Value to UK*, DP 1/354/1, WSP 1/1/14, Confidential.

¹²³See *Paper Prepared in the Policy Planning Council: National Policy Paper, Southern Africa*, November 20, 1968, in NARA, RG 59, S/S Files, Lot 70 D263, SIG/MEMO, #107-11/22/68-U.S. Policy toward Southern Africa, 47th SIG Meeting, Secret, Noform.

¹²⁴See *Memorandum of Meeting - Senior Interdepartmental Group: Chairman's Summary of Discussion and Decisions at the 47th SIG Meeting*, December 3, 1968, in NARA, RG 59, S/S Files, Lot 70 D263, SIG/RA, #49-12/9/68 - Chairman's Summary of Discussion and Decisions at the 47th Meeting, 12/3/68, Secret.

a billion dollars in the area,¹²⁵ while in Angola the Portuguese kept a strict control on the economic process by restricting foreign investments, though in the last period this trend had been relaxed to speed up development, especially as concerned raw material industries.¹²⁶ On the other hand, Caetano was showing his ability to exploit Cold War tensions by playing the card of the Soviet threat, thus stressing the need for cooperation between the U.S. and European countries. According to the Prime Minister, the tribal state of native populations both in the Portuguese territories and in the other African lands made elections a farce. Moreover, he thought that subversion in the Portuguese provinces had a foreign base and that the masses were only able to express the thinking of certain leaders, rather than their own feelings. As concerned the American position on that, it is easy to find out that Washington agreed with the other Atlantic power on the Portuguese presence in Africa, which was not something to cancel and about which the Americans were not conducting any crusade.¹²⁷ The new President, Richard Nixon, pursued dialogue with Portugal and did not want his administration – to quote his own words – to continue using doctrinaire views in foreign policy,¹²⁸ as the choices of the previous administrations were no longer thought to match American national interests. According to new CIA reports, in fact, though African *élites* were not so easy to influence from abroad, any circumstance undermining relations with the West could be exploited by the Soviets, despite not even the American intelligence believed that the Marxist-Leninist ideology could get deeply rooted in a continent crossed by waves of economic nationalism. As a matter of fact, nationalism, and certainly not communism, was likely to be the dominant theme in African policies towards the outside world.¹²⁹

¹²⁵See R. MORRIS, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*, New York, NY-San Francisco, CA-London, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977, p. 108.

¹²⁶See *Intelligence Memorandum: Economic Trends in Black Africa*, January 1969, ER IM 69-1, Confidential, in www.cia.foia.gov.

¹²⁷ *Memorandum of Conversation: The Secretary's Visit to Madrid and Lisbon November 16-19: Azores Base*, November 19, 1968, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, ORG 7 S, Secret.

¹²⁸ See *Memorandum of Conversation: US-Portuguese Relations*, April 19, 1969, in D.S. PATTERSON, gen. ed., J.E. MILLER - L. VAN HOOK, eds., FRUS 1969-1976, vol. XLI, *Western Europe; NATO, 1969-1972*, Washington D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 2012, doc. n. 254, Secret; Exdis, pp. 798-801.

¹²⁹See *Central Intelligence Agency – Office of National Estimates Memorandum: The Soviets and Black Africa – New Approaches and the African Response*, March 13, 1969, Secret, in E.C. KEEFER, gen. ed., FRUS 1969-1976, vol. E-5, part 1, *Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969-1972*, Washington DC, Of-

On the other hand, Chinese diplomacy was gaining ground.¹³⁰ Maoist ideology, in fact, gave Beijing a leading role in the world revolution and the struggle against colonialism and white racism. Hence, Africa was by then playing a pivotal role in Chinese foreign policy and the most effective insurgent group significantly supported by communist China was the Mozambique Liberation Front. In addition, the old dictator was pursuing something like a “dollar diplomacy” and to this end Zambia offered the best outlook in terms of commercial and political expansion.¹³¹ Such an attitude responded to the so-called Three Worlds Theory, developed by the Chinese leader and illustrating that international relations comprehended three politico-economic spheres: the first world, formed of superpowers, the second world of lesser powers, and the third world of exploited countries. The difference from the classic school of thought was that Chairman Mao included both the United States and the Soviet Union in the First World, which, respectively, were responsible of imperialism and social imperialism. Japan, Europe, and Canada composed the Second World, while Africa, Latin America, and the rest of Asia formed the Third World. A few years afterwards, in April 1974, the then Chinese Vice-Premier Deng-Xiaoping explained the Three Worlds Theory in a speech to the United Nations, specifying that the two superpowers were the biggest international exploiters, threatening the independence and security of all nations. Concerning this particular point, the Chinese politician said that the superpowers had adopted neo-colonialist methods to continue and intensify their exploitation and plunder of the developing countries, by exporting capital and building there a “State within a State” by means of such international monopoly organizations as “trans-national corporations”.¹³² Mao’s emphasis on the existence and importance of a third force enabled China to develop her own identity and expand her own influence in international relations. Theo-

rice of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 2005, Doc. No. 1, in www.state.gov.

¹³⁰The escalation of tension with Beijing made the Soviets seek access to possible Indian Ocean transit facilities in Southern Africa, thus developing a confrontation within Cold War relations. See M. WEBBER, *Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Final Phase*, in «The Journal of Modern African Studies», XXX, 1, March 1992, p. 19.

¹³¹See *Directorate of Intelligence – Special Report Weekly Review No. 32: Communist China’s Presence in China*, June 20, 1969, Secret, in FRUS 1969-1976, vol. E-5, part 1, doc. n. 5, in www.state.gov.

¹³²See *Speech By Chairman of the Delegation of the People’s Republic of China, Teng Hsiao-Ping, At the Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly*, April 10, 1974, in www.marxists.org.

retically, the Asian giant had defined an area that belonged neither to the Soviet Union nor to the United States. In particular, Chairman Mao declared full sympathy and support for the struggle of the Africans against imperialism and colonialism.¹³³ Beijing's economic aid to Third World countries backed the view that the struggle for political independence would be incomplete unless followed by a nationalised, self-sufficient economy. However, the Chinese Communist Party's leaders miscalculated the complexity and diversity of the Third World, by insisting on a united struggle against both revisionism and imperialism. China failed to consider that each country had its own conception of national interest and wanted to define its own relationship with the superpowers. In light of this, a transition from revolutionary chaos to pragmatic reconstruction began a new stage of Chinese foreign policy in the late 1960s, based on the concept of a united front of China, the U.S. and sympathetic Third World countries against the Soviet Union.¹³⁴

