

18

Pan-Africanism and African unity

**Con-
cept of
unity**

African independence had a specific significance for Pan-Africanism. Many nationalist leaders were Pan-Africanists who were strongly inspired by its anti-imperial and anti-colonial stance, and they promoted the movement after independence had opened opportunities for the realisation of their dream of continental unity. African unity was a vague concept, however, and fundamental differences existed among Africa's new leaders on exactly how unity was to be applied in practice. Kwame Nkrumah, Pan-Africanism's strongest supporter, spoke in terms of Pan-African nationalism,¹ and he placed the emphasis on the political unity embodied in a united states of Africa. Others were dubious about such a close form of unity and gave preference to a loose federal structure while a third group favoured a gradual regional form of cooperation which they predicted would eventually end in a more permanent form of unity. The Ivorian leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, saw no advantage at all in any kind of political unity: common political institutions were seen as an unnecessary waste because Africa's real need was economic development and aid, something Pan-Africanism and continental unity could not supply.²

THE QUEST FOR UNITY

Conference of Independent African States Opposition to his ideal did not deter Nkrumah, who advocated Pan-African unity as a guarantee against what he defined as neo-colonialism or the continued economic dominance of Africa by foreign or the former colonial countries. During Ghana's independence celebrations he sounded the opinion of African guests on the possibility of political union on the continent and took the first step in 1958 when he brought a well-known West Indian socialist and Pan-Africanist, George Padmore, to Ghana to act as his advisor on African affairs and to lead the Pan-African movement in Africa. Padmore thereupon organised a Conference of Independent African States in April 1958. He and Nkrumah expected a strong commitment towards African independence and unity from the eight independent states who attended the conference: Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Liberia, Ethiopia and Ghana. Instead they refrained from any mention of political unity and were satisfied with a vague reference to non-alignment as a base for African foreign policy. Even in Ghana there was doubt about the unity Nkrumah had in mind, as political leaders and civil servants feared the influence it could have had on Ghana's national interests.³ However, the opportunity to discuss world affairs proved attractive and gave the assurance that future meetings would take place. The conference also had another much more important significance: it widened the scope of Pan-Africanism by drawing the Arab states into the fold of a movement that had formerly tended to limit its attention to the Negroes.

All African Peoples' Conference December 1958 saw a further advance when the All African Peoples' Conference took place in Accra. It was attended by two hundred delegates representing fifty political parties, trade unions and student organisations from all parts of the continent irrespective of their political status. The conference reconfirmed the principles laid down by the Manchester Conference of 1945 and the delegates pledged themselves to a final and co-ordinated assault on colonialism and imperialism, including the use of violence if necessary. Much stronger steps towards African unity were also suggested. These included the regrouping of the continent's independent states by the adjustment of existing 'artificial' borders, the amalgamation or federation of certain areas on a regional basis, and the progressive formation of federations or confederations into an ultimate Pan-African commonwealth and a free and independent united states of Africa. After the delegates heard Nkrumah's opening plea for a strong form of unity such as this, they accepted a resolution asking for the formation of a 'Commonwealth of free African states' and expressed the hope that 'the day will dawn when the first loyalty of African states will be to an African Commonwealth'.⁴ Regional governments controlling five federations of North, West, Central, East and South Africa were suggested and a constitution was adopted providing for an organisation with a permanent secretariat to organise future conferences. A call was also made upon existing independent African states to lead the continent towards the attainment of this goal.⁵

Milestones These two conferences were milestones in the quest for African unity. They made Pan-Africanism an exclusive African movement, lead by Africans. The movement then definitely entered the sphere of practical politics,⁶ and between 1959 and 1963 various

steps were taken to create some form of unity on the continent. Greater mutual contact between leaders, parties and trade unions made these Pan-African overtures possible.

East Africa: Pafme-ca One of the first moves in this direction was a regional one and was made in September 1958, even before the meeting of the All African Peoples' Conference in Accra. East Africans who wanted to liberate their countries from colonialism founded the Pan African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa (Pafme-ca). A conference of nationalists from these areas, inspired by Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika, followed immediately after the Accra conference. Delegates from Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, Nyasaland Northern and Southern Rhodesia considered the promotion of Pan-Africanism and the liberation from colonialism. A Freedom Charter of the peoples of East and Central Africa was drawn up coordinating their actions. Between its inception and 1963, Pafme-ca met annually, and in 1960 it contemplated steps to federate Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar.

Guinea-Ghana Union A similar attempt to encourage closer union followed in West Africa after Guinea opted for complete independence from France in 1958. Sekou Touré was a convinced Pan-Africanist and after the financial aid 'rich and jolly' Ghana gave him, he and Nkrumah created the Ghana-Guinea Union on 11 May 1959. With its own flag, anthem and motto, the Union was intended to become the core of the desired union of African states. Membership was open to all independent states and under its motto of 'Independence and Unity' it strove towards a free and progressive union of independent African states.⁸

Sanniquillie Declaration This strong emphasis upon a close political union did not attract all states. President William Tubman of Liberia was one ruler who was dubious about it and after a meeting with Nkrumah and Touré in July 1959, the Sanniquillie Declaration was issued. It laid down the principles for a Community of African states but made no reference to any form of unification. Instead it favoured a kind of commonwealth as base for future unity in which member states would retain their identity and constitutions. It recognised the principle of non-interference in one another's domestic affairs and brought to the fore the problem of the relationship between sovereign states and their position in a unified political framework.

The Ghana-Guinea union failed to develop despite the fact that Mali, formerly the colony of French Sudan, joined them in 1960. Touré attached no specific value to the union and was satisfied with occasional ministerial meetings where nothing was achieved. In practical terms the union had no common frontier, and this made economic cooperation difficult to achieve.⁹ After Nkrumah (1966) and the Malian leader, Modibo Keita (1968), were removed from power, the union practically disappeared.

Parallel conferences: Tunis A series of parallel conferences, held by the independent states and the All African Peoples' group, was another feature of Pan-Africanism in those years. It is thus evident that the movement was divided into moderate and militant groupings and that the two regarded each other with suspicion. The All African Peoples' group held their second congress in Tunis in 1960 and devoted much attention to the political, economic and

cultural aspects of Pan-Africanism. Its revised constitution reaffirmed the ideal of unity and the eventual creation of a united states of Africa.

Addis Ababa

Later in the same year, the independent states met in Addis Ababa at a conference that was also open to colonies which were not yet independent but had already set the date to take this step. Nigeria, Somalia and Algeria attended but the French colonies, due for independence later that year, were conspicuous by their absence. This was caused by several factors. In the first place, at that stage their enthusiasm for Pan-Africanism was lukewarm compared with the other states, and they feared that the presence of Algeria, locked in an intense struggle with France, could alienate them from the mother country. Other differences centred on language and the background of their leaders who were all steeped in French culture. The way in which these colonies became independent was significant too. From 1960 they could obtain independence individually with continued economic, technological, military and other aid from France. This was generally preferred to joining the two federal blocs, which formed the core of two larger united francophone states.¹⁰

Differences on unity

The independent states all confirmed their opposition towards colonialism, imperialism and racism as well as to the French nuclear tests in the Sahara. They also decided to create an organisation for African economic development and to work towards closer educational, cultural and scientific bonds. Despite this, fundamental differences existed with regard to unity. Ghana and Guinea made a strong case for a political union based upon the Sanniquellie Declaration, but the other delegates were cool about this. Nigeria not only branded the idea 'premature', but warned against leaders who aspired to lead the continent to constitutional unity. This remark was obviously aimed at Nkrumah, who had made himself available for this role during the first All African Peoples' Conference in 1958. Africa's new leaders were clearly unwilling to sacrifice their newly attained political power to anybody.¹¹

Bloc of French-speaking states

This paved the way for the appearance of a separate bloc of conservative states on the continent. This bloc was French-speaking and relied on the mother country for their security, capital, skills and markets. It coincided with De Gaulle's preference for keeping English influence out of the European Common Market (ECM) which spilt over into Africa and deepened suspicion towards English-speaking Africa. Nkrumah was increasingly convinced that the former French colonies were mere client states of France and only nominally independent, since he regarded the ECM as an instrument of neo-colonialism. He also opposed their preference for regional groupings, seeing it as a drain on the political power which unity of the continent could bring. Pafmeca became Pafmecs between 1961 and 1962 when Ethiopia, Somalia, Basutoland, Bechuanaland and black nationalists from South Africa, South West Africa and Swaziland joined the grouping.

Developing force

The year 1960 was crucial for Pan-Africanism and the quest for continental unity. The pioneers of this ideal managed a clearer definition of its aims and placed the movement on a better organised footing. Its influence on the continent and in world politics was taking shape, and at the United Nations (UN) it became a power bloc putting Africa's

viewpoint with growing confidence. But the first cracks in its ranks and ostensible unity were also appearing as more states became independent and their rulers disagreed with the pioneers about the interpretation of African unity and the continent's attitude towards the outside world. These dissidents were the thirteen French colonies and Nigeria. Differences between the groups terminated in blocs of states hostile towards each other. Another bone of contention was border disputes, especially between Cameroon and Guinea, Somalia and Ethiopia, Tunisia and Egypt, Togo and Ghana, Nigeria and Ghana, Morocco and Mauritania, and Morocco and Tunisia.

Katanga secession

Then came the Congo crisis. The Congolese prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, asked the African states and the UN for aid in ridding the country of the Belgian troops who tried to maintain order in the chaos that followed the granting of independence. The UN obliged and asked African states to make troops available for a task force. This drew these states into the crisis which was worsened when Katanga seceded and resisted efforts to bring it back into the Congolese fold. Lumumba expected greater involvement from the world body, but the UN was hesitant to interfere in the domestic affairs of the country and limited its efforts to helping to rid the Congo of the Belgian troops. A split was also developing between Lumumba and the country's president, Joseph Kasavubu, while Kasavubu and the Katangese leader, Moïse Tshombe, enjoyed the support of some of the French-speaking African states.

Leopoldville Conference

All of this contributed to making the situation very difficult for Lumumba. He was a convinced Pan-Africanist and these problems convinced him to organise his own Pan-Africanist conference. This was held in Leopoldville between 25 and 31 August 1960 and immediately created a very delicate situation for the thirteen states that attended. They did not want to antagonise the UN, because they realised that the UN force had to stay in the Congo; on the other hand they did not want to oppose Lumumba. In consequence, they requested Lumumba to cooperate with the UN and confirmed the world body's actions. Katanga was a much harder nut to crack since there was a difference of opinion on how Tshombe's secession was to be handled. Guinea supported Lumumba's demand that Tshombe be deposed, but others were unwilling to commit themselves to such a step. In the end they made no positive suggestions on how to handle the Katangese secession. Uncertainty and mutual differences prevented the independent African states from taking a unified stand. A disillusioned Lumumba then called upon the Soviet Union for aid – a step that put African unity under further pressure because it violated the principle of non-alignment upon which previous Pan-African congresses had laid so much stress. The cracks in Pan-African ranks were widening.

Polarisation

Further developments in the Congo worsened the position. The split between Lumumba and Kasavubu proved impossible to heal and they removed each other from power. Meanwhile, the UN occupied the broadcasting station in Leopoldville, using Ghanaian troops and thus preventing Lumumba from addressing the people; Nkrumah took the stance of supporting the Congolese prime minister in public. This was an obvious effort to keep in favour with both parties while the more radical African states, Ghana and Guinea, criticised the UN for not acting against the Katangese secession. At this stage

the army under Colonel Joseph Mobutu intervened and stopped the chaos in the Congo, but his action also widened the gap among the African states. Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Egypt and Morocco did not recognise the new Congolese government and continued their support for Lumumba. When the Congolese government sent the Ghanaian ambassador home and requested the UN to withdraw the Ghanaian and Guinean troops, the polarisation between the pro-Lumumba and anti-Lumumba groups increased.

**The
Brazza-
ville
group**

While these developments were in progress, the thirteen French colonies in black Africa became independent. Although the new states were cool towards Pan-Africanism, they realised the value of greater continental unity and after discussing the Algerian crisis in October 1960, they formed a more permanent organisation to guard their interests. In December of the same year, twelve of the new states met at Brazzaville. The Congo and Algerian crises were reaching serious proportions, and at the Brazzaville meeting the new states expressed their support for the UN's actions in the Congo. On the question of unity they preferred closer African cooperation based upon neighbourliness and unity of culture and interests to the advantage of all. No reference was made to the radical kind of unity Nkrumah propagated. The Brazzaville conference had a special significance: for the first time a conference was held to which only a limited and specific group of states were invited. This resulted in the formation of a bloc – the Brazzaville group, also known as the Union of Africa and Malgassy (UAM) – that stood for a policy of mutual cooperation. Their taking of sides in the Congo crisis contributed to the deepening of the split that existed in Pan-African ranks.

**Casa-
blanca
Con-
ference**

African unity was the loser. The states supporting Lumumba suddenly found themselves in the minority; fearing that they were losing their Pan-African initiatives, they began to cooperate in a bloc which enabled them to put their case more strongly. Morocco took the lead and organised a conference at Casablanca early in January 1961. The heads of states of Ghana, Guinea, Mali and the United Arab Republic (Egypt) attended, as did the foreign minister of Libya and the leader of the provisional government of Algeria. Although the meeting devoted some discussion to imperialism, colonialism and racism, the Congo and continental unity enjoyed its main attention. Nkrumah pleaded strongly for a union of African states, but even within their ranks there was no real support for this kind of unity. Instead, the conference reconfirmed its confidence in the conferences of independent African states which had been held in Accra in 1958 and in Addis Ababa in 1960, calling upon all to cooperate to create political, economic, cultural and military unity as far as this was possible. To this end they decided to form an African Consultative Assembly and four committees dealing with political, economic, and cultural affairs, as well as an African Supreme Command. These were to meet regularly to deal with affairs of common concern.

