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Abstract

This study examines China's role in the Angolan Civil War through the context of U.S.-Chinese rapprochement and the global Cold War. Based on declassified conversations between U.S. and Chinese officials along with declassified intelligence cables, government documents, and research in the United Nations archives this paper illuminates how China played a crucial role in escalating the Angolan Civil War and encouraged U.S. intervention in the conflict. This study builds on previous scholarship yet takes a new approach that emphasizes China played the primary role in intensifying the Angolan Civil War, not the U.S. or Soviet Union.

“Empty Cannons”

U.S.-Chinese Cooperation and Conflict in the Angolan Civil War

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May 3rd, 2012

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of (Fine) Arts of the
City College of the City University of New York

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Introduction

Angola, China, and the United States.

At first glance interaction between these three very different nations may seem unclear to the global study of the Cold War. However, during the mid-1970s these three became interlinked in the Angolan Civil War. Angola's Civil War, along with U.S. and Chinese involvement in the conflict, constitutes a major subject in the Cold War. Throughout the 1970s American foreign policy rested on two strategies: détente and triangular diplomacy. Détente, or the relaxation of tensions between the Soviet Union and the U.S., encompassed roughly 1969-1976. Triangular diplomacy was the strategy of exploiting the rivalry between the two largest communist powers, China and the Soviet Union, to the advantage of the United States. The Angolan Civil War forever changed both détente and triangular diplomacy. The crisis pitted Angola's three liberation movements against each other based on delineations that conflicted traditional Cold War battle lines. The communist MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) received aid from the Soviet Union and Cuba, while its rivals the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) and UNITA (Union for the Total Independence of Angola) were supported by the U.S., China, South Africa, and Zaire. Though the MPLA emerged the victor the Angolan Civil War was the first instance of U.S.-Chinese cooperation in a Third World conflict where both sides stood together, albeit shortly, against the Soviet Union. This makes the Angolan crisis a highly important, though often neglected, subject in Cold War history.

During and after the Angolan crisis conservative American politicians and Chinese diplomats relentlessly criticized détente as appeasing Soviet aggression in the Third World. Furthermore, China manipulated U.S. fears of Soviet expansion in the Third World to their advantage and encouraged the U.S. to pursue a more interventionist policy in Angola, effectively

reversing triangular diplomacy. Yet, after the U.S. and its ally apartheid South Africa became heavily involved in the Angolan Civil War, China withdrew its aid to the FNLA and UNITA in October of 1975. In lieu of continuing to aid the American and South African backed anti-Soviet FNLA/UNITA coalition, the PRC (People's Republic of China) choose to focus on domestic issues such as leadership succession amid the political turmoil of the waning Cultural Revolution and the possibility of a Soviet invasion. Due to these more pressing domestic issues China did not combat the Soviets in Angola, instead urging the U.S. to do so and despite America's best efforts China refused to reinvest itself in the Angolan conflict after October of 1975. Moreover, American intervention in Angola proved unpopular domestically and the Senate ended up passing legislation that blocked further U.S. action in Angola. In the midst of dismantling détente and reversing triangular diplomacy Angola became an international battleground as the U.S., South Africa, China, North Korea, Zaire, Romania, Soviet Union, Cuba, German Democratic Republic, France, and Yugoslavia all gave aid to one of the liberation groups at some point.

Despite China's role in escalating the conflict historians have primarily focused on the U.S., Soviet, Cuban, and South African roles largely because they were most heavily involved in the fighting. In the first authoritative account of the Angolan Civil War John Marcum investigated the historical origins of Angolan nationalism and its three liberation movements. He argued that external factors such as the Cold War and foreign military aid exacerbated underlying ethnic and ideological differences between Angola's liberation movements and escalated the situation into a full-blown civil war.¹ Though *The Angolan Revolution Vol. I* and *Vol. II* are extremely informative and in depth they were published in the 1969 and 1978,

¹ See John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution Volume I: The Anatomy of an Explosion 1950-1962* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969) and John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution Volume II: Exile Politics and Guerilla Warfare 1962-1976* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1978).

respectively. Therefore Marcum could not make use of newly declassified material on the subject.