In contrast to this, a definition reminding Lenin and provided in the Brezhnev era by Karen Brutents, a leading Soviet scholar on the Third World and later an important official under Gorbachev, underlines that national liberation movements produced revolutions aimed at getting rid of any foreign economic and political domination, including of course the one originating from colonial subjugation, and setting up fully sovereign States. Traditionally, Soviet doctrine considered every colonial area as a nation invested with national sovereignty. As a consequence of this, any subject people was a victim of aggression and therefore entitled under international law to adopt whatever forms of warfare necessary to resist and overcome the aggressor.¹³⁵ In the late 1960s, in the competition with China the advantage still lay with Moscow in the Southern African area, as Beijing lacked resources to seriously compete for prime clients. In spite of this, the Soviet military felt that American stalemate in Vietnam and the achievement of essential equivalence at the strategic nuclear level had opened possibilities to fight imperialism with minimal risk of superpower confrontation. The outcome of this revision, as well as the analysis of small scale regional wars and civil conflicts, was the expansion of the

¹³³See S. GILLESPIE, *Diplomacy on a South-South Dimension: The Legacy of Mao's Three-Worlds Theory and the Evolution of Sino-African Relations*, pp. 112,118, in www.diplomacy.edu.

¹³⁴See *ibid.*, pp. 119-121.

¹³⁵See A.Z. RUBINSTEIN, *Moscow's Third World Strategy*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 80-81.

scope of what was interpreted as war of national liberation, which became also a confrontation within Third World nations not necessarily involving Western countries.¹³⁶ On the other hand, the Americans were by then persuaded that China and the Soviet Union would benefit from violent conflict under new black majority regimes. As a matter of fact, the United States had relations with several black-ruled States in Southern Africa, and Zambia was even purchasing weapons from the Americans in an attempt to avert possible attacks from the white minority. This put Washington in quite an awkward position, as the last thing the White House wanted was to be perceived by the white regimes in the area as an open supporter of black majority rule. In order to safeguard economic interests and investments, Washington decided that the minority regimes did not have to fall, and that change would be coming through collaboration between the two ethnic groups, rather than with violent means.¹³⁷ Actually, in front of the stagnation of the West on Southern Africa's racial issues, Julius Nyerere warned that with no other alternatives the blacks in the area would fight for their rights and the front-line States would have no choice but help them. Despite this, a lot of governments, though firmly condemning South African and Portuguese policies, did not wish to complicate their relations with the Western powers by letting Chinese and Soviet weapons cross their territory. Nyerere, instead, gave this permission with a heavy heart, but at the same time pursued the Western powers' support to majority rule negotiations. However, Africans could not fight with bows and arrows just to prove that they were Africans and the only ones willing to give arms to the national liberation movements were the communist countries. The Tanzanian President expressed his concern in a speech in Canada in April 1969, during which he stated that «the Freedom fighters use communist arms and are trained in communist countries because they have no choice. [...] And then South Africa and Portugal will proclaim [...] this “proof” that they are fighting communism [...] I am afraid that Western States would strengthen their support for the South-

¹³⁶See *ibid.*, pp. 96-98.

¹³⁷See R.L. STEVENSON, *U.S. African Policy under Henry Kissinger*, in H. WALTON, JR. - R.L. STEVENSON - J.B. ROSSER, SR., eds., *The African Foreign Policy of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: A Documentary Analysis*, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2010, pp. 84-85.

ern African regimes [...] and gradually this conflict will become the ideological conflict which at present it is not». ¹³⁸

The new American Administration made the firm decision to put African affairs at the bottom of the political agenda, as it had been repeated by Nixon himself to the Portuguese Foreign Minister when he said that European allies came first and that a completely new approach was followed at the White House. ¹³⁹ This version is confirmed by Franco Nogueira, who in his memoirs writes that Nixon announced his Administration was going to change the policy towards Southern Africa. According to the Portuguese Foreign Minister's reconstruction, Nixon was rather surprised about the situation in the area and the outcome of the sanctions imposed especially on Rhodesia, which made the United States dependent on the chrome imported from the Soviet Union, while the one produced in Rhodesia was being sold to China, which used it for nuclear weapons production. ¹⁴⁰ The President briefed his National Security Advisor, Henry Alfred Kissinger, and his top officials about this decision and specified he did not want his timetable to include meetings relating to Africa, about which he only asked for a report on the general situation in the continent twice a year. ¹⁴¹ In light of this, when in May 1969 fourteen African States in Lusaka issued a Manifesto to condemn racial discrimination in the area – though with quite a conciliatory tone, as the liberation of Southern Africa did not mean racialism in reverse –, Kissinger was extremely realist: «[...] African leaders will not abandon their basic opposition to white minority rule, yet they can't reach their objective [...] without outside [...] support». ¹⁴²

The African context and the relations among black States had been translated into the meeting in April 1969 of East and central African States in Lusaka, during which a

¹³⁸ C. PRATT, *The Critical Phase in Tanzania 1945-1968: Nyerere and the Emergence of a Socialist Strategy*, Oxford-New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 136.

¹³⁹ See *Memorandum of Conversation: US-Portuguese Relations*, April 19, 1969, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL PORT-US, Secret, Exdis.

¹⁴⁰ See F. NOGUEIRA, *Intervenção. Diálogos Interdictos: a política externa portuguesa e a guerra de África*, vol. II, Lisboa, Editorial Notícias, 1979, pp. 250-251.

¹⁴¹ See A. DEROCHE, *Asserting African Agency: Kenneth Kaunda and the USA, 1964-1980*, in «Diplomatic History», XL, 5, November 2016, p. 983.

¹⁴² See *Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon: Black African Manifesto on Southern Africa*, May 15, 1969, Confidential, in M.F. BURTON-E.C. KEEFER, eds., FRUS, vol. XXVIII, *Southern Africa*, Washington, DC, United States Government Printing Office, 2011, doc. n. 9, pp. 14-15.