**African
Charter**

These decisions were embodied in the African Charter of May 1961, which was compiled after another meeting in Cairo and was intended to embody the principles laid down at Casablanca. When it took these steps, the Casablanca group became a formal organisation in a wider Pan-African context. It took the process of bloc formation a step further and formed a group that opposed the Brazzaville group in a specific manner.

However, the other African states did not react to their call for unity, an indication that the Pan-African ideal was very far from realisation and was in danger of disappearing.

Monrovia Conference

Africa was divided into two camps with a third group of states, Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo and Tunisia, remaining aloof from the polarisation. These states did not form a third group, but their existence made African unity futile and ludicrous – a situation that moved Léopold Senghor of Senegal to try to convince the two blocs to come to some kind of mutual understanding. A further conference was proposed. Léopold Senghor, President William Tubman of Liberia and Sir Abubakar Tafewa Balewa, the prime minister of Nigeria, arranged the preliminaries with the support of six other states. Two of these, Cameroon and the Côte d'Ivoire (belonging to the Brazzaville group), and two others, Guinea and Mali (from the Casablanca group), cooperated with Liberia and Nigeria to sponsor the meeting. Eventually twenty states gathered in Monrovia. Shortly before the meeting opened on 8 May 1961, Ghana, Guinea and Mali withdrew, ostensibly dissatisfied with the arrangements, while Morocco and Egypt refused the invitation. Sudan withdrew in support of Morocco's objection to the presence of Mauritania, while the Congo, the source of the quarrel between the two blocs, was not invited, signifying that the Casablanca group were boycotting the conference.¹³

Principles

In spite of this, the Monrovia Conference was the biggest meeting of African states since 1958, and French- and English-speaking states met for the first time to discuss general affairs. The main speakers all stressed some aspect of the unity that Africa desired and needed. Tubman emphasised economic cooperation, Senghor stressed cultural, technical and economic instead of political unity, while Milton Margai of Sierra Leone pleaded for a unity that preserved the territorial integrity of each state and a free choice of form of government and kept political ideology intact. After lengthy discussion a number of principles, laid down in a joint communique, were accepted. These included the recognition of the absolute equality of all states; the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states; respect for the sovereignty of each state; and the principle that there should be recognition of the inalienable right of each state not only to exist but to develop its own personality and means of resistance to subversive acts by neighbouring states.¹⁴

Lagos Charter

The acceptance of the principle of mutual cooperation based upon tolerance, solidarity, good neighbourliness and the periodical exchange of ideas was of special importance. The kind of unity these states preferred excluded any form of political unification or integration of their sovereignty, but aimed instead at the unification of aspirations and acts as far as social solidarity and political identity were concerned. In January 1962 these principles were finalised in the Lagos Charter, which gave birth to the Inter-African Malagasy Organisation (popularly known as Ocam), with various management and administrative organs.

Polarisation of views

The year 1962 was one of polarisation on the African continent. The radical Casablanca group wanted to place the continent on the path to socialism, which they saw as the solution to its economic problems. The African personality was to be cultivated in all

walks of life, and the group continued to warn against the dangers of neo-colonialism. The moderate Monrovia group differed on all three these aims and attached much importance to good relations and cooperation with the former colonial powers. The widest and most significant difference, however, concerned the concept of unity. To Monrovia it meant unified aspirations, solidarity and the maintenance of political identity but no political unification on a unitary, federal or regional level. This was the exact opposite of Nkrumah's stance. To him, the future lay in a political union because it held the solution to problems such as poverty, balkanisation, neo-colonialism and mutual aspirations, as well as language and cultural differences. At this stage these differences of approach towards Pan-Africanism resulted in personal quarrels between African leaders. The Nigerian press came out strongly against Nkrumah for his derisive remarks on the Monrovia principles and mocked him for his inability to unite Ghana and Guinea properly. He was accused of seeing himself as a kind of messiah at the head of the whole African continent.

THE FORMATION OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

Pro- posed summit

Paradoxically, despite these bitter differences African states had one important thing in common. All of them felt an urge for some kind of continental unity. It was this feeling that changed the direction of events and made 1963 the year of African unity – something which hardly seemed possible when the Lagos Charter was issued. During the Lagos meeting, some African leaders were obviously unhappy about this dissent. Haile Selassie, head of Africa's oldest independent state, regarded the bloc formation as artificial and called upon the continent's leaders to put away their differences and concentrate on affairs upon which they all agreed. He stressed that he belonged to one grouping only: the African grouping. This evoked reaction from both Ghana and Guinea, who made new calls for cooperation among African states. Throughout 1962 serious discussions at diplomatic level took place at the UN, and visits between various African leaders followed, such as between Haile Selassie and Sekou Touré in Asmara on 28 June 1962. The idea of a summit for all heads of African states was born. Ethiopia took the lead in organising this and succeeded in gathering the foreign ministers together to prepare for the proposed summit which was to be held at Addis Ababa early in 1963.

Provi- sional charters

During a preliminary meeting, African foreign ministers worked on compiling an agenda and drafted provisional charters on which the heads of state could deliberate. With the charters of the Monrovia and Casablanca groupings and the ideas of Kwame Nkrumah before them, four perspectives on possible unity crystallised. Libya and Sudan suggested that an African Charter similar to the Declaration of Bandung should be accepted. This would have maintained the position as it had been before the summit. Another group of states favoured the framing of a declaration of principles to create a loose organisation of states within the framework of an African Association, based upon the model of the Organisation of American States. A third grouping regarded such an organic form of unity as premature, and gave preference to economic cooperation which could lead to future unity. Lastly, those who were clearly inspired by Nkrumah

insisted on the formation of a union of African states with its own civil service, supreme military command and high court. This confronted the foreign ministers with unsurmountable obstacles and they opted for the way of least resistance. This entailed the circulation of an Ethiopian concept charter for the comments of the heads of state which they would then reconsider at a later date.¹⁵

**Addis
Ababa
summit**

Thirty heads of state gathered in an euphoric Addis Ababa on 23 May 1963. Only Morocco, in protest against the presence of Mauritania, and Togo, because of the assassination of President Sylvanus Olympus, were absent. Strong leaders such as Nasser, Haile Selassie and even Houphouët-Boigny rejected the foreign ministers' suggestion to refer the Ethiopian concept back to the foreign ministers for further consideration. Opening the summit, Haile Selassie told the delegates that their prime task was the creation of a base for unity and that it was his view that they should talk with one voice and make unilateral decisions when and where necessary. This was possible only in a single organisation from which Africa could talk as an entity and in which Africa itself could find solutions to its problems. To accomplish this was the meeting's prime responsibility to the people of Africa.

**Differ-
ences
of view-
point**

A variety of views were put forward in the subsequent discussion, but opinions once again polarised reflecting the basic difference that had existed since the quest for unity had begun in 1958. Nkrumah pleaded for a union of states and reasoned that socioeconomic development and cooperation were possible only within this type of political framework. He assured the summit that this would not lead to the political union so many feared. Only Uganda stood by Nkrumah – the majority opposed his suggestion. Sir Abubakar Tafewa Balewa said it was much too early for such a union and placed strong emphasis on the independence and sovereignty of each state. Mutual respect for, and acceptance of, each other's sovereignty and equality were prerequisites for unity; this would be possible only through gradual cooperation in the economic, educational, scientific and cultural spheres. He stated that it was essential for the Africans to come to know each other properly before a step as drastic as political unity could be contemplated. The spirit of Casablanca and Monrovia was obviously alive and well.

**New
sense
of soli-
darity**

Then Ben Bella of Algeria steered the meeting on a different course. In an emotional speech he called on the delegates each to die in some small way so that African unity could live. He turned their attention towards decolonisation, which all African states favoured, and he called upon Africa's independent states to cooperate in liberating the rest of the continent from the white minority governments in the south. This inspired the meeting with a sense of solidarity and new spirit. One by one, speakers then began to clarify this as Africa's prime task. South Africa and Portugal became the binding factors: unity was found in joint commitment against colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination. Military and financial aid and boycotts, all aimed at the white south, were suggested, and in this spirit the summit sent the foreign ministers back to draft a charter.

OAU

Concessions were necessary and the Casablanca states accepted defensive aspects such as respect for sovereignty, the condemnation of subversion and non-interference for the

inclusion of non-alignment, anti-colonialism and the absolute priority of liberation in southern Africa.¹⁶ What eventually crystallised was more in accordance with the views of the conservative heads than those of the radical leaders. The Casablanca grouping realised that its view had been rejected and the unity it preferred was undesirable at that stage in the quest for continental unity. They accepted the charter with the promise that closer unification would be discussed at a later stage. On 23 May 1963 the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was born – Africa took a significant step towards the cooperation and unity its leaders so ardently desired, the form of which had been the source of such vastly differing opinions.¹⁷ Since the unity that was created rested upon the principles of decolonisation, anti-apartheid and the desire to have a say in world affairs, it was, as one critic put it, built on the negative act of breaking down forces outside its fold rather than an attempt to consolidate itself from within its own ranks.¹⁸ From a different viewpoint, the OAU is an organisation that aims at the defence of the territorial and political status quo in Africa. Individual sovereignty was the supreme issue. It made the annual assembly of the continent's heads of state of far greater importance than the arbitrary bodies set up to consider health, education, economic and defence matters.¹⁹

THE AIMS, PRINCIPLES AND STRUCTURE OF THE OAU

- Charter** The charter of the OAU is very similar to that of the UN and some of the principles accepted were taken from the UN charter. It recognised the inalienable right of all people to decide on their own future as well as the principle that freedom, equality, justice and dignity are aims that should be pursued if the legitimate aspirations of Africa's peoples are to be realised. Peace and security should be maintained, sovereignty and territorial integrity guaranteed and all forms of neo-colonialism opposed. Member states are pledged to aspire towards mutual understanding and solidarity.
- Aims** Five specific aims were set. The organisation devoted itself to promote unity and solidarity among its members; cooperation was aimed at the improvement of life on the continent; the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the African states were to be protected; all forms of colonialism were to be wiped out; and international cooperation was to be promoted within the context of the charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To realise these aims, member states undertook to coordinate their policies with regard to the following: politics, diplomacy, economic cooperation including transport and communication, cultural cooperation, the promotion of health, sanitation, feeding, scientific and technical cooperation, defence and security affairs.²⁰ Emphasis was placed on cooperation whereas political unification did not feature at all. With regard to defence matters, Nkrumah's suggestion of an African Supreme Command was also omitted.
- Principles** In article III of the charter, seven principles were laid down to govern relations between member states. This is the key to understanding the essence of the OAU. The article affirmed the following: the sovereign equality of member states; non-intervention in the domestic affairs of member states; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state as well as the inalienable right of each to independence; peaceful settlement

of differences through negotiation, mediation, conciliation or arbitration; unconditional condemnation of all forms of political assassination and subversive activities to undermine the government of a neighbouring state; absolute devotion to the liberation of regions still struggling for their independence; and non-alignment with regard to international power blocs.²¹

Structure Four main institutions and a number of specialised commissions control the OAU, headed by an Assembly of Heads of State and Governments. The assembly meets once a year, or more often if two thirds of the members, which also constitutes a quorum, consider it necessary. This body determines policy and reviews the decisions taken by the OAU's other organs while its own decisions are sent to Africa's governments in the form of suggestions which cannot be enforced upon member states. No disciplinary action can be taken against any member. Each member has one vote and all decisions except procedural measures require a two-thirds majority. Another function of the assembly is the appointment of the secretariat and some of the specialised committees.

Council of Ministers The Council of Ministers consists of the foreign ministers of the member states. They have two regular meetings a year, but can be summoned more often when relations deteriorate or crises such as border disputes develop. This makes it the most active organ of the OAU. The council's decisions are generally submitted to the assembly, but in more recent years the council has started to take decisions on its own when important issues are at stake. Like the assembly, it lacks the power to execute its decisions. Another function of the council is the coordination of the organisation's specialised commissions.

Secretariat The secretariat consists of an administrative secretary-general with four assistant regional secretaries and some junior personnel. They form a permanent central body executing all administrative affairs as laid down in the charter. The secretary-general's duties are limited to administration, as the name of his post suggests. The main reason for this is to restrict his power and prevent him from making policy. In fact he must remain neutral – strong proof of the absence of real unity within the OAU. This makes the appointment of the secretary-general every four years a very sensitive affair. In practice he is a puppet and his functions are carefully circumscribed. Special care is taken to prevent him from executing commands from individual states or governments and member states may not misuse him. He can react to the OAU's commands only in a strictly neutral capacity.

Commission for Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration The Commission for Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration is perhaps the OAU's most important commission. Consisting of 21 members, and appointed for a period of five years, its aim is to arbitrate between member states and to reconcile them if necessary. The commission has its own management and staff situated in Addis Ababa and, in contrast to the other commissions, falls directly under the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Like the OAU's other organs this commission's decisions cannot be enforced, neither can it suspend a guilty party. Only the assembly can request a state to comply with the commission's suggestions – which makes the council a somewhat ineffective body.

Specialised commissions The OAU also appoints seven specialised commissions for specific purposes. Their aim is to coordinate and harmonise policy with the purpose of promoting close cooperation and mutual understanding. The members of the commissions are the ministers who deal with these affairs in each of the member countries. Among the issues dealt with in the commissions are economic and social affairs, education and cultural affairs, health, sanitation and feeding, defence, science, technical affairs, research, transport and communication and justice. There are a number of additional bodies such as the Commission for Fugitives and the Coordinating Commission for Liberation of Africa which were formed during the foundation of the OAU. Initially this latter commission consisted of eleven members but was later enlarged to seventeen. Its headquarters are in Dar es Salaam. The commission controls an aid fund and is financed by donations amounting to 10 per cent of the government income of member states. Because of mistakes this commission made over the years, it was later augmented by a committee of military experts and a Bureau for Sanctions.