More recently, historians have paid close attention to international involvement in the Angolan Civil War and its larger impact on the Cold War. Piero Gleijeses' *Conflicting Missions*, for example, focuses heavily on Cuba's role in Africa and its support of liberation movements fighting for independence from minority white governments and colonial powers. Drawing on a wealth of declassified material from U.S., Cuban, and Eastern European archives Gleijeses shatters the Cold War myth that Cuba acted as a Soviet puppet. Moscow, says Gleijeses, feared that Cuba's adventurist foreign policy would strain détente with the United States.² Odd Arne Westad's *Global Cold War* similarly emphasizes the global implications of the Angolan Civil War, but focuses instead on how the crisis led to the decline of détente internationally and its condemnation in the American political arena. Through research in Soviet archives Westad also highlights the confidence boost Angola gave to the Soviets, having defeated the U.S. in Vietnam and Angola consecutively.³

Although highly significant to the global study of the Cold War Marcum, Westad, and Gleijeses largely ignore an enormous factor: China. Historically, China has been more involved in Africa than the Soviets and in the 1970s half of China's economic aid went to Africa.⁴ The PRC was the first foreign power to aid any of the Angolan liberation movements and had ties with all three dating back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. China even admitted delegates from the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA to Beijing for military and political training. They were also the first foreign power to deliver significant amounts of military aid and advisors to an Angolan

² See Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

³ See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 238.

liberation movement in 1973,⁵ raising the stakes of the Angolan conflict. Furthermore, the Soviets initially acted in Angola to counter the growing influence of the Chinese, not the United States.

The lack of attention to China's role in the Angolan Civil War is understandable. Due to China's slow and reluctant declassification process few government documents concerning Chinese policy during the Angolan crisis have been made available to the public.⁶ As a result secondary literature on the subject is limited. This raises several important questions about China's role in the Angolan crisis and the effect of China's Angolan policy on détente and triangular diplomacy. Why did Chinese diplomats condemn détente during and after the Angolan crisis? Why was China the first foreign power to intervene in Angola but also the first to leave? How did the Angolan crisis impact U.S.-Chinese relations and triangular diplomacy? And finally, why did China publicly condemn U.S. intervention in Angola but encourage it privately?

This thesis seeks to address these questions and will illuminate a previously unexplored topic in the Cold War: U.S.-Chinese collusion during the Angolan Civil War and its effects on détente and triangular diplomacy. Based on a wealth of recently declassified U.S. State Department and CIA documents, as well as archival material from the United Nations, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), and Digital National Security Archive (DNSA) I will argue that the Chinese pressured the U.S. to intervene in Angola but refused to reciprocate America's efforts and subsequently ceased their aid to anti-Soviet forces in Angola despite the pleas of U.S. President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. For Chinese leaders Angola emerged as a battleground to combat growing Soviet influence in Africa, but insisted the

⁵ John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York: Norton & Company, 1978), 257.

⁶ For an excellent synopsis of Chinese archives and declassifications see Yafeng Xia's article "The Study of Cold War International History in China: A Review of the Last Twenty Years," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2008): 81-115.

U.S. alone should halt the Soviet's expansion in the region. However, the Ford administration eventually received significant domestic backlash regarding U.S. involvement in Angola. Though China acted first in Angola and deplored Soviet expansionism in the Third World it did not want to risk its reputation by associating with the U.S. or apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, China had more pressing domestic concerns, namely the succession of top leadership in the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and a possible Soviet invasion stemming from the Sino-Soviet split and border conflict.

To properly examine the subject a background of Portugal's colonialism in Angola and the formation of nationalist liberation movements seeking independence is needed. After understanding how and why the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA were founded the role of foreign sympathizers, détente, triangular diplomacy, and U.S.-Chinese collusion in escalating the conflict can be properly explored. Once the Angolan crisis and foreign intervention is investigated the reasons why American and Chinese policy began to diverge in the 1980s and how China became a prominent investor in Africa while the U.S. continued to pursue highly unpopular policies in the region will emerge.