Manifesto on Southern Africa had been issued, emphasising equal rights and human dignity. At the same time, rather than calling for a commitment to immediate change, the document simply called for change and peaceful progress, though in case of armed struggle all black States were supposed to aid freedom fighters. As concerned Portuguese Territories, the colonial power had been criticised not for racialism, but rather for the will to exist in the black continent. Should Lisbon accept the principle of self-determination, the document stated, the front line capitals could try to ask the guerrilla movements to put down arms and then white settlers would be welcomed by new black independent governments.¹⁴³ The document acknowledged the right of all the whites who had settled to stay there and accepted that change could not come overnight.¹⁴⁴ The Manifesto, later to adopted by the UN General Assembly, suggested a diplomatic solution to the wars in Southern Africa, emphasising the desirability of a negotiated end to apartheid, so long as South Africa accepted the principles of human equality and dignity'. Mandela's ANC opposed the statement, but did not make its objections public, as it did not want to antagonise those countries that harboured its military and political cadres.¹⁴⁵

In the meantime, the South African Premier, John Vorster, had perfectly realised that friendly relations with as many black States as possible were necessary, if South Africa did not want to become totally isolated while more and more African countries reached independence. The Prime Minister focused on economic aspects, knowing that the new nations needed economic assistance. As an evidence of this, on December 11, 1969, the governments of Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa herself signed a Customs Union Agreement. The principle of non interference was at the basis of the so-called outward-looking policy, stressing Pretoria's successful trading performance in the past two decades, together with scientific and cultural exchanges, and this was some-

¹⁴³In the mid 1960s, the whites were only five per cent of the whole population South of the Sahara, about eighty per cent of whom were concentrated in South Africa and in North and South Rhodesia. Even in major cities they constituted an ethnic minority, but justified their exclusiveness on grounds of having built and maintained the so-called Western civilisation. See H. KUPER, *The Colonial Situation in Southern Africa*, in «The Journal of Modern African Studies», II, 2, July 1964, p. 152.

¹⁴⁴See *Manifesto on Southern Africa*, proclaimed by the Fifth Summit Conference of East and Central African States, April 14-16, 1969, Lusaka, Zambia, in <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/>.

¹⁴⁵ See N. NDEBELE - N. NIEFTAGODIEN, *The Morogoro Conference: A Moment of Self-Reflection*, p. 14, in www.sahistory.org.za.

thing the British and the Americans could not afford to ignore. According to Vorster, South Africa's neighbours had nothing to fear from, as Pretoria recognised the independence of Black African States.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, the South Africans were securing their own "white belt", by augmenting military and commercial relations with colonial Angola and at the same time, the more successful national liberation movements were, the more South African rulers tried to play movements of armed opposition off against each other.¹⁴⁷ As regarded this, the British expressed surprise towards the late timing of an initiative like that, since if Angola were relinquished by the Portuguese, Pretoria would expose her left flank in South West Africa to the local liberation movements. This was the outcome of the more liberal approach of the Caetano Government, which no longer ward off foreign activities.¹⁴⁸

From the African point of view, instead, political and social stability were a pivotal aim to achieve in order to gain real independence which often existed only on paper, since key decisions for the integrity of African nations were taken without any reference to them. This is what Julius Nyerere denounced in a speech delivered at the University of Toronto on October 2, 1969. This was associated to the need of political stability in order to avoid outside forces to take advantage of African divisions by exacerbating local conflicts. As concerned the particular situation of Southern Africa, the Tanzanian President said it was impossible for black independent States not to be involved in opposing the policies of colonial powers. Accepting the continuation of such conditions was a denial of the African moral right to freedom and equality. Even the existence of the front-line States, he said, was in jeopardy due to colonialist and racial regimes of the area, which would inevitably try to reduce the effectiveness of black States' policies. That was why the situation in Southern Africa could not be regarded as a local problem, since all Africans as such were by then involved. Self-determination of the peoples of Southern Africa and the other Portuguese colonies, therefore, had become a common objective of all Africans. What kind of socio-political system came after independence

¹⁴⁶ See THE HON. B.J. VORSTER, *South Africa's Outward Policy*, Cape Town-Johannesburg, Tafelberg-Uitgewers Ltd, 1970, pp. 7-9.

¹⁴⁷ See R. ROSS, *A Concise History of South Africa*, Cambridge-New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2008², p. 151.

¹⁴⁸ See *Saving Telegram No. 7 from Luanda to Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Angola-South Africa*, June 24, 1969, in TNA, FCO 45/108, *Angola: Relations with South Africa*, CS A6/334/1, Confidential.

was an affair of the population of those territories. Hence, Tanzania was ready to help whatever kind of insurgents struggling for independence, no matter whether they were liberal or communists. Finally, Nyerere did not think that violence was a good way to pursue this task; however, if the door to freedom was locked and bolted the choice was very straightforward. Such was the case of Southern Africa, whose minority regimes had even rejected in principle the demand for freedom, thus leaving organised violence against the government as the only path to get what was a just African right.¹⁴⁹ On what concerned non-alignment, he said a few months afterwards that these countries did not form any bloc, being all different from one another in terms of socio-political system and all facing different problems, both domestic and dealing with foreign relations. What was in common was only their non-alignment, that is their existence as weaker nations, trying to keep their independence and use it for their own benefit, as the real danger came from poverty and the relating need to look outside for capital investment. Therefore, political independence was based on the level of economic sovereignty. In order to avoid economic colonialism, Nyerere claimed co-operation among non-aligned nations, in terms for example of sales operations on a co-operative base instead of competing in the world market.¹⁵⁰ Along the same lines there was what Kenneth Kaunda in 1968 had called the Mulungushi Economic Revolution. This spoke about the acquisition of majority shareholdings in big enterprises, both national and international, seeking to encourage a Zambian domestic business and industrial network and at the same time reserving the government contracts in several sectors of them.¹⁵¹ Like his colleague, Kaunda repeated that the main aim of his country's foreign policy was the creation of the necessary conditions for the peaceful transfer of power from irresponsible white hands to reliable black hands. These efforts, however, had always been hampered by

¹⁴⁹ See J.K. NYERERE, *Stability and Change in Africa*, 2 October 1969, in J.K. NYERERE, *Freedom and Development: A Selection of Writings and Speeches, 1968-1973*, London-Oxford-New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 108-125.

¹⁵⁰ See J.K. NYERERE, *Developing Tasks of Non-Alignment*, April 13, 1970, *ibid.*, pp. 159-172.

¹⁵¹ See S. CHAN, *Kaunda and Southern Africa: Image and Reality in Foreign Policy*, London-New York, NY, British Academic Press, 1992, pp. 25-27.

NATO members by pouring in investments and military hardware towards white minority regimes.¹⁵²

In December 1969, the National Security Council suggested a new policy on Southern Africa. The National Security Study Memorandum 39 became a turning point of the Nixon Administration as an extremely realist record stating that sorting out racial problems and colonial conflicts in that region of the world did not match American interests.¹⁵³ Nixon's attitude was probably influenced by Kissinger's belief that national liberation movements were a little more than puppets in the hands of communist powers.¹⁵⁴ The present policy aim, it was reported, was to try to balance American economic, scientific and strategic interests in the area with the political interest to have the White House dissociated from white minority regimes' repressive racial policies. Despite that, the whites were there to stay and try to overthrow minority rule through violence was supposed to be a way to favour communist insurgency or infiltration. Collaboration with the whites was therefore essential, as well as a moderate pressure to make them change attitude towards the black majority in view of a gradual process of reconciliation. As concerned the Portuguese Territories, Washington chose to take Lisbon's more moderate policies as suggesting further changes, while at the same time black front-line States had to seek closer relations with white-dominated States in view of better future conditions. The arms embargo on Portuguese overseas provinces was to be maintained, but the big change was that the Nixon Administration decided to give more liberal treatment to exports of dual purpose equipment and also encourage trade and investment.¹⁵⁵ In a word, Portugal acquired the chance to use military equipment

¹⁵² See T.M. SHAW, *The Foreign Policy of Zambia: Ideology and Interests*, in «The Journal of Modern African Studies», XIV, 1, March 1976, p. 82.