THE OAU AND AFRICAN UNITY

Criticism from Nkrumah After the formation of the OAU, the Casablanca and Monrovia groupings, Pafmecs and the UAM were disbanded, but the tension between the demands of national sovereignty and the All-African supranationalism which continental unity implied continued to exist. The unity embodied in the OAU charter encountered severe criticism from Nkrumah and his followers. They referred to the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments as a 'trade union of African presidents'²² wishing 'to protect their interests at the expense of the African people'.²³ Until his fall in 1966 Nkrumah continued his efforts to change the OAU into the kind of body he preferred and tried to create an executive with wide powers at every summit meeting. This weakened the OAU, who had to struggle with severe border disputes between Algeria and Morocco as well as those between Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya and a recurrence of the Congo crisis within five months of the organisation being founded. By giving asylum to political fugitives from Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Zaïre, Nkrumah caused relations to deteriorate because some African leaders were reminded of the role he had played in the Togo-Ghana feud a few years previously.²⁴ They were also disillusioned by the OAU's inability to prevent Nkrumah's actions, and boycotted the OAU meeting he sponsored in Accra in 1965. The old schism between the Casablanca and Monrovia groupings reappeared and the disbanded UAM revived as Ocam shortly afterwards.

Disillusionment When Nkrumah fell from power a year later, Nyerere and Touré tried to keep some of his sentiments alive, but the high priority the OAU gave to decolonisation prevented the continuation of a search for closer unity. At the same time, the spirit of Casablanca and Monrovia, the egotism of some of the leaders, national rivalry between member states and political instability filtering through the ranks of the organisation, posed other serious obstacles.²⁵ Nkrumah's dreams of the disappearance of international boundaries and a common African brotherhood, even as long-term processes, became unattainable when the heads of states declared their national boundaries inviolable at the Cairo summit in 1964.²⁶ It was not only the small group of ardent Pan-Africanists

who were disillusioned by the OAU. On its thirteenth anniversary in 1975 the *Daily Nation*, a Kenyan newspaper, lamented that the OAU had 'more to show on the debit than on the credit side'.²⁷ Worse was still to come in 1976 when the Angolan crisis split the OAU into two equal factions, coinciding with ideological pressures between East and West.

Political divisions In 1977 the summit realised that lip service to African unity could not prevent the political fragmentation that was paralysing the OAU. Suggestions to reform the secretariat were made, and these crystallised into a more pragmatic approach in 1978 when a committee to coordinate relations among the OAU's 49 member states was formed. These steps failed; national sovereignty clearly dominated the Pan-African idea while the ideological differences that arose after 1976 pushed the South African issue into the background. Differences about the Cuban presence in the Ogaden, the second invasion of Shaba, and relations between the francophone states and Paris were other bones of contention. In the early eighties the crises in the Western Sahara and Chad demonstrated that the divisions were stronger than ever, and in 1982 it proved impossible to obtain a quorum for that year's summit.

Regional unity From the outset, the creation of regional unity was a possible alternative to the unity that the Addis Ababa conference had failed to achieve. However, attempts to promote regional unity did not originate as OAU projects, but came from individual statesmen – one of these pioneers was even Nkrumah himself. The Ghana–Guinea–Mali union was intended to be a forerunner of a socialist Union of West African states: something which Nkrumah had dreamed about since his days in London. This union also failed. Another abortive West African attempt was made by Senegal and French Sudan – which later became known as Mali. The achievement of Maghribian unity, including Libya, proved to be unrealistic as did the attempt to federate Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda in 1963–1964. Thereupon Nyerere united Tanganyika and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba in April 1964 and this area became known as the United Republic of Tanzania in April 1965. The mutiny in Tanganyika's army and communist penetration of Zanzibar had much to do with this effort, although it was announced that this move was merely an attempt to bind the historical and cultural links between the two states. The unity that was created in 1965 was very shaky. The Revolutionary Council of Zanzibar retained a substantial amount of sovereignty – thus demanding severe restraint on the part of Nyerere to keep the union together. Despite this, Tanzania far outlived the efforts made in West Africa. After 1972 unity became more binding, and five years later the ruling parties on the island and the mainland merged and a new constitution replaced the temporary one which had been written in 1965. In the new dispensation Zanzibar retained its separate government but started to send representatives to the union parliament for the first time.²⁸

THE WEAKNESS OF AFRICAN UNITY

Other obstacles Other dividing factors gradually emerged from the divergent interests of the OAU's member states. These crystallised into problems in assembling all the heads of state for the annual summit meeting; a preoccupation with domestic affairs including civil

unrest and the high occurrence of coups; a lack of enthusiasm for continental unity; and personal animosities between leaders. As early as 1964 Moise Tshombe, who was legally entitled to attend the summit, caused trouble; the presence of Idi Amin also kept Nyerere, Kaunda and Seretse Khama away from the 1975 gathering. In 1971 attendance was as low as 10 out of 41 and it dropped to 6 out of 45 five years later. In 1982 the OAU experienced a serious crisis and the summit was postponed twice: as a result of the western Saharan dispute and subsequently, after the crisis in Chad, before it was eventually convened in 1983 in Addis Ababa. This poor attendance eroded the decision-making power of the body. Meetings on ministerial level were more successful in removing misunderstanding and in reducing conflict.²⁹

The
secre-
tary-
general

The OAU's inability to act with a modicum of unity is built into its structure, and a powerless secretary-general, with no authority to take decisions, also contributes to this. At best he is a dignified clerk without any political role or relevance³⁰ and all suggestions to improve this position are regularly forestalled. In fact appointments to this sensitive post were another dividing factor, because it was strongly contested. Diallo Telli of Guinea first held the position and he was succeeded by a Cameroonian, Nzo Ekangaki. To appoint his successor, W. E. M'Boumoue, also from Cameroon, twenty ballots had to be held, and the position became even worse in 1983 when three candidates contested the position before an acting secretary-general, Peter Onu of Nigeria, previously the assistant-secretary for West Africa, was appointed.³¹ He held the post until 1985 when Ide Oumarou of Niger succeeded him. Since 1989 Salim Ahmed Salim of Tanzania held the post.

Mem-
bership
ques-
tion

The principle that every independent African state except South Africa could join the OAU was another factor that harmed the body's efficiency. Mauritania was admitted from the outset, despite Morocco's complaints, while Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana were allowed to join despite Sudan's objection and their economic dependence on South Africa. Deeper divisions surrounded the admittance of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic despite strong Moroccan opposition. The Polisario Front, who preferred independence instead of the division of the Spanish Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania, enjoyed recognition from 22 members of the OAU.

ATTEMPTS AT ECONOMIC COOPERATION

African
Devel-
opment
Bank

Economic cooperation was a distinct aim of the OAU, and some African statesmen saw economic cooperation as the most practical way towards the desired continental unity. Julius Nyerere regarded regional economic groupings as 'stepping stones towards African unity'.³² Organisations for economic cooperation were founded even before the formation of the OAU, and these were more successful than attempts at political cooperation. Some, such as the Equatorial Customs Union (UDE) and the Conseil de l'Entente, both established in 1959, had limited aims, but the African Development Bank (ADB), whose origin dates back to the All African Peoples' Conference in Tunis in 1960, is among the more successful efforts to create continental cooperation. Twenty states were members of the bank when it started its operations in 1966 and ten years later membership had grown to 39. The bank aims at social and economic development

on an individual and collective scale with preference for regional cooperation. It has the power to initiate projects, and by 1974 it had invested R500 million in development projects, while an African Development Fund was established in the same year.

- Cus-
toms
and
econ-
omic
unions** The formation of interstate facilities for the economic development of North, East and Central Africa enjoyed the support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and, in the early sixties, a Customs and Economic Union for Central Africa (UDEAC) started to work towards complete freedom of movement of people, goods, commodities, services and capital in order to coordinate industrial development, transport and tax systems. By late 1967 the UDEAC was far advanced in realising a general monetary system, one transport system and free movement of capital and people; at this stage two member states, Chad and the Central African Republic, became dissatisfied and, joined by Zaïre, they formed the Economic Union of Central Africa (UEAC) in April 1968. The Central African Republic soon became disillusioned and reverted to the UDEAC. Since then both bodies have existed alongside each other; all efforts to reconcile them had failed up until 1980.
- Ocam** The Union of African and Malagassian Economic Cooperation, another organisation of this kind, was formed in 1964 and was a reconstruction of the disbanded Union of Africa and Malagassy (UAM). It was a definite economic bloc, but its 14 members soon felt that a more politically oriented body would serve their purposes better. The Africa and Malagassy Community Organisation (Ocam) developed from this, and although it lost Mauritania in 1965, Zaïre and Rwanda later joined the organisation. It aimed at political, economic, social, educational and cultural ties between francophone Africa and Madagascar within the wider framework of the OAU. Ocam had its own summit of state and governmental heads, a council of ministers, a general secretary and a charter which all pointed to its political orientation. This drew criticism from the OAU which accused Ocam members of greater loyalty towards Ocam than to the OAU and claimed that its existence could stimulate regional economic bloc formation, a step which the UN encouraged. However, by 1967 the OAU's attitude had softened, and its summit began to support regional economic cooperation as a forerunner to a future African Economic Community similar to the European Economic Community (EEC).
- OERS** This revised view stimulated existing bodies such as UDEAC and led to the formation of the Organisation of Senegal River States (OERS) in 1968. Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal joined the OERS and wanted to develop the Senegal River basin for the benefit of all. The agreement also included stipulations on cooperation in commerce and health. Mutual differences, military coups and strong personal differences between Touré and Senghor brought the OERS to the brink of collapse while the OAU failed to sort out their differences; in 1971 a new organisation, the Organisation for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS), was established without Guinea, but it too, failed to create the necessary cooperation. Meanwhile Ocam realised that it was trespassing on the area of the OAU and depoliticised itself in 1974 by limiting its activities to economic, social and cultural cooperation. Hereafter decline set in and, although it still functioned in the 1980s, its members consisted of the small and poorer francophone states who were primarily concerned with linguistic and cultural links.³³

EAEC Two other groupings developed under the umbrella of the OAU. One was the East Africa Economic Community (EAEC), which grew from its colonial predecessors, the East African High Commission (1948) and the East African Common Services Organisation (1961). The latter played a significant role in maintaining East Africa's common services and survived the abortive negotiations to form an East African federation in 1963. Fears of unequal advantages spelt its doom – Tanganyika and Uganda claimed that Kenya would derive greater benefit than was just. A compromise resulting in the EAEC and an East African Common Market, controlled by an East African Authority, was reached with the signing of a Treaty for East African Cooperation on 6 June 1967. This consisted of ministers, five councils and an East African legislative assembly of nine members; offices were to be decentralised. An East African Development Bank was called into existence in order to promote industrial development and all trade restrictions were removed. Kenya continued to dominate, however, and by the mid-1970s the organisation was dwindling. The political will to make it succeed was absent, because Nyerere, who chaired the Authority, did not call meetings since he refused to sit at the same table with Amin of Uganda while his socialist economic policies based on Communist Chinese and North Vietnamese models ruled out any cooperation with Kenya.³⁴ In 1977 the EAEC crumbled completely. In 1983 Nyerere closed his borders with Kenya until the assets and liabilities of the EAEC were sorted out. This was achieved in November, whereupon Nyerere opened the border once again.

CEAO In West Africa moves towards economic regionalism became stronger after Nkrumah disappeared from the scene in 1966, and as a result of the criticism the ECA directed at the discussions held to form a body based on the EEC a year later. Francophone West Africa was suspicious and interpreted the tentative moves as another ploy to create Anglo-Saxon economic domination. In 1970 they established a West African economic community known as the CEAO which tied up with France and the EEC rather than their English-speaking neighbours. In this region Nigeria, prospering as a result of the oil boom, recovered quickly after the civil war and became the economic giant of the area. With a favourable balance of payments, and from a position of strength compared with its non-oil-producing neighbours, Nigeria began to steer towards a West African economic community.

Ecowas To placate francophone fears, Nigeria used Togo as a screen while the Lomé Convention of 1974, regulating relations between 46 African, Caribbean and Pacific states and the EEC, served as a guideline. In May 1975, 15 countries signed the Lagos treaty which created the Economic Organisation of West African States (Ecowas) after Senegal's suggestion that Zaïre and the francophone states of Equatorial Africa be included to counter the English bias had been refused. Ecowas followed the EEC model and aimed at the removal of all customs duties, trade restrictions and barriers to mutual export goods within fifteen years. Other aims included a shared commercial policy towards countries outside the economic community, and common citizenship ensuring freedom of movement, work and residence to all people living within the community. It also provided for a cooperation fund to compensate and develop member states who suffered a loss of revenue as a result of reduced tariff rates. Lomé became its headquar-

ters, and an annual meeting of heads of member states and a subordinate council of ministers were introduced.