Portuguese Colonialism, African Resistance, and Angola's Independence

When the Portuguese arrived in Angola during the 15th century they encountered three distinct ethnic groups: the Kongo kingdom, who resided near the coast in northern Angolan, the Mbundu who lived south of the Kongo kingdom, and the Ovimbundu who occupied Angola's central highlands region. Each ethnic group had its own unique culture and though there were other smaller kingdoms and ethnic groups, these three would eventually form the basis of support for each of Angola's liberation movements. The Portuguese and Kongo kingdom traded

various commodities but most importantly, slaves.⁷ The slave trade between Portugal and the Kongo kingdom started slow but exploded when sugar plantations sprouted in the Portuguese colonies of Sao Tome and Brazil.⁸ In total Angola lost 8 million people to slavery, “a heavier loss than any other country in Africa has borne.”⁹ The loss of able-bodied men and women began to devastate the economy and authority of the Kongo kingdom as those who grew rich off the slave trade began to challenge the traditional power structure of the kingdom. The decline of the Kongo kingdom enabled the Portuguese to establish the city of Luanda on the coast and claim Angola as a colony in 1576.

By the early 20th Century, Angola remained under firm Portuguese control. In 1926 a military coup installed Antonio Salazar as the unquestioned ruler of Portugal. During Salazar’s dictatorship “Portugal’s overseas territories assumed increased importance.”¹⁰ The Benguela Railway was completed, linking mines in the Belgian Congo to the Angolan port city of Lobito. Furthermore, there was “rapid development in a wide variety of agricultural, fishing, mining, and manufacturing industries, and from the late 1950s on, in oil production as well.”¹¹ Angola also proved to have large reserves of diamonds; money from these so-called blood diamonds would help fund Angola’s Civil War for almost thirty years. New economic opportunity led to an unprecedented influx of Portuguese settlers, “from 80,000 to approximately 200,000 between

⁷ Slavery existed in the Kongo kingdom prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, but it was a very different form of slavery. Slaves in the Kongo were prisoners of war or refugees, not captured by slave traders and they were kept within the area, not exported overseas.

⁸ Inge Tvedten, *Angola: Struggle for Peace and Reconstruction* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 18.

⁹ Ibid, 18.

¹⁰ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution Vol. 1*, 5.

¹¹ Gretchen Bauer and Scott D. Taylor, *Politics in Southern Africa: State and Society in Transition* (Boulder: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2005), 144.

1950 and 1961.”¹² Yet high rates of economic growth and investment did little for the Angolan people and in 1950 ninety-five percent of Angolans over the age of 15 were illiterate.¹³

As more Portuguese settlers moved to Angola, a “systemic policy of segregation was carried out through division of the population into *indigenas* (indigenous peoples), and *assimilados* (assimilated nonwhites), and Europeans.”¹⁴ Indigenas were forced to carry identification cards, work six months a year for the colonial government, and possessed no political or social rights. Assimilados had to meet certain educational, economic, and linguistic requirements and also committed to abandon their traditional way of life. The division of Angola’s population into assimilados and indigenas also coincided with the strengthening of African ethnic identities. The Kongo people “developed a special identity based on its former importance as a kingdom” and “developed close links with Zaire and with West African culture.” The Mbundu were identified by their “close interaction with the Portuguese and their subsequent ‘Westernization’ and, later, urbanization” as well as their “affiliation” with mesticos.¹⁵ While the Ovimbundu’s “ethnic solidarity” was “developed through their relative isolation in the central highlands region and their economic superiority through involvement in trade and agropastoral production.”¹⁶ These three different ethnic identities formed the foundation for each of Angola’s three nationalist liberation movements that sought independence from Portugal.

Still, the formation of nationalist liberation groups came to Angola much later than other African colonies. This was due to widespread population displacement at the hands of the Portuguese, first through slavery and later forced migration and labor. There was also a wide gap between the educated assimilados, who resided in cities near the coast, and the indigenas, who

¹² Tvedten, *Angola*, 26.

¹³ Marcum, *Angola Revolution Vol. 1*, 28.

¹⁴ Tvedten, *Angola*, 27.

¹⁵ Mestico is a term used to refer to those of mixed race, in this case African/European.