¹⁵³ This choice was nicknamed "Tar Baby" by some Department of State officers, who thought the United States would get stuck to the destinies of the white regimes in Africa. See L.A. PICARD, *U.S. Foreign Policy toward Southern Africa*, in D.P. FORSYTHE, ed., *American Foreign Policy in an Uncertain World*, Lincoln, NB-London, University of Nebraska Press, 1984, pp. 457-458.

¹⁵⁴ See M. EL-KHAWAS - B. COHEN, eds., *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa: Security Study Memorandum 39 (Secret)*, Westport, CT, Lawrence Hill & Company, 1976, pp. 26-28.

¹⁵⁵ This policy was implemented for the first time at the United Nations in March 1970, by casting the veto to a resolution calling for the extension of economic sanctions, already in force towards Rhodesia, to Portugal and South Africa, and for the use of British forces against the rebel colony of Salisbury. The United States could have abstained, as it was certain that the British delegate would cast his own veto. Therefore, Washington wanted to make it clear that it would no longer hide behind Britain, thus showing a precise

and weapons in the colonies if only that stuff could be used for civil purposes as well.¹⁵⁶ In reaching these conclusions, the White House was clearly led by the strategic importance of the Azores base and the Portuguese African territories to Cold War defence planning. From an economic point of view, moreover, Angola served as the door to one of the mineral richest parts of Africa and Portugal's encouragement of foreign capital resulted in more competitive activity by American and European multinationals for exploration and possible exploitation of iron ore, diamonds, sulphur and phosphates deposits.¹⁵⁷ Hence, Washington aimed at extending the NATO zone as far South as the Cape of Good Hope to challenge the growing presence of Soviet naval power in the Indian Ocean and therefore chose to keep a low profile on the opposition to Portugal's African posture.¹⁵⁸ This also implied that the United Nations, with the Afro-Asian bloc forming up to one-third of the membership, had by then become an important forum where racial issues and the American posture towards Southern Africa affected relations with the rest of the world and the relating access to African and Asian areas, thus putting in jeopardy 2.5 billion dollars of investments in Africa, one-third of which in the white regimes.¹⁵⁹ In a few words, America did not have to align with the enemies of the white regimes. Such a trend was counterproductive, as those policies were impossible to achieve, they were contrary to American interests and were also frustrating the need of stability in the area. Therefore, Nixon's approach was quite realistic: «It is obvious that

attitude on what was regarded as an unreasonable resolution. See D. NICOL, *Africa and the U.S.A. in the United Nations*, in «The Journal of Modern African Studies», XVI, 3, September 1978, p. 370.

¹⁵⁶*Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa – Study in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa*, December 9, 1969, AF/NSC-IG 69-8 Rev. A, in NARA, National Security Study Memoranda (thereafter NSSM) and Related Papers, 1969-1976, Lot 80D212, NSSM 39, Secret.

¹⁵⁷The Portuguese simply did not accept that the African population was represented by nationalist leaders, whom they regarded as mere ambitious politicians exploiting racial hatred and drawing support from abroad. Nationalist feelings did not seem possible to the Portuguese dictatorship, the only loyalty admitted being that to the tribe. According to a mentality like that, independence was just a way to dispossess the white man of his land, goods, and jobs, and consequently make law and order collapse and go back to tribal warfare. See G. MARTELLI, *Portugal and the United Nations*, in «International Affairs», XL, 3, July 1964, p. 463.

¹⁵⁸See EL-KHAWAS – COHEN, eds., *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, cit., pp. 45-51.

¹⁵⁹See *Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa: Study in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39*, December 9, 1969, Secret, in NARA, RG 59, NSSM and Related Papers, 1969-1976, Lot 80 D212, NSSM 39.

we have to avoid the colonialist label, but we must analyse where our interest lies and not worry too much about other people's domestic policies». ¹⁶⁰

The confirmation of this shift came with the State of the Union Address on February 18, 1970, when Nixon said that economic development was one of the two main American concerns on Africa, which was thus encouraged to welcome U.S. enterprises. At the same time, the Republican Head of State explicitly remarked that the continent had to be free from great power rivalry. As concerned Southern Africa in particular, he added: «Though we abhor the racial policies of the white regimes, we cannot agree that progressive change in Southern Africa is furthered by force. [...] violence and the counter-violence it inevitably provokes will only make more difficult the task of those on both sides working for progress on the racial question». ¹⁶¹

The President and his main collaborators were persuaded that the previous Democratic Administrations had completely failed to achieve any pivotal result. On the contrary, the only outcome had been that South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia had abandoned non violent methods. ¹⁶²

5. *Salazar's Legacy*

According to British analyses, the dawn of the post-Salazar era looked quite bright in Angola, where the Gulf Oil Company was by then exploiting crude oil from the concessions in Cabinda, and in December 1969 the multinational had been said to be producing at a rate of 40,000 barrels per day, while the Belgian-Portuguese Petrangol were extracting another 20,000 barrels per day, thus giving an estimate total production in Angola of almost 3 million tons for 1969, compared with 0.75 million in the previous year. The output was so promising, that seventeen more oil companies were applying for new concessions in Southern Angola. The potential of the colony in terms of minerals production and food stuff, as well as political stability, was vast, said the Financial Times, and Britain had to be careful to take her own share of these new markets. This last ob-

¹⁶⁰See *Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting*, December 17, 1969, Secret, in FRUS 1969-1976, vol. XXVIII, doc. n. 20, pp. 57-63.

¹⁶¹R.M. NIXON, *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace. A Report to the Congress*, February 18, 1970, in FRUS 1969-1976, vol. E-5, part 1, doc. n. 7, in www.state.gov.