**Problems facing
Ecogas**

Among its successes, Ecogas can point to the creation of an energy programme and fund as well as a \$25-million communication project. A programme to attain agricultural self-sufficiency was also initiated, but progress towards harmony on the issue of customs and the free movement of goods and people was less successful. The free movement of migrant labourers across West African borders is a specific feature of the region's economy,³⁵ but in 1970 Ghana suddenly expelled about 170 000 foreign Africans, notably traders; the Côte d'Ivoire followed suit. In this way Ecogas failed as an intermediate step towards true Pan-Africanism, but there were other factors that contributed towards Ecogas's problems, proving that the development towards a West African economic community will take much longer than was initially envisaged. Money made through Nigerian oil failed to finance the development of the entire West African economy and Nigeria ran into serious financial troubles itself – which led to the expulsion of some 2 million foreigners in January 1983. Other major obstacles were linguistic barriers and poor communication links, and there also were serious differences in the level and structure of the members' customs duties. Ten of Ecogas's 16 members were involved in other regional groupings such as the Conseil de l'Entente and the CEAO and in the latter case trade was promoted by means of a 65 per cent tariff reduction. The proliferation of currencies, foreign exchange difficulties and controls made the attainment of monetary unity a long-term objective. Economic nationalism played a role too, and the many coups disrupted regional cooperation. In 1982 Ecogas was still hopeful of creating a free trade zone by 1989.³⁶

SADCC Between 1977 and 1978 the idea of setting up a regional organisation in southern Africa gained momentum. Although economic factors played a role in this movement, the South African idea of drawing its neighbouring states – including even the former Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe – into a constellation of southern African states, points to a clear political motive. In November 1979 the four so-called frontline states – Tanzania, Zambia, Angola and Mozambique – attempted to widen their struggle against South Africa by pulling Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi into the battle against South Africa, hoping to wean them from their pro-South African economic preferences.³⁷ The prospect of Zimbabwean independence encouraged the formation of a regional organisation which could work towards loosening economic ties with South Africa: Zimbabwe's strong transport system could serve as the nucleus of a southern African transport system north of the Limpopo River. This was one of the prerequisites for the realisation of the dream of peaceful development without South Africa. On 1 April 1980 nine states including Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi formed the South African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in Lusaka. South West Africa–Namibia adopted observer status in expectation of its independence.

Aims The SADCC's aims included four specific aspects. Dependence on South Africa specifically, but also on all other foreign powers, had to be reduced as soon as possible; ties creating true and equal regional integration had to be forged; the region's sources had

to be mobilised to promote national, interstate and regional policy; and coordinated action was to be established to obtain international cooperation within a framework of economic liberation. At its foundation, the SADCC claimed that a new era in regional integration and the liberation struggle in southern Africa had arrived and the SADCC was portrayed as the pioneer of a regional organisation totally different from any comparable African body, especially the ineffective East African Economic Community – it claimed that its controlling structure and premises were entirely innovative. Because respect for the national sovereignty of member states was of extreme importance, and it was taken that the SADCC could not dictate economic policy to its members, the creation of a supra-bureaucracy was avoided. Supreme power was vested in the annual meeting of government heads, while a council of ministers and coordinating and specialised committees assisted them. The SADCC's headquarters was in Gaborone, Botswana, and from there a centralised secretariat served the organisation. Individual governments were given help in embarking on various projects and although individuality was encouraged, six areas were identified where cooperation would take place. These were trade and communication, agriculture, energy, manpower, industrial development and finance.

Priorities and undertakings Because six of the SADCC's members were landlocked states, transport and communication was given high priority in an effort to lessen dependence on South Africa as soon as possible. A South African Trade and Communication Commission was formed in Maputo as early as July 1980. Every member state could choose a sector in which it wished to take the lead. Agriculture was another sector which assumed particular urgency in order to reduce dependence on South Africa for food: this became Zimbabwe's responsibility. Tanzania became responsible for industrial cooperation, Swaziland for manpower, Zambia for mining, Lesotho for soil preservation, Botswana for health and Malawi for wildlife and forestry. There were no SADCC projects, only undertakings which the organisation monitored and coordinated. The SADCC did not envisage a common market of any kind, but tariff walls and the decrease of tariffs and inter-African trade featured among the aspects it intended to consider.

Sources of income The SADCC was dependent on continued foreign sources for its funding. The Soviet Union and the Arab oil-producing countries remained aloof. The ADB made a contribution and the SADCC began its own development fund, while EEC countries and Western aid agencies reacted favourably to the overtures of the SADCC's London liaison office. During 1980, \$870 million was pledged for the transport and communication project – this money was made available specifically to the countries in which this project was launched. Malawi received money for railway development while Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique were given funds for road building. Three years later the donors were less generous, but pledges relating to agricultural development and industrial cooperation were made by the ADB and the EEC.

Inhibiting factors There were various factors which inhibited the SADCC's projects in the early years, however. Between 1980 and 1985, droughts and locusts hampered attempts to increase food production. At the same time war in Angola and Mozambique, where Unita and Renamo resisted one-party regimes, prevented efforts to link the landlocked member

states to the sea.³⁸ The drop in oil prices also had serious implications for Angola. One of the SADCC's priorities was 'disengagement' from South Africa, because, according to the four original 'frontline' states (Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania), which form the core of the SADCC, this could accelerate the capitulation of the South African government. 'Disengagement' was thus an instrument towards a specific goal – the liberation of Africa south of the Limpopo River.

De-
pend-
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on
South
Africa

The opposite occurred: between 1980 and 1986 the dependence of members of the SADCC on South Africa increased,³⁹ and it became questionable whether member states were willing to make the sacrifices 'disengagement' demanded – despite their acceptance of sanctions against South Africa. SADCC members depended on South Africa in a variety of ways. Tanzania and Angola were in the best position but, in contrast, 40 per cent of Lesotho's exports went through South Africa. Swaziland followed closely with 37 per cent, while Zimbabwe sent 10 per cent of its exports through South African harbours. In 1988 Zambia's exports through southern ports amounted to 1 per cent. Imports show a completely different picture and, with the exception of Angola and Tanzania, all seven SADCC member states were threatened by economic dislocation if the proposed international blockade South Africa was instituted. Thirty per cent of the SADCC states' total imports went through South African ports in 1984, and these included essential commodities such as machinery and parts for production processes. Four of these countries had trade agreements with South Africa, while Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland belonged to the South African Customs Union. Zimbabwe, who produced 50 per cent of the SADCC countries' exports to South Africa, broke off diplomatic relations with South Africa but maintained trade and commercial bonds. Other aspects of dependence by some of the SADCC countries on South Africa concerned the use of its rail networks, petroleum and electricity supplies, as well as the foreign valuta which labourers from Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho and Botswana earned for their home countries.⁴⁰

Re-
gional
devel-
opment

Economic realities imparted a large degree of uncertainty to 'disengagement', consequently more attention was paid to transport and communication projects and the SADCC 'kept [on] plugging the 1980 line';⁴¹ this tempered the ideals of regional integration and economic liberation of South Africa. The implications of regional development, the essential justification for regional cooperation, were significant, however. For example, Zimbabwe's intention of developing its Wankie Power Project meant that Zambia had to sacrifice some of its main export, electricity, while Mozambique also had plans to upgrade the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric scheme and export the power to members of the SADCC. Members were equal in status, and regional integration had to be applied with caution because of unfavourable experience in the days of the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the Portuguese colonial union and the South African Customs Union. Regional integration and development were attractive only when specific benefits were apparent. As Botswana's former president, Seretse Khama, once stated, '[the] SADCC's program of action must offer and be seen to offer real benefits to each state. There must be a perception of common interests but must [sic] provide for the real and immediate needs of each cooperating state'.⁴² Botswana was obviously not

willing to extricate itself from South Africa merely to fall under the domination of another state.

The SADCC's continued concentration on transport and communication eventually yielded positive results in Mozambique in 1987. Renamo's attacks decreased, and Mozambique received greater sympathy from Western money-lenders, probably because of adroit diplomacy in its requests for aid, the West's aversion to Renamo, Mozambique's preference not to use foreign troops against Renamo, and Unicef's influence in promoting Mozambique's affairs. There was a change in Angola, too, where the South Africans suffered serious military setbacks at Cuito Canavale and its economy began to crumble: the South African government turned towards the negotiating table to discuss the independence of South West Africa/Namibia.⁴³

THE OAU AND THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

Cooperation essential Even before the establishment of the OAU, the ECA warned the new African states that economic cooperation – at least between close neighbours – was essential for the economic development of the continent.⁴⁴ When the OAU came into existence a few months after this warning was uttered, cooperation towards improvement of life was among the aims it set for itself. While some of the founding fathers saw economic cooperation as an essential stepping stone towards the desired continental unity, others felt that economic unity was possible only after the broadening of political cooperation.⁴⁵ In both cases the OAU failed to achieve any substantial results.

ECA In 1963, the ECA was already busy with plans for African economic development which included the forming of an African Development Bank as was suggested at the second All-African Peoples' Conference at Tunis. The ECA preferred an integrated approach to African social and economic problems, and welcomed the OAU as an ally in the battle against economic and social problems and development. Despite its aim and charter, the OAU was disinclined to involve itself in economic development and concerned itself mainly with decolonisation and anti-apartheid measures, leaving the continent's economic problems to the ECA until such time as the radical and socialist secretary-general, Diallo Telli of Guinea, took over. In 1967 he started attempts to get the ECA under the OAU's control. This was largely because of Africa's economic decline and the civil unrest that arose in Nigeria.

Intervention in the ECA Intervention in the affairs of the ECA increased and at the Kinshasa summit of 1967, economic issues featured prominently and a resolution on inter-African cooperation was taken which clearly underlined the link between politics and economic issues. The OAU wanted to end Africa's dependence on the developed countries by creating regional groupings and an African common market. Telli continued to encourage interest in economic affairs by submitting reports on economic and social development to the Council of Ministers.

Declaration In the same year, an important step was taken when 31 African states met in Algiers and adopted the African Declaration of Algiers. All of the non-aligned countries accepted

this too, prior to its submission to the Second United Nations Trade and Development Conference in 1968. The OAU's role in the continent's economic development was also strengthened when the 1968 summit recognised that the economic integration of Africa was a prerequisite for the realisation of the organisation's other aspirations.

**African
voice
at UN**

The OAU went one step further in 1969 when the African group at the UN became strong enough to make its voice heard in the world body. This was also significant for the UN's economic policy: the Africans demanded a more decisive say in economic policy. The ECA was forced to make the OAU a partner in all its plans and projects and this gave the OAU a stronger political voice. The ECA accepted this and saw the new arrangement as one that could benefit Africa. Some of the economic projects came under joint control although the ECA did most of the work. Considerable cooperation existed despite the continued existence of competition, but this alone was not enough to make projects viable. Shortage of manpower, money, and the lack of the political will to succeed also played a role.

**Economic
Charter
of 1973;
Lomé
Con-
vention**

During the seventies the OAU became increasingly concerned with the continent's economic state and issued an Economic Charter emphasising the need for economic independence in 1973. This document augmented the Charter of 1963 which set down the political base upon which the organisation intended to function, accepting the desire for economic independence and emphasising the need for economic cooperation as the base for stronger unity. To develop this further, Zaïre proposed the creation of an Economic Coordinating Committee for the entire continent and the formation of an African Common Market. Cooperating with the ECA and ADB, the OAU demanded a new Interim Economic Order, and this was put before the UN at a special session in May 1974. The OAU's role in efforts to change the world economy was, however, minimal; Algeria played a more prominent role in this respect. Paradoxically, in 1975 the OAU accepted that the responsibility for Africa's economic growth lay with the African states themselves, but continued to shift responsibility to the shoulders of the UN and the other non-aligned countries. Africa's greatest achievement in her efforts to establish a more just economic relationship with the industrial countries was the Lomé Convention signed with the Caribbean, Pacific and the nine EEC countries in 1975. In this the EEC made major concessions to Africa,⁴⁶ but lack of unity in its ranks prevented the effectiveness of the measures.

**Cairo
summit
of 1977**

In the 1970s black Africa's economic position deteriorated when oil prices rose sharply. The OAU tried to enlist Arab support for the continent's ailing economy and an attempt was made to hold an Afro-Arab summit in 1974, but this only came to fruition three years later when the Arab League and the OAU met in Cairo. Sixty countries and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation signed a declaration to cooperate politically and economically, especially in finance, mining, communication and preferential tariffs. More money was made available with the creation of an Arab Bank for the Development of Africa – a move that drew sharp criticism from the OAU's secretary-general who saw no need for another institution similar to the ADB.

- Lagos summit of 1980** Many of the Arab undertakings at Cairo came to nothing, and a drop in oil prices in the early eighties indicated that Africa could not rely on the Arab countries for economic aid. At an economic summit in Lagos in 1980, another plan of action was devised, which aimed yet again at the attainment of a common market, this time at the end of the twentieth century. This was to be based on Ecowas and the SADCC which were formed at the same time under the OAU umbrella. Emphasis was placed on food production with an eye to self-sufficiency within a decade.⁴⁷ Other goals included self-sufficiency in building materials, clothing and energy. Transport and communication were also earmarked for attention. The chances of success here were poor. The OAU was experiencing financial problems and many individual states were importing grain. This in turn had a negative influence on the balance of payments which went into decline during the oil crisis of 1973–1974 and the drop in African export commodity prices from 1977.
- Summit of 1985** Economic problems increasingly occupied the OAU's attention from the mid-eighties. They even pushed the troubles in Chad into the background and after Morocco's withdrawal from the OAU in 1984, the same happened to the Western Sahara. New attempts were made to obtain the ECA's support at the 1985 summit at Addis Ababa but, at a special meeting, the General Assembly failed to obtain special commitments from the international community. The world body emphasised the necessity of self-help and acknowledgement of previous mistakes. There was a general vagueness about Africa's debts, but the continent's need for money was estimated at \$130 000 million by 1990. Of this, Africa was expected to find \$80 000 million from its own sources. At that point the 1986 summit of the OAU accepted economic restoration programmes inspired by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which had differing effects on various countries.⁴⁸
- Economic crisis** Conditions deteriorated as the nett outflow of capital from Africa continued; commodity prices declined further and disappointing contributions from Western powers threw all calculations into disorder. There was increased pressure for a new summit to deal with these debts, and in Africa a difference of opinion developed between the more radical point of view, which favoured a unilateral and collective repudiation of all debts, and a more moderate view, which felt that the debt crisis had not yet reached the point which justified such action.⁴⁹ It was decided to hold an international conference to find a solution for the crisis. This was confirmed in November 1987, and the ECA and the ADB were saddled with the arrangement of the conference. Only if this did not yield the desired result were more drastic steps envisaged.⁵⁰
- Seven-point declaration** The Western creditor nations did not favour the conference despite their growing concern for black Africa's debts; but renewed pressure followed for this conference. In 1988 African debts reached about \$200 000 million before an extraordinary OAU summit accepted a seven-point declaration aimed at the Western creditor nations. It asked for a ten-year suspension of debt service payments; an interest-free rescheduling of debts over a period of fifty years; a transfer of existing bilateral debts into grants; a reduction of real interest rates on new loans, facilitating at least part of the repayments into debtor currency; the lessening of maturity and grace periods on private loans; and

an international conference between the OAU and the Western creditor nations to discuss the debt problem.⁵¹

Con- ces- sions

It was obvious that Africa stood at the crossroads and needed a lasting solution to its debt crisis. Serious stumbling blocks remained, and donor countries such as the United States, France and Canada remained unwilling to hold the suggested summit. They were willing to accept a partial repayment of debts in African currency and a rescheduling of debts if the African countries accepted an IMF stabilisation programme. During 1987 the United Kingdom and some of the Nordic countries cancelled \$1 000 million of Africa's debts, while new funds were made available to some of Africa's low-income countries.