¹⁶ Tvedten, *Angola*, 28.

lived mostly in the rural countryside and townships. The geographic, social, and ethnic differences between the two groups made cooperation and resistance against the Portuguese difficult. Additionally, “Censorship, border control, police action, and control of education all postponed the development of African leadership.”¹⁷ Yet despite the best efforts of the Portuguese authorities Angolans began to form nationalist liberation movements based on ethnic identities in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1956 Agostinho Neto, a doctor and poet who studied medicine in Portugal, formed the first Angolan liberation movement, the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola). The MPLA espoused a Marxist political doctrine and garnered most of their support from the Mbundu ethnic group, mestizos, and whites. The MPLA was also “the most popular movement in the main towns” such as Luanda and was “well supported by intellectuals.”¹⁸ The leadership of the MPLA was generally well educated compared to its rivals, giving it a political and administrative edge over its competitors. Initially, the colonial Portuguese government cracked down hard on Neto and the MPLA and many of its leaders were exiled or languished in Portuguese prisons. Though plagued by internal factionalism the MPLA received aid from China, but the Soviets and Cubans emerged as much more generous donors.

The next liberation movement to be created was the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) in 1962. Holden Roberto, the group’s leader, attended a Baptist missionary school in northern Angola where he “came under the influence of Kongo nationalists.”¹⁹ The FNLA adhered to an exclusively African notion of Angolan nationalism that conflicted with the more urban based and multiracial MPLA. Roberto drew support from the Kongo ethnic group in

¹⁷ Ibid, 29.

¹⁸ Note for the Secretary-General, 8 November 1974, Box: S-0902-0010-02-00001, Folder: Peacekeeping-Africa 1963-1981, United Nations Archives (UNA), New York City.

¹⁹ Tvedten, *Angola*, 30.

the northern countryside and due to early military aid from Zaire and China the FNLA became “stronger than any of the other liberation movements.” However, the Kongo people straddled the border between Angola and Zaire giving the FNLA “little political support within Angola.”²⁰ The FNLA’s support from Zaire was further strengthened by the fact that Zaire’s President, Mobutu Sese Seko, was Roberto’s brother in law. During the Angolan Civil War Roberto, fearing assassination, rarely entered Angola preferring to remain in the safety of Zaire. In addition to Zaire and China the FNLA would also receive support from the U.S.

Jonas Savimbi created Angola’s last liberation movement, UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) in 1964. Savimbi studied medicine in Portugal, politics in Switzerland, and was originally a member of the FNLA. However, Savimbi, a member of the Ovimbundu ethnic group, defected from the FNLA because “he was critical of the strong Kongo dominance in that movement.”²¹ UNITA drew support from the Ovimbundu though its political ideology continually shifted to suit whomever it received external aid from. Militarily, UNITA was the weakest of the three liberation movements, but managed to conduct an insurgency against the independent Angolan government for almost thirty years. Savimbi also colluded with notorious characters such as the colonial Portuguese military and apartheid South Africa in his effort to rule Angola. Eventually the U.S., China, and South Africa would aid UNITA.

Violent resistance to the Portuguese colonial apparatus began in January and February of 1961 with a “violent boycott against the forced cultivation of cotton” as Angolan indigenas “abandoned their fields, burnt their identification cards, and attacked Portuguese traders.”²² Angolan indigenas also attempted to free political prisoners from the jails of Luanda. This initial

²⁰ Note for the Secretary-General, 8 November 1974, S-0902-0010-02-00001, Peacekeeping-Africa 1963-1981, UNA.

²¹ Tvedten, *Angola*, 30.

²² *Ibid*, 31.

revolt of the early 1960s was met by fierce opposition from the Portuguese, who used forced migrations to create controlled villages where the general population could be cut off from the liberation movements. As a result, the MPLA established an exile base in Congo, the FNLA did the same in Zaire, while UNITA mostly stayed in Angola's southeastern countryside. From exile bases in neighboring countries along with small outposts in the rural Angolan countryside the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA fought a guerilla war against the Portuguese military. Moreover, due to ideological differences regarding Angolan nationalism the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA fought each other as well, inhibiting their effectiveness against the Portuguese.

Yet Angola was not Portugal's only colony to violently demand independence during the 1960s. In Mozambique and Guinea, Africans formed more effective nationalist liberation groups that were conducting fierce wars of independence against their colonial oppressors, often with foreign aid and support. However, Portugal was determined to maintain control of its colonies, especially Angola due to its natural wealth. But subduing the nationalist aspirations of its African colonies began to take its toll on Portugal and by the early 1970s colonial wars "consumed 40 percent of the government's budget and more than 5 percent of the country's GDP."²³ Portugal's fierce crackdown on African nationalists also began to damage its reputation, both at home and abroad. In Portugal, citizens were leery of military conscription to fight in colonies where casualty rates among junior officers were notoriously high. Even Portugal's NATO allies criticized its policies, and the U.S. began endorsing United Nations resolutions that condemned

²³ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 218.