¹⁶² See G. IURLANO, *Henry A. Kissinger e l'Africa Australe: il National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 39*, in «Nuova Storia Contemporanea», XIX, 2, marzo-aprile 2015, p. 72.

servation was particularly meaningful, as it was clear that the British business sector was showing good confidence in Caetano's efforts to pacify and develop the African province. In particular, Caetano had summed up in the following way the chief points of his government's policy towards overseas territories: a) consolidation of multi-racial societies; b) progressive autonomy for provincial governments; c) extension of people's participation in political and administrative structures¹⁶³. Despite that, the sheer volume of European immigrants the government had been encouraging for at least two decades was angering urban Africans even more, since they found themselves pushed further down the social and economic ladder. In spite of claims of non-racial attitude and legislation, the whole colonisation programme had been based on racist assumptions, as we can realise from Caetano's words themselves: «The Natives of Africa must be directed and organised by Europeans, but are indispensable as auxiliaries. The blacks must be seen as productive elements in an economy directed by whites».¹⁶⁴

As concerned the Americans, by reading declassified documentation we realise how different the President's view was from the policies of the Department of State. According to Foggy Bottom, in fact, the experience of the previous decade showed that there were serious doubts about Caetano's expectations for a better time in colonial matters. On the contrary, in absence of any attempt of reconciliation, it seemed the gulf between Portugal and the black States was destined to widen. Such a situation was in no-one's interests, bearing also the risk of increasing opportunities for communist influence.¹⁶⁵ Unlike the White House, State Department officers had confidence in the Lusaka manifesto and thought it contained positive elements which could help Portugal reconcile European interests with those of African States and nationalist groups.¹⁶⁶ Instead, what Nixon chose did not certainly pave the way to negotiations, though in public the Presi-

¹⁶³ See *Developments in the Portuguese African Territories during 1969*, March 19, 1970, in TNA, FCO 51/122, RR 1/2, Confidential.

¹⁶⁴J. CIMENT, *Angola and Mozambique: Postcolonial Wars in Southern Africa*, New York, NY, Facts on Files, Inc., 1997, p. 35.

¹⁶⁵Dependency of an African country on the Soviet Union implied a certain cost for Moscow, which had to bear the expenses of internal reconstruction and military efforts. Moreover, despite an unstable regime granted the Russians more influence, at the same time the Soviets had to spend a great amount of money to keep the government afloat. See H. BIENEN, *Soviet Political Relations with Africa*, in «International Security», VI, 4, Spring 1982, p. 171.

¹⁶⁶See *Airgram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Portugal: Southern Africa*, January 9, 1970, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1970-73, POL 1 AFR, Confidential, Limdis.

dent was always careful to criticise racial policies. The Americans believed that foreign communists were able to exert massive and long-term influence over African left wing nationalists, thus blocking good relations with the West and putting the world balance in jeopardy.¹⁶⁷ Only a few days after the Department of State remarks, in fact, Nixon decided to except from the arms embargo on Portugal non-lethal equipment with a dual civilian and military usage.¹⁶⁸ This was another sign that the Nixon Administration was quite sympathetic with the position of Portugal on Africa and such agreements helped harden Caetano's thought that the kind of independence the United Nations were pursuing in that part of the world was only a danger to civilization leading to the implantation of communism.¹⁶⁹ In a word, Prime Minister Caetano stated that people had to realise that Portuguese sovereignty over African provinces was worth more than an adventure with an unpredictable outcome.¹⁷⁰

On June 18, 1970, the Conservative Party came back to power in Britain, being welcome by companies as a government more sensitive to market needs. The New Prime Minister, Edward Heath, did not show any particular enthusiasm for UN sanctions. As a matter of fact, the Cabinet issued a report on the economic implications of a possible lifting of the arms sales ban to South Africa, which also implied a substantial export in the private sector. Protests from many countries were to be expected, but none of them, with the exception of Tanzania and Zambia, was able to take serious actions against the UK.¹⁷¹ However, on the day the Tories won elections there was already a paper, issued by the Labour Executive, on Anglo-Portuguese relations and the African implications, which gives evidence that Wilson had practically paved the way to his successor. According to this study, like the Americans the British needed a stable and peaceful Afri-

¹⁶⁷See S.R. WEISSMAN, *CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences*, in LEMARCHAND, ed., *American Policy in Southern Africa*, cit., p. 444.

¹⁶⁸See *National Security Decision Memorandum 38: United States Policy toward Southern Africa*, January 28, 1970, Top Secret, Nodis, in FRUS, vol. XXVIII, doc. n. 23, pp. 69-70.

¹⁶⁹The prospect of independence for African colonies threatened the survival itself of Western Europe's longest-running dictatorship. Imperialism had become a key propaganda weapon to justify the existence of the regime. See D. BIRMINGHAM, *Frontline Nationalism in Angola & Mozambique*, London - Trenton, NJ, James Currey - Africa World Press, 1992, p. 35.

¹⁷⁰See *Memorandum of Conversation: Portuguese and U.S. Policies in Africa*, May 30, 1970, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1970-73, POL PORT-US, Confidential, Exdis, part III of III.

¹⁷¹ See *Draft Report: South Africa – Economic Implications of a Change in United Kingdom Arms Policy*, June 1970, in TNA, BT 241/2438, *South Africa: UK Arms Sales Policy*, Confidential.

can continent offering a good trading outlook to Western enterprises. Hostility between white minority regimes and black African countries was of course a major threat to British interests. As concerned the question of self-determination, though recognising and endorsing such a principle for all peoples, and despite the fact that the denial by the Portuguese of this right was only worsening racial tensions, the Labour government, as well as the Tory Administration, had the same stance as the Americans, as we can easily figure out by reading the document. It was surprising that the Africans had taken up arms, that was true, but then we read: «We condemn the use of force and we agree that freedom fighters rely to a worrying extent on external communist support».¹⁷²

The report reminded the one issued by the Americans a few months previously also on what regarded the collaboration with minority regimes. «We can, by selective relaxation of our stance toward the white regimes, encourage some modification of their current racial and colonial policies and through more substantial economic assistance to the black states [...] help to draw the two groups together [...]».¹⁷³

On the other hand, during the Security Council debate on December 30, 1969, Lord Caradon had paid a tribute to the Portuguese government on the fact that «[...] they maintain a policy of racial relations which is very different from the policy adopted in parts of Southern Africa [...] if they were to adopt a policy of self-determination, Portugal could make a contribution in Africa comparable to its contribution to the history of the world».¹⁷⁴

It was true, as British diplomats reminded, that there was no legal racial bar in Angola and no racially segregated area or facility, though Angolan Africans formed the under-privileged majority. The problem the British Consulate General in Luanda highlighted was bound to Portuguese nationalism, which precluded the Europeans from accepting any form of local culture or the establishment of a kind of Angolan nationalism based on a Luso-African identity, able to be strong enough to face African nationalist feelings. On the other hand, the same despatch reporting such an optimistic outlook

¹⁷² See *Anglo/Portuguese Relations: Detailed African Aspects*, June 18, 1970, in TNA, FCO 45/511, *Political Relations between Portuguese Africa and United Kingdom*, CSP 3/548/1, Confidential.

¹⁷³ *Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa - Study in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa*, December 9, 1969.