Unre- solved prob- lems

This did not do much to lighten the burden, and more calls for an international summit continued as Africa's debts escalated to \$230 000 million. In 1989 the OAU summit repeated its request for a relaxation of debts, the cancellation of the poorest countries' debts, and easier repayment terms. The ten-year suspension on service payments was repeated, and it was suggested that the 'total maximum level of debt service' be paid as a percentage of exports. Although the request for an international conference received some sympathy from France and the EEC countries, most creditor nations remained unwilling to yield, because they feared the effect this would have on Latin America – a continent which had even greater debts than Africa. The debt problem therefore remained unsolved when Africa entered the last decade of the twentieth century.⁵²

Effec- tive- ness of OAU

The effectiveness of the OAU in promoting Africa's interests politically, economically and socially can thus be questioned and criticised. As Prof Harry Gailey wrote in 1983: '... the OAU is to Pan-Africanism as the United Nations is to world government. While one can applaud the achievements of both, it would be foolish to assume that they play anything but a secondary role in political decision making.'⁵³ African unity, however, has nothing to do with sterile uniformity or unanimity or successes in international or even African politics and economics. The decisive connection is far more likely that 'profound sense of being African'⁵⁴ – perhaps this can be offered as an explanation for the survival of the OAU in the turmoil of Africa's independent existence.

Notes

- 1 K. Nkrumah, *Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 45.
- 2 R. Oliver & A. Atmore, *Africa since 1800*, p. 320, and *Africa Report*, 6(5), p. 8.
- 3 K. B. Hadjor, *Nkrumah and Ghana: The dilemma of post-colonial power*, p. 92.
- 4 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives: Weekly diary of world events*, XII, 1959–1960, p. 16612.
- 5 V. B. Thompson, *Africa and unity: The evolution of Pan-Africanism*, p. 352.
- 6 H. J. van Aswegen, *Geskiedenis van Afrika: Van die vroegste oorspronge tot onafhanklikheid*, p. 500.
- 7 A. A. Mazrui & M. Tidy, *Nationalism and new states in Africa*, p. 344, and *Africa* 1961, 1, 6 January 1961, 'The African personality in Casablanca', p. 2.
- 8 Van Aswegen, *Geskiedenis van Afrika*, p. 500.

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Africa and world politics

Super-power rivalry During the decolonisation period, there was an expectancy that Africa would refrain from involvement in world politics since neither the United States nor the Soviet Union, despite strong anti-colonial views, was directly involved in Africa. Independent Africa had also opted for non-alignment – a policy of neutrality in the Cold War which set in between the two superpowers after the Second World War. This stance was unrealistic, however, because Africa's geopolitical or strategic position and its mineral wealth soon involved it in superpower rivalry.

AFRICA AND NON-ALIGNMENT

Nehru's policy of non-alignment Non-alignment was a policy formulated by Pandit Nehru, the prime minister of India, which had become independent in 1947. Nehru reasoned that India had nothing to do with the ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, or the Cold War which had evolved from this conflict at about the time India became independent. He refused to associate his country with either of the two superpowers. This did not imply an unwillingness to benefit from the Cold War: as long as India could obtain the much-needed economic aid it desired from the superpowers without becoming involved in any political ties with either country. To promote this view, India associated itself with the Soviet-American anti-colonial campaign at the UN in an

obvious bid to win the support of aspiring black nationalists for the policy of non-commitment.

Bandung Conference 1955

Nehru was soon rewarded from unexpected quarters. In 1948 the Yugoslavian leader, Josip Tito, who differed from the Soviets on the interpretation of Marxism and socialism, changed from international communism to nationalism and non-alignment.¹ Nehru's second prominent convert was the Egyptian ruler, Gamal Nasser, who fell strongly under his influence in 1953 when he realised that he could play off the East against the West for his own personal benefit and Egypt's. Egypt was one of the six African countries present at the Bandung Conference held in the Indonesian capital in April 1955. The others were independent Ethiopia, Liberia and Libya while the Sudan and the Gold Coast, soon to become independent, also sent delegates. Although this conference dealt primarily with Asiatic affairs, it took a strong stand against colonialism in order to win the hearts of Africa's leaders for the policy of non-alignment and it became the forerunner of future Afro-Asiatic solidarity.

Bloc of non-aligned states

Although the delegates were divided on the issue of non-alignment, they managed to cast this aside in what became known as the 'spirit of Bandung'; they all accepted non-alignment, which implied a cohesive bloc of Third World nations bent on the promotion of peace, directed against any involvement with either of the two superpowers. As Nasser put it: 'We oppose those who oppose us, and are at peace with those who make peace with us.'² Africa, which attained independence while the Cold War dominated global politics, produced more non-aligned states than any other continent. With the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, who both preferred a pro-Western stance, the other African states saw greater security outside the two ideological camps. This attitude did not exclude mutual differences and the more radically inclined states leaned strongly towards the Soviet Union because not only was this superpower openly anti-colonial, but it was also anti-European and anti-Western and therefore anti-American. Moreover many African leaders adhered to the socialist ideology, although there were also those like Gabon who wanted cooperation and aid from Europe and the United States: a view that tied in with the French preference that the new African states should link up closely with the European Common Market (ECM).³ This also had some common ground with the policy of the United States, especially during the Eisenhower presidency, for continued cooperation between the former African colonies and their former mother countries.⁴

THE SOVIET UNION AND AFRICA

Soviet interest

The Bandung Conference opened new possibilities for the Soviet Union, despite their not being invited to attend the conference. The presence of the six African delegates at Bandung convinced the Soviet leader, Nikita Krushchev, that Africa was a new area of political influence which the Soviet Union could utilise in the struggle against the West. In 1956 he told the Twentieth Party Congress (somewhat belatedly) that the national awakening of the African people had begun and that it was necessary to reconsider the existing Stalinist policy which regarded the nationalist leaders of Africa as bourgeois lackeys of Western capitalism and therefore unworthy of support.

- Lack of knowledge of Africa** The lack of historical ties and scanty knowledge of Africa handicapped this intention. During the partition of Africa Tsarist Russia had shown only limited concern, and after the revolution of 1917 Soviet attention was absorbed in domestic problems. When the Second World War came to an end, the Russians showed some interest in the politics of the Mediterranean and the Horn of Africa. They attended the Afro-Asiatic Peoples' Conference in Cairo in 1955 and Nkrumah's All African Peoples' Conference in 1958, despite the fact that diplomatic relations were only established in the following year.
- Obstacles to Russian influence** The Kremlin was aware of its lack of knowledge about Africa and took steps to change this. A separate African division was formed at the Institute of Oriental Studies in 1956 and three years later it developed into an African Institute where young Russians studied African languages and history in order to equip themselves with the necessary background to take decisions on Africa. The newly acquired knowledge brought some improvement but did not remove other stumbling blocks such as the classlessness of Africa's traditional society, the influence of the continent's traditional religions, the influence of Christianity and Islam, and the existence of ethnic nationalism. In accordance with the philosophy of non-alignment, Africa's leaders, civilian and military, did not move so close to the Soviets as they would have liked, and the existence of African socialism proved to be yet another stumbling block.
- Soviet support for national democracies** The Soviets found African socialism unacceptable and believed that only one form of socialism existed: their scientific and Marxist socialism. After Stalin's death in 1953, this view changed to some extent and made way for the idea that there may be several different paths towards socialism. While Africa's new leaders were not communists in the orthodox sense of the word, and a politically effective African proletariat and communist parties did not exist, the Soviets concentrated on nationalists who had socialist inclinations. Leaders who introduced state control over industry, banking and foreign trade, and the communal ownership of land were regarded as revolutionary 'non-capitalists' on their way to true socialism; they were merely omitting the capitalist phase of the process. These states were the only ones worthy of Soviet support, and in 1960 a conference of Communist and Workers' Parties endorsed Soviet friendship for what were called 'national democracies'.⁵ Two North African leaders, Gamal Nasser and Ahmed Ben Bella, and three black leaders from West Africa, Sekou Touré, Kwame Nkrumah and Modiba Keita, were considered fit to serve Soviet interests on the continent. The West Africans were invited to attend the Twenty-second Congress of the Soviet Union's Communist Party and received Lenin Prizes while Nasser and Ben Bella were honoured by being named Heroes of the Soviet Union.
- Guinea, Mali and Ghana** Sekou Touré's Guinea was the first of the West African states to attract Soviet attention. After his break with France in 1958 his survival hung in the balance, but his communist and trade union background made him a communist hero whom the Soviets believed was totally committed to the communist cause.⁶ Moscow did not hesitate to recognise his government and soon offered him credits, trade, aid in creating a new currency to free him from the franc zone, and Czech arms. Personal contact followed and the Soviets, aware of Guinea's strategic importance with regard to the Atlantic Ocean, sent an experienced ambassador, Daniel Solod, to make Conakry the centre of Soviet in-

fluence and activities in West Africa. After Modiba Keita's French Sudan (Mali) broke away from its shortlived union with Senegal, it turned to Guinea and entered the Soviet fold because it had no other friends. Like Touré, Mali wanted to skip the capitalist phase on the road to socialism. Initially Ghana, like Mali, had little attraction for the Soviet Union. Immediately after independence Nkrumah failed the Kremlin's test for a pure socialist. His preferences for Commonwealth and British and American capital were responsible for this. But in 1958 this changed. His immediate financial aid for the struggling Touré and the fact that he housed the revolutionary Union Populaire du Cameroun in his country played a role here. The death of his friend Lumumba in 1960 at the hands of CIA agents⁷ changed his pro-American attitude. It also soured his relations with Western countries such as Britain, France, West Germany, Israel, Belgium and the Netherlands, whom he increasingly accused of neo-colonialism.⁸ To demonstrate his non-alignment more strongly Nkrumah turned to the communists, and according to one writer he and Algeria's Ben Bella became Moscow's closest friends in Africa.⁹ In 1960 Nkrumah received his first credits from Moscow.

Growing resentment of Moscow

Moscow's attitude was friendly, but its interests in Africa differed from those of the African states. The Soviets tried to break existing ties between these new states and the West; in fact they tried to make things difficult for the capitalist world in general. This was not necessarily in the interest of the African states, whose preference for non-alignment had coloured their decision not to take sides in the Cold War. The money the Soviets made available was used to loosen the ties between the new states and the West and also to gain control of their exports. It included the financing of mutually agreed capital projects, meeting the balance on the trading account, and training blacks in the Soviet Union. Soviet experts went to Ghana and Guinea to get a hold on their economies and to win their favour with spectacular projects. But recommended projects such as the collectivisation of communal land in Guinea ran into disfavour, and this caused unrest. Many of the Russian experts were unfamiliar with local conditions and their feasibility studies were ineffective; then too goods, often of poor quality, either arrived late or exceeded what was required. All of this added to a growing feeling of resentment.

Deteriorating relations with Ghana

But the Soviets themselves had reason for dissatisfaction. Ghana overloaded them with suggested projects and left it to the Russians to sort out the particulars. The ideological benefits that the Soviets expected in return for the money they made available were not fully forthcoming; indeed, the results benefited Ghana more than the Kremlin. Moscow was an assured purchaser of Ghanaian cocoa and Russian purchases sustained the price of the product when world prices fell. The prominence of Russian advisors soon proved to be unacceptable to many Ghanaians.¹⁰ Another bone of contention was that Nkrumah's personal Guard Regiment, which was organised on a healthy budget by the Russians, operated under a separate command after 1962. This caused dissatisfaction in the regular army when lack of funds meant a shortage of material – and subsequently became one of the significant reasons for the coup which pushed Nkrumah from power in 1966. Relations between the two countries rapidly deteriorated. General Joseph Ankrah's new regime was vehemently anti-Soviet. He expelled all but a thousand

experts and closed the Cuban, Chinese and Russian embassies as well as the entire East German trade mission.