¹⁷⁴ *Anglo/Portuguese Relations: Detailed African Aspects*, June 18, 1970.

showed also how the Portuguese were not developing an Angolan economy moulded on the Africans.¹⁷⁵ As a matter of fact, there were no African controlled businesses, or Luso-African commercial partnerships in Angola, where the Portuguese kept a monopoly on retail and distribution trading, thus blocking the social lift for Africans.¹⁷⁶ Despite this, there was quite a big difference between Portuguese territories and the other white minority regimes. No such thing like “settler power” did exist in Angola, Guinea, or Mozambique. Power in Portuguese Africa resided always with a colonial governor appointed from Lisbon, who ruled without necessarily taking into account the opinion of the residents of the territory, no matter whether white or black.¹⁷⁷ In short, at the very end of the Wilson’s Government the main British objectives towards Portugal were: a) increasing London’s share of Portuguese market and secure some benefits of economic development in Angola and Mozambique; b) encouraging the transformation of Portugal into a democratic country; c) persuading Portugal to accept the principle of self-determination for her African provinces, whether as independent countries, or having federal ties with the mother-country; d) ensuring the availability to NATO and Britain of defence facilities in Metropolitan Portugal and the Azores. Just to be clear once more, the final version of this Foreign Office report stated that by keeping in contact with Lisbon over African questions too, it was possible to give some contribution towards the evolution of the Portuguese attitude on those issues.¹⁷⁸

Britain’s change of policy was on the way. The Government had decided to resume arms supply. Heath was persuaded that Black African countries had to learn to live with South Africa, as no-one was going to settle the Southern African problem by force. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Douglas-Home, stated that arms could be sold to any country unless declared an enemy. In addition, the Secretary of Defence said that a Soviet attack of any kind was not considered as a serious imminent risk, but he also added it would be

¹⁷⁵South African companies were moving into mining ventures, fishing industries, manufacturing projects, and agricultural development in Angola. See L.W. BOWMAN, *South Africa’s Southern Strategy and Its Implications for the United States*, in «International Affairs», XLVII, 1, January 1971, p. 25.

¹⁷⁶See *Multi-Racialism in Angola: Reality or Myth?*, June 25, 1970, in TNA, FCO 45/427, *Social Conditions in Angola*, CSA 18/1, Confidential.

¹⁷⁷See J. FARLEY, *Southern Africa*, London-New York, NY, Routledge, 2008, pp. 48-49.

¹⁷⁸See *Anglo/Portuguese Relations*, June 18, 1970, in TNA, FCO 45/511, CSP 3/548/1, Confidential.

idle to pretend that Russian influence had not grown in the Mediterranean as well as the Middle East and the Red Sea.¹⁷⁹

As concerned the particular problem of Angola, in his valedictory despatch the British Consul General, Hugh Carless, quite prophetically predicted that the Portuguese would likely to remain in control of the province until at least 1975. The weakness of the colonial position was as evident as the economic development in progress in those years. As a matter of fact, the Portuguese stance was a source of embarrassment to liberal opinion in the West, and lacking the practice of political democracy at home the Portuguese did not have any plan or strategy for the future, apart from hanging on and hoping for the best.¹⁸⁰ American conclusions were practically the same, since the Administration complained about the lack of any moderate Black African bloc. Hence, the President was persuaded that a “local Leviathan” like South Africa could play an important role, therefore putting off racial issues to an indefinite future.¹⁸¹ It is also true that the White House and Henry Kissinger were rather unaware of the complexity of external support to the different parties involved in the liberation of Angola. Actually, he did not apparently care about the fact that the anti-communist party he would later choose to back in the civil war following independence was receiving most of its aid from the People’s republic of China, North Korea, and Rumania.¹⁸²

Conclusions

Downing Street was conscious of the tensions with Black Africa States, whose leaders they tried to convince that isolating the South African regime was only a way to consolidate it. Therefore, the best hope of bringing about a more liberal system lay in main-

¹⁷⁹See *House of Commons Debate: South Africa (Sale of Arms)*, July 22, 1970, vol. 804, in <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>.

¹⁸⁰See *Luanda Despatch to H.M. Ambassador in Lisbon: Final Impressions of Angola*, July 14, 1970, in TNA, FCO 45/425, *Valedictory Despatch of H.M. Consul-General in Angola*, CSA 1/7, Confidential.

¹⁸¹See A. DONNO, *Gli Stati Uniti e il Leviatano sudafricano: il dilemma di Nixon e Kissinger*, in DONNO - IURLANO, eds., *L'amministrazione Nixon e il continente africano*, cit., pp. 292-295.

¹⁸²See G.J. BENDER, *American Policy toward Angola: A History of Linkage*, in G.J. BENDER - J.S. COLEMAN - R.L. SKLAR, eds., *African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, CA-London, University of California Press, 1985, p. 113.

taining contacts between Pretoria and the outer world, relying on the economic pressure coming from industrial expansion.¹⁸³

Instead, what for Britain was a question of Cold War issues and balance of payments, for Black States was a matter of principle and honour. All defence motivations and speeches about the Soviet threat in the area did not convince the Africans on the necessity of coexisting with the South African Leviathan. For black Africa priority was South African and Portuguese policies of white supremacy. The Anglo-Saxon powers, however, had reached the same conclusions. Political stability was pivotal, as well as friendly relations with black independent States, in order for important countries not to quit the Commonwealth and implement discriminating measures against Great Britain. Nobody in the West thought that white communities in the area would ever give up power, nor that anyone would be able to win a large-scale war against them. Both Atlantic powers were firm in denouncing racial discrimination and backing the principle of self-determination for everyone and in particular for the peoples of the Portuguese-ruled territories. However, on both shores of the Atlantic it was highlighted that Lisbon's policy of racial toleration was an important factor along the path of emancipation, which ruled out the option of violence. Interesting to know is the different vision between the White House and the State Department, whose top executive after the tour of the continent proposed a document the President endorsed on March 26, 1970, which considered that it was American national interest to cooperate with African countries in their endeavors to improve conditions of life and to help in their efforts to build an equitable political and economic order.

What Washington sought, according to the document, was a relationship of constructive cooperation with the nations of Africa. In particular, mineral and petroleum development accounted for nearly three-fourths of U.S. private investment in Africa. On this issue, the Secretary was mindful of the special relationship between some African and some European countries. However, the Americans claimed their share of the market and therefore encouraged improved access for exports of African manufactures to the markets of all nations on an equal basis, also urging the elimination of discriminatory

¹⁸³Trade between an important oil producer like Nigeria and South Africa and Portugal did not disappear until 1970, but even afterwards there were some leakages. See J.H. POLHEMUS, *Nigeria and Southern Africa: Interest, Policy, and Means*, in «Canadian Journal of African Studies», XI, 1, 1977, p. 55.

tariffs putting U.S. goods at a competitive disadvantage in many African markets. As concerned the question of Southern Africa, pursuing peaceful change in the Portuguese territories did not undermine the right of self-determination, but the solution was to be found in the constructive interplay of political, economic and social forces.¹⁸⁴

Instead, Henry Kissinger saw the Angolan problem in terms of global politics, being determined not to allow the Soviets to make a move in any part of the world without being militarily confronted. Angola was located near the shipping lanes of the giant tankers carrying oil around the Cape of Good Hope, but according to John Stockwell, the former CIA Chief of the Angola Task Force, Soviet bases in Somalia had much better control of American shipping lanes and any military move against oil supplies in the Indian Ocean could trigger a chain reaction much more dangerous than the Russian presence in Angola. Stockwell thinks that Kissinger was simply seeking opportunities to challenge the Soviets, thus overruling his collaborators and refusing to seek diplomatic solutions. On this he was aided by both Zaire and Zambia, which feared the prospect of a Soviet-backed government on their flanks controlling the Benguela Railway.¹⁸⁵

By reading Kissinger's words a few years later, in 1975, we can easily assume how focused on Cold War and global issues Nixon's main advisor was. «My assessment was if the Soviet Union can interfere eight thousand miles from home in a undisputed way», he writes in his memoirs, «[...] then the Southern African countries must conclude that the U.S. has abdicated in Southern Africa. [...] They will then have two choices as to where to turn – to China or to the USSR».¹⁸⁶

The following year, in light of the Cuban involvement in the Angolan civil war, the former Harvard scholar said: «If Angola goes Communist, it will have an effect in Angola, in Zaire, in Zambia, etc. These countries can only conclude that the U.S. is no longer a factor in Southern Africa. We will pay it for decades».¹⁸⁷

Actually, Moscow had a real interest in gaining influence in whatever new States emerged from the decolonisation process, but assuming that this could be achieved

¹⁸⁴See *Secretary Rogers to President Nixon: U.S. and Africa in the 70's*, March 26, 1970, No classification marking, in FRUS 1969-1976, vol. E-5, part 1, doc. n. 11, in www.state.gov.

¹⁸⁵See J. STOCKWELL, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story*, London, Andre Deutsch Limited, 1978, p. 43.

¹⁸⁶H.A. KISSINGER, *Years of Renewal: The Concluding Volume of His Memoirs*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999, p. 792.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p. 807.

without any costs or constraints meant overestimating USSR power. Moreover, Soviet intervention in the Third World was designed to contain Chinese moves,¹⁸⁸ rather than to make life difficult for the West.¹⁸⁹

African States like Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia, focused their arguments on the alliance among former colonies and a dictatorial imperial reality such as Portugal, which was inflaming the whole area. Instead, the two Atlantic Powers were persuaded the “colonial belt” would grant stability and protection from radical infiltrations, while any violent overthrow of existing regimes would expose the area to the communist threat. This Cold War paradigm was then exploited by the white regimes to influence Western Powers, by proclaiming that movements of black emancipation were inspired and manipulated by communist forces. South Africa’s grand strategy was initially aimed at keeping white-ruled neighbours strong, then keeping black-governed neighbours as militarily weak and economically dependent as possible. According to an MPLA statement dating back to March 25, 1970, in fact, the South Africans had deployed their defence forces in Angola to take part in enemy operations in the Luanda region.¹⁹⁰

To tell the truth, the Americans did not need to be abused by the South Africans in order to follow such a version. In the Summer of 1970, in fact, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research issued a note suggesting that the Soviets might be increasing their support to national liberation movements. Moscow was thought to have become even more bullish in Africa and the activities in Angola were supposed to enhance the position of the Soviet-backed liberation movements to those aided by the Chinese, thus provoking more and more tension.¹⁹¹

On the British side, the main objective in Southern Africa was to avoid direct confrontation between black independent States and white-ruled countries. Like the other

¹⁸⁸By 1970, the Chinese-backed UNITA was being successful against the Portuguese, thus gaining international respectability. See L.M. HEYWOOD, *Unita and Ethnic Nationalism in Angola*, in «The Journal of Modern African Studies», XXVII, 1, March 1989, p. 53.

¹⁸⁹ See J.E. SPENCE, *Détente in Southern Africa: An Interim Judgment*, in «International Affairs», LIII, 1, January 1977, pp. 12-13.

¹⁹⁰ See P.L. MOORCRAFT, *African Nemesis: War and Revolution in Southern Africa, 1945-2010*, London-McLean, VA, Brassey’s Ltd, 1990, pp. 64,76.

¹⁹¹See *Intelligence Note Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research: USSR-Africa – Soviets Increasing Aid to African Liberation Fronts?*, August 11, 1970, in NARA, RG 59, INR/IL Historical Files, Africa, Latin America, Inter-Agency Intelligence Committee Files, Angola-Washington, RSEN-60, Secret, No Foreign Dissem.

Anglo-Saxon government, Whitehall sought dialogue and détente in the area, hoping that in the long-run the white regime would evolve towards a non racist direction. Majority rule was the final aim, but violence was excluded as a way to achieve it. Therefore, Downing Street was ready to side with Portugal on this particular issue at the United Nations and cast her veto. Actually, this was also due to the British will to increase the market share in metropolitan Portugal and in her overseas provinces as concerned the exploitation of natural resources, always with the optimistic outlook that in the future the Lusophone country should develop a more democratic system and a more liberal and market oriented economy.¹⁹²

American objectives were practically the same as the British ones, for they dealt with the lessening of border tensions, the development of local institutions with significant African participation and a better understanding of U.S. African policy by both black and white Angolans. Such an attitude was even more felt in those days, as the Angolan insurgents' Zambian safe haven was exacerbating relations between Lusaka and Portugal¹⁹³.

Everything the members of the Nixon Administration did or said in the early 1970s was in line with the Tar Baby choice, such as the address delivered by the Assistant Secretary of State David Newson in Chicago on September 17, 1970, who said that contact with the outside world would help bring white rulers to better understand the need for change.¹⁹⁴ To tell the truth, by reading the minutes of the conversation Newson himself had with the South African Prime Minister it does not seem that the white regimes would have gradually accepted change. As a matter of fact, John Vorster publicly said that discussion of apartheid could not be part of any dialogue.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹²See *Country Assessment Sheet: Angola*, August 18, 1970, in TNA, FCO 45/426, *Country Assessment of Angola by United Kingdom*, CSA 3/548/1, Confidential.

¹⁹³See *Paper Prepared in the Department of State: Angola - Guidelines for Policy*, September 1970, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1970-73, POL 1-2 ANG-US, Secret, Noform.