Worsening relations with Guinea Relations with Guinea had gradually deteriorated since the days when a lonely Touré, afraid of foreign invasion and desperately short of arms, welcomed the Soviet's overtures. Guinea, who was unable to feed its population, needed food and not arms – a situation the Russians seemed unable to comprehend. Self-interest prevailed and besides the one-sided bauxite venture, the Soviets refused to assist Guinea by building a fishing fleet or making any of the catches taken in Guinean waters available to the local population. Although Guinea's overtures towards the Eastern Bloc countries advanced quickly,¹¹ ideological affinity had its limits, and in December 1961 Touré sent the Soviet ambassador home, accusing him of the so-called 'teachers' plot' against his government. This was not the first 'plot' Touré had exposed against his own increasingly autocratic rule: previously the French and not the Russians had been accused. In all probability the Soviets were involved in unnecessary interference in Guinea's own affairs, and when five members of the teachers' trade union criticised his government, Touré was quick to accuse them of endangering the Marxist revolution in his country and had them sentenced to penal servitude for periods of five to ten years. Touré's position deteriorated as pupils and training college students took to the streets and demanded the death of the president. Although the Soviets sent a deputy prime minister to Conakry to conciliate,¹² this did not prevent Touré from turning to a more neutral foreign policy. At a World Peace Conference in Stockholm in 1961, he supported the Chinese against the Russians and he first accepted aid from the United States in 1962. His turnabout took on further proportions when he refused to allow the Soviets to use Conakry's airport, which, ironically enough, had been built by the Russians during the Cuban missile crisis.

Congo crisis The ideological motive also failed to yield results in the Congo crisis of the early sixties. Lumumba conformed admirably with the Soviet requirement for an African socialist, but after he had been removed from power in September 1960, he was killed early in 1961. The Soviets immediately withdrew support for UN measures and threatened to intervene in favour of Lumumba's heir, Antoine Gizenga, who was in revolt against Lumumba's successors in the capital. Only Moscow's West African clients and Nasser gave support; the rest of Africa rallied behind the UN. When Sudan refused the Soviet Union permission to cross its territory to come to the aid of Gizenga's wilting revolt, Gizenga lost his value for the Soviets. In 1965, when the pro-American Mobutu seized power, he closed the Soviet embassy.

Nigeria Moscow met with greater success in Africa's largest but most anti-leftwing state, Nigeria. The Soviets distrusted the feudal pro-British rulers from the north and sympathised with the Ibos in the east. They were also against military rule, but soon changed their ideas after their civilian friends in Guinea and Ghana let them down. At least the military seemed to ensure more stability and provided the opportunity of doing business with people who managed to remain in power; this also meant that the Soviets could act against what remained of capitalism. The Muslim north had other virtues. The Kremlin had good reason to be on friendly terms with this region since the

Soviet Union had a large Muslim population. Good relations with these people could benefit the Soviets in the Middle East. When it became clear that the Ibos in the east contemplated secession, Moscow ran into difficulties as most members of the OAU opposed this move and the Soviets were not inclined to lose popularity with them. Conveniently, the Kremlin detected a capitalist plot in the secession move and gave full support to the northerner, General Yakubu Gowon.

Civil
war

Initial aid was in a non-military economic form, and Lagos accepted loans from the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites. The establishment of a steel industry was the main focus of these professionally conducted negotiations. What made the whole issue remarkable was that this African state was known for its distinct antagonism towards communism and the supporters of this ideology. In 1968 the Soviets promised a vast credit for the steel project, but when the civil war broke out things changed. Gowon was in dire need of arms which the British and Americans refused to supply. The Soviets grabbed the opportunity and supplied aircraft, piloted by Egyptians, and heavy artillery which Gowon could not obtain from Britain. In contrast to its previous approach to the African states, the Kremlin did not attempt to exploit Nigeria's difficulties for its own ends. Alexander Romanov, the ambassador who conducted these negotiations, knew that he could not turn Nigeria into a communist or satellite state. Instead the Soviets aimed to befriend this African giant, and within weeks of the outbreak of hostilities Soviet aircraft and Czech arms arrived in Nigeria. The Soviets aimed at, and achieved, limited returns as a more tempered association between the two states emerged. The significance of Moscow's relations with Nigeria lies in the fact that it loosened ideological restraints on the Kremlin's approach to Africa despite the fact that much of the ideological rhetoric remained. The Soviets simply reacted to Nigeria's practical demands.

COMMUNIST CHINA'S IDEOLOGICAL STAKE IN AFRICA

Bandung
Conference

When the Communist Chinese foreign minister, Zhou Enlai, attended the Conference of Bandung in 1955, his country had no formal relations with Africa. Before this new communist power attended the Geneva Peace Conference on the French withdrawal from Indochina in the previous year, Communist China's foreign policy was closely linked to that of the Soviet Union. At Bandung the Chinese communists went out of their way to prove to the other delegates that they were more sensible and amenable than popular opinion would have others believe. They were also anxious to demonstrate that their form of communism was reconcilable with Asian nationalism in the light of its preference for non-alignment. In addition, Bandung created an opportunity to make personal contact with African leaders.

Communist
China's
motives

Communist China's motives were aimed primarily at the attainment of international recognition for Mao Zedong's regime and support for its membership of the UN where it hoped to replace the Republic of China (Taiwan). After the split with Russia, the Chinese tried to create trouble for the Soviet Union and the conflict between them could be promoted more easily in Africa than elsewhere. This resulted from Communist China's belief that the Soviet Union had relegated them to a junior role in Africa while

they were not as anti-American as Beijing expected them to be. The Chinese communists even suspected the Soviets of a willingness to sacrifice them in Soviet efforts to improve relations with the Americans. To outdo the Kremlin, the Chinese moved further to the left than Moscow and gave their full support to all of Africa's liberation movements. The more revolutionary these movements were, the better – an uninhibited radicalism which the Soviets distrusted. Initially the blacks welcomed Communist China's anti-colonial voice but, as they attained their independence, Chinese insistence on subversion became less acceptable. The fact that the Chinese portrayed themselves as a non-European power that was also subjected to European imperialism compensated in some measure for this. To many blacks they were more likeable than the Russians and the Americans, despite the fact that they had less to offer financially and technically.

Relations with Africa At Bandung, Zhou Enlai's contact with Nasser paved the way for Communist China's first relations with Africa, and an embassy was opened in Cairo in 1955. In 1956 the Chinese communists recognised Sudan's independence and the opening of a cultural mission there was followed soon afterwards by similar offices in Ethiopia, Morocco and Tunisia. China was the first to recognise the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) as the provisional government of Algeria. Sudan returned diplomatic recognition only after a coup there in 1959, and there was some discord in Algeria about Chinese aid in their struggle. Eventually Communist China disapproved of the terms of the agreement which brought the war between the Algerian nationalists and France to an end.

West Africa In West Africa the Chinese were hot on the heels of the Soviets, and in 1958 they made a particular point of publicising their recognition of Guinea, where there was a sizeable Chinese population. Ghana was recognised in the following year. Financial aid to both Ghana and Mali was much smaller than the Soviet offers had been, no doubt because of the continued economic crises that plagued China until 1961. But Chinese loans were repayable over longer periods and at a much lower interest rate. These grants were mere gestures, however, and when the Cultural Revolution broke out in 1966, only 15 per cent of the total Chinese credits were taken up. During the Congo crisis Lumumba was aided financially and China opposed all UN measures; the power's non-membership of the world body was mainly responsible for this attitude. Lumumba's fall was an obvious setback, which was further aggravated by the switch to Antoine Gizenga, who eventually made peace with Kasavubu. Continued Chinese aid to other rebellious groups had little effect. The foundation of the OAU in 1963 was detrimental to China's support for the liberation movements because the OAU's declared aim was to orchestrate the liberation of southern Africa from within Africa herself.

Zhou Enlai's tour of Africa Beijing had to review the position, and in 1963 Zhou Enlai undertook a extended tour of Africa. He announced specific principles upon which Chinese economic aid, aimed at the promotion of socialism and the destruction of capitalism, could be obtained. This did not prevent a rather cool reception in Cairo, where Nasser expressed himself in terms favourable to the Soviets. The Algerians had been somewhat restrained in their appreciation of Chinese support ever since the war of liberation. Ethiopia was rather cool because of Chinese support for the pro-Chinese element in the Somalian govern-

ment. In Somalia, Zhou Enlai made an enormous diplomatic blunder when he referred to the excellent revolutionary potential in Africa. This was a threat to almost all existing African rulers. His visits to Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Nairobi were cancelled because of unrest and Kenya even launched an anti-Mao campaign. Only Mali welcomed him.

Changing fortunes Early in 1964 China's fortunes changed to some extent. This was the result of diplomatic recognition by France, followed by that of francophone Africa (with the exception of the Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon). Between that year and 1978, the country's diplomatic missions in Africa grew from 15 to 40, but its continued preference for revolutionary groups prevented any smooth development. West Africa's military leaders all distrusted the Chinese and efforts in 1965 to hold a second Bandung Conference failed because the Western-oriented African states saw through Beijing's efforts to be nationalist and revolutionary simultaneously.

Burundi China's involvement in Burundi, where it wanted to fish in troubled waters, brought no dividends either. Tutsi survivors of the Hutu revolt in Rwanda were plotting a counter-coup with their Burundi kinsmen. This had no grounds for ideological communist support, but China backed the Tutsi expedition by training some Tutsi in Chinese forms of guerrilla warfare. Appalling massacres followed, and in Burundi, where Chinese meddling was viewed with suspicion, the government split into pro- and anti-Chinese factions. The anti-Chinese prime minister was murdered, and rumours had it that the Chinese were involved. The whole episode ended with the closing of China's short-lived diplomatic mission.

Congo-Brazzaville Involvement in the Congo-Brazzaville was slightly more successful. This African country was among those who recognised Communist China when France pointed the way, and a treaty of friendship which included an aid programme followed. In 1966 a military coup put an end to all this.

Cultural Revolution During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1968) China closed all its embassies except the one in Egypt. All diplomatic personnel was recalled for reform, and African students in China were sent home. Financial aid was cut back. After this, China's tactics changed, and it halted its efforts to create conflict between African states and the West. Instead China began to concentrate on outspoken anti-imperial states and institutions. China's most spectacular success came in Tanzania, one of Africa's most radical and anti-Western states.

Tanzania Communist China's relations with Tanzania date back to its independence and the army mutiny in 1964. Nyerere, who had to rely on British troops during this episode, turned to the Chinese to strengthen his army and the connection between the Tanzanian People's Army and China began. The two countries moved closer together, and after a visit to China, Nyerere was impressed by Chinese development programmes, which he regarded as suitable for Tanzania. A treaty of friendship was signed in 1965 and China's involvement in Tanzania's economy began in the following year. During the Cultural Revolution, China maintained relations with Tanzania, and in 1967 Nyerere introduced his version of Tanzanian socialism known as 'ujamaa'. This was an effort to change the

lifestyle and production methods of Tanzania's peasants to one of communal cooperation which had been inspired by the Chinese communes.

**Tazara
railway
project**

The Tazara railway – initially known as the Tanzam railway – was an even more spectacular manifestation of Chinese involvement in Africa. The railway was not a Chinese idea. In the days of European partition a line had been contemplated, and the Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, encouraged the idea of a railway connection with Dar es Salaam after his country had become independent, because this would have enabled Zambia to export its minerals directly. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and an economic mission of the UN turned down the idea as uneconomic before Zhou Enlai offered to build the line in 1964. Kaunda remained sceptical about the Chinese involvement; he preferred Anglo-Canadian investment, but when Rhodesia proclaimed UDI, his communication problems worsened and his regard for the British decreased.

Work commenced in 1970, and despite several stumbling blocks the railway was completed in 1975, two years before schedule. It became the property of the two African countries, who had to pay for it by 1982; 52 per cent of this debt had to be settled through the purchasing of Chinese products. This project, often portrayed as a model of foreign aid to Africa, soon ran into difficulties, though not of Chinese origin. Poor maintenance contributed to the decay while goods clogged at Dar es Salaam, and in 1978 Zambia had to turn to South Africa to help with the export of its copper. As a result, China's reputation suffered, and the ideological benefit derived from the construction was also minimal: the Tanzanians and Zambians protested against any Chinese ideological propaganda during the construction process.

**Com-
munist
Chinese
suc-
cesses
in Africa**

Chinese successes were few and far between. China lacked air and shipping links with Africa, and mutual trade was negligible. Before the Cultural Revolution, diplomatic contact was modest, but after Communist China had attained membership of the UN, the position changed and it returned to Africa, stepping into the position that Taiwan had had to sacrifice – often where Communist China would have found it difficult to enter otherwise. These included pro-American states such as Ethiopia and Zaïre and others such as Uganda and Somalia who did in fact benefit financially from Communist China's involvement. Small projects like rice cultivation in Guinea, Mali and Botswana count among the limited successes Communist China had in Africa.

**Broad-
casting**

Another form of propaganda is broadcasting, and China made use of Arabic broadcasts in Egypt at the time of the Suez crisis. Although the Chinese did not trail behind the Soviets in this respect, the content of their broadcasts was hollow, its main concern being to blacken the Soviets instead of promoting positive Chinese views. China's attempts at promoting a truly revolutionary influence failed; it simply backed the wrong groups. In Angola, for example, the Chinese backed all except the MPLA. This does not mean that Communist China's influence on the continent disappeared. Until 1974 Beijing hosted a constant stream of visitors from Africa who continued to see a confidant in China.

THE CUBAN INTERLUDE IN AFRICA

Cuban guerrillas Cuba was too small for its dynamic leader, Fidel Castro, and when his efforts to export his ideology to Latin America failed, he turned to Africa, towards which he cherished a special feeling of kinship. His radicalism urged him to help Africa against all forms of imperialism, colonialism and capitalism. In 1961, a mere two years after the Cuban revolution, Castro despatched instructors to Ghana to train guerrillas. These Cubans provided military and technical aid and in 1963 another band of instructors went to Algeria. When this country became involved in a border war with Morocco, Castro stepped up his aid and sent military equipment including tanks as well as staff who could operate and maintain them. Unlike the Cubans in Ghana, who were not meant to get involved in any fighting, those in Algeria would have done so if hostilities had not ended before they reached the front. At this stage the combat units were withdrawn, but the training units remained until 1965 when Ben Bella was overthrown. Cuba was also involved in the Congo debacle when Che Guevara went to the aid of Lumumba's heirs with a small force. Mobutu's rise to power forced them to the Congo-Brazzaville while the troops in Ghana survived until 1966 when Nkrumah fell from power.