¹⁹⁴See *Saving Telegram No. 70 from Washington to Foreign and Commonwealth Office: U.S. Policy Affecting Southern Africa*, September 17, 1970, in TNA, FCO 45/402, *Political Relations between U.S.A. and Southern Africa*, CS 3/304/1, Unclassified.

¹⁹⁵See *Record of a Meeting Held at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office between Sir J. Johnston and Mr. David Newson, the United States Assistant Secretary of State*, November 30, 1970, in TNA, FCO 45/402, CS 3/304/1, Confidential.

This did not cause any doubt in the U.S. policy, and Nixon's second State of the Union Address was not different from the one delivered in 1970. Despite the repression of any attempt of emancipation towards majority rule, the President stated again that his Administration wanted to encourage the white regimes of Southern Africa to adopt more generous and realistic policies towards the needs of their black citizens, but the violent solution to the problems of racial discrimination was always excluded as an obstacle to evolutionary change. In a word, isolation of the white governments was not on the agenda.¹⁹⁶

Meanwhile, Chinese communist activities in the black continent were always being monitored. In a few words, the revolutionary struggle against colonialism and imperialism was to be fought through the arming and training of national liberation groups, the support to regimes deemed truly revolutionary and the aid to political dissidents in pro-West African countries. Actually, such a programme distinguished the Chinese from the more moderate line taken by Moscow, so much so that that initially Beijing had supported subversive actions in some of the regimes the Soviets were courting. In fact, the Russians condemned Mao for being too irresponsible and reckless, ignoring political and economic reality in individual States and setting the Africans against the USSR and the rest of the socialist bloc. Zambia and Tanzania had by far become the leading supporters of liberation movements in Southern Africa and the Tanzam Railway the Chinese were building, and which was to give Lusaka access to the sea through a friendly country, rather than through the Portuguese territories, was expected to reduce Zambia's vulnerability to economic retaliation, thus further contributing to the anti-colonialist struggle.¹⁹⁷

One of the aims of the Americans, instead, was to encourage, wherever possible, the various liberation movements to detach themselves from over-dependence on Sino-Soviet assistance, by continuing discreet contact with the leadership, giving help to pro-

¹⁹⁶See R.M. NIXON, *A Report to the Congress: U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's – Building for Peace*, February 25, 1971, in FRUS 1969-1976, vol. E-5, part 1, doc. n. 14, in www.state.gov.

¹⁹⁷See *Central Intelligence Agency, Office of National Estimates: What the Chinese Communists Are up to in Black Africa*, March 23, 1971, Secret, *ibid.*, doc. n. 15.

West leaders and their movements, short of supplying weapons and military equipment, and providing educational and humanitarian assistance to refugees.¹⁹⁸

British reports seemed a sort of photocopy of the American ones. All declarations of intent were nice words towards what the government deemed as granted, that is the continuation of white minority rule in Southern Africa. However, as concerned Portugal, British analyses considered that the difficulties of her position would finally lead to withdrawal from Africa in the 1980s. Moreover, it was stated that a higher standard of living in metropolitan Portugal and the manpower demands of industrialisation, once the country's economic development was bound up to the rest of Western Europe, would make it hard for the government to support the large armed forces necessary to maintain control of overseas provinces. Apart from this, Portugal was already regarded as the most vulnerable target in Southern Africa, thus national liberation movements were growing in strength and effectiveness and the two communist powers were also expected to gain from tensions between black Africa and Southern white regimes.¹⁹⁹

Despite Cold War analyses and interpretations, the British experts stated that Africa would remain an area of relatively low priority for the Soviet Union, despite a growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean and considerable opportunities in some States like Zambia and Kenya. As concerned Britain, Black Africa was expected to remain of long term importance, as a market and as a source of raw materials, while investments and trade with South Africa were always substantial and profitable, though ongoing tensions in the area were supposed to lead to a reduction of London's economic stake. What is important to highlight is that the document stressed that, whatever the internal situation of individual black States, nothing would affect the attitude to white supremacy in

¹⁹⁸See *Paper Prepared in the Bureau of African Affairs; Policy Planning Memorandum No. 1: U.S. Relations with the African Liberation Movements*, undated, in NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1970-73, POL 1 AFR-US, Secret.

¹⁹⁹Specific Chinese reasons for supporting African insurgent movements may be summarised as follows: a) an attempt to increase prestige and influence within the Organisation of African Unity, and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation; b) an attempt to compete with the superpowers, first of all the Soviet Union, for short-term influence in post-revolutionary governments; c) competition with the USSR and her satellites for long-term influence in post-revolutionary governments; d) a genuine sense of international duty to support insurgencies perceived as similar to the Chinese revolution; e) propaganda against China's perceived enemies, by diverting their attention from the Asian country to peripheral areas in Africa. See S.F. JACKSON, *China's Third World Foreign Policy: The Case of Angola and Mozambique, 1961-93*, in «The China Quarterly», CXLII, June 1995, p. 389.

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Southern Africa. Racial discrimination was bound to remain an emotional issue causing humiliation to the whole black population, regardless of the political system and economic development level.²⁰⁰

This was exactly what the Atlantic powers seemed to ignore. No matter how developed black African States might have been and what kind of alliance they might have chosen. Self-determination and majority rule had by then become the only issue about which no compromise was possible. Apart from statesmen like Kaunda and Nyerere, under the name of Black Consciousness and with the leadership of some young activists like Steve Biko, students argued that blacks should first develop their own cultural strength. Biko said that the blacks had been convinced to be really inferior. African culture had been associated to a sort of sub-culture purely because African people were only trying to mimicking the white man's way of living. Therefore, the first thing to do to achieve true emancipation was rejecting Western culture as something foreign and oppressive.²⁰¹

Colonialism not only took land away from those who had been living there for ages, but it was not satisfied until it had emptied the native's brain and distorted the past of the oppressed people.²⁰²

Biko claimed that Africans had to accept themselves the way they were as a first step along the path of freedom.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ See *British Policy in the Light of Longer-Term Trends in Southern Africa*, September 1, 1971, in TNA, FCO 49/320, *United Kingdom Policy towards Southern Africa*, RS 3/3, part B, Secret-UK Eyes Only.

²⁰¹ See S. BIKO, *Some African Cultural Concepts, 1971*, in A. STUBBS, ed., *Steve Biko 1946-1977, I Write what I Like: A Selections of His Writings*, Harlow, Heinemann, 1987, p. 46.

²⁰² See S. BIKO, *White Racism and Black Consciousness, 1971*, *ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁰³ See S. BIKO, *What is Black Consciousness, 1976*, *ibid.*, pp.100-104.