This did not discourage Castro, he merely changed his tactics, and in the spate of the many new presidencies and governments that took power in Africa, he set out to train security forces and bodyguards for them. This was done from Conakry and Brazzaville. Brazzaville became the home of the remnants of his abortive Congo expedition while Conakry, easily accessible from the Caribbean, not only had left-wing rulers, but was also suitably situated for involvement in Portuguese Guinea.

Anti-Portuguese activities Anti-Portuguese activities became Cuba's main concern for the decade after 1964 when Che Guevara made his first contact with the MPLA and the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC) in Guinea. During these years Cuba was also of some service to his hosts when he not only helped to foil a coup in the Congo-Brazzaville, but also organised an internal security service and personal bodyguard for Sekou Touré in Guinea. Eventually the Congo-Brazzaville leader was overthrown, but this setback was countered by the extension of Cuban services to Sierra Leone before Castro became involved in South Yemen, Oman and the Middle East against Israel. Events in Angola and Ethiopia eventually drew Cuba into the whirlpool of international politics in Africa with much more vigour.

Angolan war During the Angolan war of liberation, the MPLA was regarded as a suitable leftist organisation to qualify for aid from Moscow. Because of lack of results, Moscow's backing began to dwindle, and in 1974 it was a mere trickle compared with the aid the rival liberation movement, the FLNA, received from various sources including Libya, Rumania, Zaïre and China, who also helped the third liberation movement, Unita. After the Portuguese abdication the FLNA became the beneficiary of all the American aid that had previously gone to the Portuguese. This enabled the FLNA almost to wipe out its rivals, and a desperate MPLA called upon Cuba and Sweden before Moscow promptly repaired its losses and rushed supplies to the MPLA via Conakry, Brazzaville and the sea: all of which tilted the scales in favour of Agostinho Neto's movement. China then

silently withdrew because she could not match the Soviets, and Rumania did the same when it saw that Moscow's client was winning. The MPLA's position was still not safe, because the United States and South Africa, both unwilling to see a pro-Soviet government in power in Angola, stepped in.¹³ Castro then intervened to save his personal friend, to whom he had given a measure of support for years before.¹⁴

Cuban aid Cuban aid started to arrive from April 1975. This gradually increased until the first combat troops arrived in November, by which time the South African invasion began to threaten both the MPLA and Castro's men. Castro did not hesitate. His hatred for South Africa and capitalism prevailed despite the heavy odds which extended involvement in Angola entailed. To succeed he needed Soviet encouragement and finance and, since this was available, Castro stepped up his stake in Angola. What followed was a shifting of men and material reminiscent of the American move to North Africa and Europe during the Second World War. The whole undertaking was a gamble that succeeded and ensured a victory for Neto over South Africa and its nervous American counterpart. Neto's domestic position, however, remained uncertain, and this forced the Cubans to stay, something Castro had not bargained for – he wanted to withdraw in March 1976 – a few months before the Soviets signed a twenty-year friendship treaty with Angola. This focused on their mutual struggle against imperialism, colonialism and racism and included cooperation in the military field, but excluded any Soviet undertaking to defend Angola.¹⁵

Soviet and Cuban involvement After an initial Soviet and Cuban cutback, their involvement began to increase from 1977 when support was generally stepped up to reach a climax in October 1988. At this stage up to 60 000 Soviet-allied troops were in Angola. Involvement of this magnitude was necessary because of Unita's persistence and South Africa's continued success against Swapo insurgents, who were often pursued into southern Angola. The Reagan government's global strategy against communism during the 1980s was another contributing factor.

Soviet influence In November 1983 the Soviets changed their attitude and warned South Africa against the extent of its direct and indirect involvement in Angola – they had prior knowledge of a major incursion South Africa was about to undertake into southern Angola. The Kremlin was equally concerned about Unita's successes against their client, the MPLA. Although Unita could not overcome the MPLA, its successes badly affected the Soviet prestige. The result was an escalation of Soviet–Cuban involvement after January 1984, when the Cubans began to fly Angolan aircraft and improved arms and equipment appeared on the battle front. The new strategy was to wipe out Unita in a limited conventional war, but the combined Angolan–Cuban–Russian force failed to remove Unita from its headquarters at Jamba. Campaigns such as these were repeated every dry season after 1985, but when American anti-aircraft Sting missiles became available to Unita in 1986, Unita began to improve its position.

Soviet military offensive Soviet tactics changed again in 1987. Despite Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's proclaimed preference for solving regional conflicts through negotiation, he launched a massive military offensive in Angola, including modern equipment and some of the top

Soviet generals. The country's oil and diamond reserves were simply too important to relinquish. This time South Africa became the main target, and the onslaught against Unita was also increased. South Africa was forced into greater involvement and lost some of its irreplaceable Mirage fighter aircraft. There was also a rumour of rebellion among the South West African Territorial Force, who were reportedly refusing to fight. This implied the increased use of white troops in future campaigns.¹⁶

In spite of mutual differences between Angola and its Cuban and Soviet allies, they agreed on action against South Africa and Unita. After a visit to Moscow in November 1987, Castro sent Cuba's best troops to Angola and the Cubans warned South Africa not to come to Unita's aid unless it was prepared to be attacked. On 10 December 1987 the Angolan president announced that these troops had started to patrol the border with South West Africa (Namibia) and they would engage the South Africans if they encountered them. Numerous Soviet and Vietnamese advisors moved to the south as what some claim to be the greatest land battle in southern African history began. In January 1988 more Cubans were thrown into the fray; they defeated South Africa, who then had no alternative other than the negotiating table.

South
African
withdrew

In accords signed at the UN in December 1988, Angola's security was guaranteed, and the way was opened for Namibia's long-awaited independence. South African troops would withdraw from both Angola and Namibia while a timetable was set for a Cuban withdrawal from Angola.¹⁷ In 1990 this agreement was contravened by the Cubans, who launched another spring attack against Jamba, Unita's headquarters, but during 1990 the accords were put into effect – at the time when the backbone of the MPLA, the Soviet Union, itself began to crumble.

THE SUPERPOWERS AND AFRICA'S STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

Strategic
regions

Africa's strategic significance involved it in international politics and complicated the continent's preference for non-alignment. North and Northeast Africa between the Algerian harbour town of Mers el-Kebir in the west and Mombasa in Kenya, as well as its hinterland, were deeply involved in superpower politics by the 1980s. Along the Mediterranean coast, Mers el-Kebir was of cardinal strategic importance. Ever since the days of the Turks, any power in control of that harbour controlled most of the Mediterranean. After the Second World War the Americans had denoted a special geopolitical significance to the area.¹⁸ Another important strategic region in the Mediterranean was Suez, but control here afforded dominance of a more limited part of the Mediterranean and involved the interests of the North African states. Egypt's interests were bound to the east as well as the Mediterranean while Morocco looked in the opposite direction towards the Atlantic Ocean and the western Mediterranean. Algeria, Tunisia and Libya were, as it were, caught in the middle of this region.

Egypt

Since the Second World War, Morocco had been under American influence whereas Nasser's Egypt was much more closely involved with the Soviet Union – as suggested by the Russo-Egyptian Entente of the 1950s, which gave the Russians some facilities at Alexandria. This was seen as a potential threat to the West, but it did not prevent the

United States from controlling the eastern Mediterranean in much the same way as in the western region of that ocean. After Nasser's death, neither Anwar el-Sadat nor Husni Mubarak sustained as close a relationship with the Soviets as Nasser did.

- Algeria** In the Maghrib, Algeria, radicalised by the war of liberation, embarked on a leftist socialist course, but refused to become a puppet of the Kremlin. Algeria regarded its relations with the Soviet Union as no more than friendly. Relations with France were also cordial and correct, especially after the French evacuated Mers el-Kebir in 1968, nine years earlier than had been specified in the peace treaty of 1962, which ended the war between Algeria and France. Morocco was Algeria's main foreign concern, and in 1963 war broke out as a result of a border dispute. Their hostility was of a territorial and economic nature, while ideology and history played a role too. Hassan II, the king of Morocco, ruled very autocratically, and this was unacceptable in socialist Algeria. Conflicting claims to mineral riches in the region also added to the unpleasantness and Algeria supported the Polisario Front in the former Spanish Rio de Oro.
- Libya** Despite Libya's claims of non-alignment and the fact that local circumstances dictated matters, Libya followed a far stronger foreign policy than Algeria. Libya distrusted Egypt because Nasser harboured ideas of incorporating the area into the Egyptian fold and his successor, Sadat, who came to power a year after Muammar al-Qadhafi's coup in Libya, was hostile towards the kind of socialism Qadhafi preferred.
- Qadhafi's foreign policy** Qadhafi soon took steps that did not endear him to other powers who had interests in the region. The Americans were expelled from a base which his predecessor, King Idris, had granted to them; he gave obvious support to subversive movements where he could; he changed Libya into the biggest harbinger of Russian arms outside Eastern Europe; he intervened in the Chadian civil war and created the notion that he was building a Muslim empire that would stretch as far as Sudan, Zaïre and Gabun. All of this was based on the income Libya attained from its only source, oil, which is extremely vulnerable in a fluctuating market. During the seventies this market flourished, but in the 1980s the position changed, prices dropped and the Oil Producing and Export Countries (Opec) cut back on output and prices to stabilise the market. Qadhafi was caught off-balance and began to run short of cash, jeopardising his development projects.
- Strained relations** Qadhafi blamed the USA for his misfortunes, and also accused the Americans, Egyptians and Sudan of involvement in an aborted coup against his regime early in 1981. With relations already strained, tension heightened when the Americans shot down two Libyan planes over the Gulf of Sirte in August, but after the assassination of Sadat in October, relations were better. Despite some success against the rivals of his friend Goukouni Oueddei, Qadhafi withdrew his forces from Chad. He was experiencing serious economic problems and shifted the blame for this from the Americans and the Egyptians to the Americans and the Saudis who purportedly glutted the market with oil to make the Libyan product unsaleable. To the Reagan administration, who put a high premium on anti-communist actions globally, Libya was the home of world terrorism, which not only threatened world peace, but made him a tool in the hands of

the Kremlin. The Soviets, however, adopted an amenable attitude towards Qadhafi. They remained aloof from his socialist ideas, but were willing to supply him with arms for cash. When Qadhafi ran out of money the Soviets became less accommodating and Qadhafi, lagging on payments, was anxious to negotiate a revised deal. Moscow was in no mood for this and insisted on payment. This was possibly because they attached no specific value to his allegiance, or because they feared an open onslaught from the United States, something which in all probability they would have liked to avoid. An empty-handed Qadhafi turned to China in 1982 while his relations with the United States continued to deteriorate. This antagonism was also extended to include Britain – especially after Libyan diplomats had killed a British policewoman during riots at the Libyan embassy in London. To the Americans, Qadhafi was the source of world terrorism and they would have liked nothing better than to bring about his fall. In April 1986 Libyan–American hostility led to the bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi with the compliance of Britain and America's Nato allies. This failed to remove Qadhafi from power and he turned to more discreet acts of terrorism.

Rio de Oro Both Libya and Algeria supported the Polisario Front against Morocco. Spain withstood UN demands to withdraw from Rio de Oro until 1975, when it wished to hand the colony to Morocco and Mauritania, hoping that the region would remain dependent on Spain. Morocco and Mauritania preferred to partition Rio de Oro: Morocco in order to lay hands on its valuable phosphate deposits and Mauritania in the hope of preventing the development of a Greater Morocco which would dominate it. Algeria wanted to leave the choice of their future status in the hands of the indigenous population. Spain eventually yielded to Moroccan and Mauritanian pressure and the region was divided between them. There was dissatisfaction among those who preferred that, in accordance with the principle laid down by the OAU, Rio de Oro should remain intact and become a new state, known as the Sahrawi Democratic Arab Republic. They had Algerian and Libyan backing, and in 1976 this state was brought into being in Tripoli.

Morocco Two years later its forces drove Mauritania from the area it held, but Morocco proved to be more difficult. Although Hassan could hardly afford the troops he pushed into the region, he was astute enough to involve his ally from the days of the independence struggle, the United States. The opportunity arose in 1982, after the disaster with the American hostages in Teheran and the United States decision to create the Rapid Deployment Force which could be deployed in the Middle East under short notice. This force needed Morocco as a base while the Saudis, who had their own reasons to bolster Hassan in the camp of Arab moderates, joined in and provided the money. The Americans and the Saudis paid for the French arms Hassan needed in his war in exchange for the area's phosphates, while broad strategic considerations – including the threat which the disturbances in Portugal and Spain in the early 1970s posed for United States air-bases there – compelled the Americans to persist in their support for Morocco. The Soviet Union performed some delicate diplomatic tactics to avoid any clash between its support for Sahrawi self-determination and Morocco, with whom it had important commercial links.¹⁹

Egypt In the Middle East the struggle was more intense, and it involved all African states that had contact with the Arabian peninsula, the Red Sea and the coast of the Indian Ocean. Egypt, Sudan and Somalia, as well as Kenya and Ethiopia, became part of a moving front where the superpowers manoeuvred to manipulate the situation to their advantage. After the American refusal to finance the construction of the Aswan Dam, and the Suez crisis, Egypt became dependent on the Soviet Union for arms and money to finance development projects. The two states did not have much in common, however, and relations were built on personal contact between their leaders, Nasser and Khrushchev, both of whom believed that this was the only way to bridge the inherent differences. This relationship barely survived Nasser's death and Khrushchev's demotion, and in 1972 Sadat dramatically evicted 20 000 Russians from Egypt at a week's notice. This clearly demonstrated the incompatibility of the two states, because Egypt only needed the support and financial aid from one rich Arab state to sustain a foreign policy free of superpower intervention.

Sudan Sudan was in a similar position, initially preferring to hold the superpowers at a distance. In 1969 this changed when General Jaafar Nimeiri seized power in a military coup. Nimeiri leaned towards Qadhafi and the Soviet Union to such an extent that the Kremlin foresaw a bloc of leftist states stretching from Tripoli and the central Mediterranean region through Sudan to the Red Sea. Sudanese nationalism prevented this, although Nimeiri remained in power. Accordingly, Sudan's foreign policy took a more obscure path of internationalism rather than being purposefully leftwing or non-aligned.

Ethiopia Although both Sudan and Egypt border on the western shores of the Red Sea, Eritrea or Ethiopia has the key to the significance of this region because it holds the southern part of this coastline. This part of the Red Sea coast gives direct access to the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, and the superpower to whom Ethiopia (who has controlled the territory since the Second World War) grants bases has a direct influence in the region. Until the 1970s the United States enjoyed Ethiopia's favour. Thereafter it switched its preference to the Soviet Union.

Unrest Ethiopia was a feudal state, but by 1974 the poverty generated by this system sparked student unrest and a military coup in which General Mengistu Haile Mariam took control. His dictatorship was soon severely tested by an uprising among the Oromo (Galla), the Somali invasion and a more intensive Eritrean war of separation. Mengistu turned to the Soviets and the result was 'the most flamboyant and most impressive invasion of Africa by an outside power since the Second World War',²⁰ very reminiscent of the British invasion of Egypt in 1882 because its basic motive had nothing whatsoever to do with African politics. The Soviets had two reasons, both extraneous, for helping Mengistu. First, the Horn was geographically important as regards the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. Second, the Kremlin supposed that the United States would not react in any way, even in the face of such vast Soviet involvement and in spite of the fact that it was already involved in Somalia.

Somalia Moscow's link with Somalia dates from 1963 when it provided military aid to President Said Barre's predecessors. Barre grabbed power in 1969 and in 1974, when Ethiopia also

experienced a military coup, Barre and the Soviets made a new agreement in Moscow. All Somalia's debts were cancelled and construction was started on a naval base at Berbera and a communications centre. These moves, in addition to improved relations with Algeria and Libya, more than compensated for the setback Moscow had suffered in Egypt in 1972, when Sadat had barred them from his country. In 1974 Mengistu opened another new door for Moscow – this time a geopolitical one, since Barre was not the ideological ally they were looking for. But the Soviets bided their time and stepped into the picture only when Somalia and Eritrea almost brought Mengistu to its knees. The Kremlin was thinking in terms of an alliance with both Northeast African countries, but this was prevented by Mengistu's refusal to honour his promises to the non-Christian inhabitants of the region and Barre's realisation that Mengistu's attitude provided an opportunity to invade Ethiopia under the pretext that he was helping the Somalis inside Ethiopia. The Soviets had to make a choice and they opted for Mengistu. Cubans (some of whom came from Angola) and an impressive airlift of arms from South Yemen saved Mengistu.

Eritrea Soon the Soviets had to repeat this act in order to save Mengistu from the Eritreans. Ethiopia's access to the Red Sea was the crucial factor. After the Second World War, first the British, then the Americans and from 1975 on the Soviets, regulated their relations with Eritrea in terms of their position in Ethiopia. In 1952 Eritrea became an autonomous part of a federation with Ethiopia. In 1953 the United States made a defence agreement with Ethiopia in which it provided military aid and training. The United States also acquired the use of the abandoned British communications centre at Kagnaw which lies in Eritrea near its capital, Asmara. Since the Americans regarded this facility as being of cardinal importance in its global strategy against the Soviet Union, it was developed to become the biggest of its kind in the world. But there were other factors in the scenario. The Ethiopians had never respected the 1952 agreement about Eritrea's status and their pretext to annex the region completely led to renewed military reaction. Despite its American military hardware, Ethiopia could not bring this region under control.

Soviet protectorate This involved the Israelis, who wanted to see the Red Sea coast under friendly Ethiopian rule. More than half of the Eritreans were Muslim and the danger was that they could side with the Arabs and impede Israeli shipping at the southern Israeli port of Eilat. The Ethiopians enjoyed the support of the United States and some of its friends. As the war escalated the Eritreans, with support from Cuba, Libya, South Yemen and Saudi Arabia, overcame their differences. By 1977–1978 they threatened the regime in Addis Ababa. Then the Kremlin stepped in with massive reinforcements. They forced the Cubans to change sides and South Yemen and Libya withdrew from the struggle. This turned the tide against Eritrea and the central government in Ethiopia became a Soviet protectorate.

Effect upon US These Russian successes did not affect the position of the United States in the Indian Ocean, where it had taken control from the British in about 1971 with the construction of a naval base on Diego Garcia. The Soviet fleet, which functioned from Vladivostok, was no match for the Americans and the use of satellite communication, the takeover

of Russian bases in Somalia, and the use of Mombasa in Kenya compensated for the loss of Kagnew in Eritrea. In 1982 some Kenyans revolted against the government of President Daniel arap Moi because of the American presence in Mombasa, while the Mauritians claimed Diego Garcia. The American position was therefore fluid at the beginning of the 1980s.

**Position
of
super-
powers**

In the eighties the Russians centred their attention on Ethiopia. Ethiopian dependence on the Soviets was related to its need for Russian arms, a position which would change only if Ethiopia could come to some agreement with Somalia and Eritrea. The Americans had vested interests in Somalia and Kenya, where there was an intractable border dispute, and also in Djibouti, where the population was divided in loyalty towards Somalia and Ethiopia. Both superpowers were therefore in positions beset with difficulties – a situation which they accepted because of the region's strategic importance in the relentless struggle for global dominance.

MINERALS AND AFRICA'S STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

**Strate-
gic
mine-
rals**

In Africa the regions where strategic minerals are found are situated mainly in the southern but also in the northwestern part of the continent. The value of strategic minerals (including oil and mineral ores) is not confined to possible military significance; they are much sought after for peaceful purposes by both capitalist and communist countries. Countries in possession of such minerals have some economic power but are exposed to the attention of outside powers which is not always to their benefit. The former Eastern European countries were more interested in Africa's minerals than the Soviets. Countries such as Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania and especially Eastern Germany had invested large sums of money in these undertakings and had also negotiated many treaties of economic cooperation and joint enterprises to exploit these minerals. This was done primarily through Comecon, of which Mozambique became the first African associate in 1978. The Soviet Union's attitude was different because it did not depend on Africa's minerals. To the Soviets these minerals had secondary strategic significance: they preferred the termination of these exports to Nato countries whereas the African states benefited through increased exports to the Western countries. The United States is the Western state which is most dependent on these products, but neither it nor its Nato partners really feared that the African states would cut their supply in a crisis. Local unrest in Africa was a more serious obstacle. The war in Morocco could influence phosphate and iron ore supplies but it affected all potential clients, both communist and capitalist.

Zaire

Zaire, one of the sole suppliers of cobalt to the United States, is of special significance. When rebels in Shaba occupied a mine which generated half the world's output of cobalt in 1978, the price of the commodity quadrupled. This disturbance induced foreign intervention on two occasions: internal revolts were put down because of threats to the flow of minerals to Western countries and the lives of Europeans. Moroccan troops, using American arms, French aircraft and Saudian money, saved Belgians and Germans whose lives were in jeopardy. French and Belgian paratroopers repeated this exercise during a second revolt a year later.

French
in-
fluence

France continued to recognise Africa's importance in world politics after decolonisation. It actually set an example in dealing with Africa which the superpowers later followed. Although the former French federal blocs had been dissolved at independence, they were reconstituted into an economic union with the former mother country, which strengthened ties between them. France linked them with the European Economic Community (EEC), which provided economic aid, and 18 of these states shared in the EEC development fund from 1964. In exchange for this, French troops remained in Africa from Senegal in the west to Djibouti in the east. In the early 1980s, the Ministry for Cooperation and Development dispensed aid in expectation of increased French influence and exports. Paris was made the centre for meetings between African leaders and all the presidents of the Fifth Republic visited the continent at various times. As pointed out above, Zaïre was helped twice; aid was also given to save pro-French governments in the Cameroon and Gabon in the 1960s. Africa remained important from the French point of view, because France regarded its influence in sub-Saharan Africa as proof of its claim to world power status.²¹

Chad

In Chad the French did not hesitate to become involved. When Africa's largest and poorest state became independent in 1960, the nomadic Muslim pastoralists of the north were dominated by the agriculturally oriented Christians of the south. Uprisings soon followed in the north and east because of heavy taxation and anti-Muslim discrimination. In 1964 a one-party system was introduced. This was the forerunner of civil war, because all attempts to reach some sort of understanding with the Muslims failed. By 1967 the north was in open rebellion, which escalated into warfare three years later. After Qadhafi came into power in Libya, he began to intervene in Chadian affairs mainly because he had designs on a piece of borderland which Benito Mussolini had annexed to Libya in earlier years and which was rumoured to be rich in uranium. In 1973 Qadhafi seized the land after efforts to buy it from Chad had failed. Six years later Goukouni Quéddeï, a northern Muslim, came to power in Chad and decided to unite with Libya. This sparked a new civil war. Anti-Qadhafian powers, with Egyptian and Sudanese support, were eventually victorious before Quéddeï entered the struggle again from Libya.

Libyan
involvement in
Chad

The Libyan interference placed France's involvement in a better light in the eyes of other African countries. Because of rumours about Qadhafi's large Muslim empire and intrigues in many other countries, he was seen as the villain. Libyan involvement was also a problem for France, because it could easily have been seen as an American anti-Libyan stooge. Despite this, the French continued to help Hissan Habre, Chad's anti-Libyan leader, and started negotiations with Libya in order to reassure France's friends in Africa about Qadhafi's intentions. France's aim was the maintenance of Chad's territorial integrity. Unlike the United States, France saw no reason to destroy Libya who, like Chad, had no strategic or economic importance and reached a peace accord with Libya in 1988, a year after Chad confirmed an alliance with the United States.²² United States–French differences demonstrated that Africa could command the interest of the great powers, but this changed as the 1980s drew to a close and the global struggle between East and West diminished. France unilaterally denounced future military aid to Chad in June 1990 and declared its support for the introduction

of free elections in Africa. Hissen Habre was one of several African rulers who was sceptical of the change in the French attitude because he saw himself as a bulwark against Qadhafi's influence. Habre's heavy-handed rule in southern Chad sealed his fate. When a coup took place against him, French troops remained in their barracks.²³

End of rivalry Superpower rivalry in Africa came to an end with the demise of the communist bloc and dwindling American interest in the early 1990s. African foreign policy, or the foreign policies of 52 African states, can no longer rely on the global struggle of the superpowers to obtain arms or any form of foreign aid from them. Western capital and technology found a 'new frontier' in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States which threw off the communist yoke and opted for a market economy and democracy. Africa's economy has been damaged by its own graft, mismanagement, misrule and ineptitude and the West has become disenchanted with the continent. In the UN anti-colonialism has lost its verve – as has the anti-apartheid drive with the decline of the National Party government in South Africa. In the last decade of the century the African states can only try to focus the attention of the international community upon the continent's economic plight²⁴ because non-alignment, at least between East and West, is no longer relevant.

Notes

- 1 P. Calvocoressi, *World politics since 1945*, p. 102.
- 2 Quoted in P. J. Vatikiotis, *The history of modern Egypt from Muhammad to Mubarak*, p. 391.
- 3 G. W. Shepherd Jr, *Nonaligned black Africa*, pp. 3 and 16.
- 4 G. Lundestad, *East, West, North, South: Major developments in international politics, 1945–1990*, p. 88.
- 5 P. Calvocoressi, *Independent Africa and the world*, p. 93.
- 6 F. Pedler, *Main currents of West African history, 1940–1978*, p. 97.
- 7 R. D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, pp. 69–74 and 164.
- 8 Pedler, *Main currents of West African history*, p. 127.
- 9 Lundestad, *East, West, North, South*, p. 99.
- 10 D. Birmingham, *Kuame Nkrumah*, pp. 99–100.
- 11 F. R. Metrowich, *Africa in the sixties*, p. 95.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 96, and Pedler, *Main currents*, p. 148.
- 13 See chapter 16.
- 14 Z. Laidi, *The superpowers and Africa: The constraints of a rivalry, 1960–1990*, pp. 62–63.
- 15 O. Abegunrin, 'Angola and the Soviet Union since 1975', *Journal of African Studies*, 14(1), 1987, p. 278.
- 16 B. MacLellan, 'Never quiet on the Western Front: Angola, Namibia, South Africa and the Big Powers', *Searchlight South Africa*, 1(1), 1988, p. 25.

- 17 D. Deutschmann, *Angola and Namibia accords: Defeating the South Africans was decisive for Africa*, p. 1.
- 18 A. Layachi, *The United States and North Africa: A cognitive approach to foreign policy*, p. 18.
- 19 S. Baynham, 'The war in Western Sahara', *Africa Insight*, 21(1), pp. 53–54.
- 20 Calvocoressi, *Independent Africa*, p. 75.
- 21 T. Chafer, 'French African policy: Towards change', *African Affairs*, 91(362), January 1991, p. 40.
- 22 *Africa south of the Sahara, 1990*, pp. 369–370.
- 23 Chafer, 'French African policy', p. 50, and S. Decalo, 'Back to square one: the re-democratization of Africa', *Africa Insight*, 21(3), 1991, p. 156.
- 24 O. Aluko, 'The foreign policies of African states in the 1990's', *The Round Table*, 317, January 1991, pp. 35–36.

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