Portuguese colonialism in Africa.²⁴ Moreover, the U.S. lamented that Portugal was using U.S. supplied military equipment to suppress African nationalism in its colonies.²⁵

Portugal's budget woes and unpopular colonial policies came to a head in the 1974 Carnation Revolution. In April 1974, the Armed Forces Movement, which consisted of lower ranking military officers, overthrew Salazar in a bloodless coup and named General Antonio de Spínola president. After the Carnation Revolution Portugal began to reform its colonial policies and granted independence to Guinea in September 1974 and Mozambique in June 1975. Angola, however, was different, "It was the richest of the Portuguese colonies" and also had "the largest white population and the weakest insurgency."²⁶ The MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA fought each other as much as the Portuguese and never controlled much of Angola, only small patches of land in the countryside. Moreover, most people lived in the cities and towns near the coast so neither movement ever gained much of a consensus among the general population. This made it unclear exactly whom Portugal should hand over power to.

To quell the fighting and bring a democratic end to the situation the MPLA, FNLA, UNITA, and Portugal signed the Alvor Agreement on 15 January 1975. The Alvor Agreement recognized the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA "as the sole legitimate representatives of the people of Angola."²⁷ It also set Angola's independence for 15 November 1975 and set up a transitional government to oversee Angola's shift from colony to sovereign country. A Portuguese general was named High Commissioner of the transitional government and representatives from the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA compromised the Presidential Council. Delegates from Angola's

²⁴ The U.S. voted for the Soviet sponsored Resolution 1654, "The Situation With Regard to the Implementation of Declaration of on the Granting of Independence to Colonial People's and Countries" Adopted Nov. 27, 1961. See *The Yearbook of the United Nations 1961*, Page 56.

²⁵ Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Kennedy, 31 August 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1961-1963, Vol. 21, Document 353.

²⁶ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 233.

²⁷ The Alvor Agreement on the Independence of Angola, 15 January, 1975.

liberation movements were also appointed to various positions such as Minister of Interior and Minister of Justice. These positions were distributed equally among the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA and no group held a majority of power in the transitional government.²⁸ The Alvor Agreement also scheduled Angola's first elections for 31 October 1975 when Angolans would elect a "Constituent Assembly, which would select the country's first president."²⁹

However, the peace established by the agreement was short lived and before long the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA, flush with foreign military aid, resumed their war for control of Angola's looming independence. Fighting began in Luanda where each movement had established a presence after the Carnation Revolution. In late January and early February the Soviet armed MPLA and Chinese armed FNLA engaged in sporadic clashes, making the initial battles of 1975 a proxy war between Moscow and Beijing. UNITA was not active in this early round of fighting largely because its presence in Luanda was so small. Furthermore, Savimbi was in the Angolan countryside rallying support and "strengthening UNITA's ties with the FNLA" forming a coalition to stand against the MPLA.³⁰ By March an all out war was being fought in the slums of Luanda between the MPLA and FNLA. Portugal set up numerous ceasefires, but did not enforce them militarily. As a result, no truce lasted more than a month as the fighting spread throughout Angola and by July, "the MPLA expelled the FNLA from Luanda."³¹ With the crisis in Angola intensifying Portuguese citizens, who compromised most of the skilled labor in Angola, began to flee the country depriving Angola of vital human capital. While it is not exactly

²⁸ For a full list of positions in the transitional government see, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations to the Secretary-General Waldheim, 7 March 1975, S-0904-0033-06, Country Files of Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim -Portugal- Portuguese Territories, UNA.

²⁹ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 242.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 253.

³¹ *Ibid*, 254.

clear who fired the first shots in 1975, it is clear who was providing the ammunition: foreign military donors whose aid fundamentally undermined the principles of the Alvor Agreement.

With war raging in Angola the United Nations and Organization of African Unity (OAU) attempted to succeed where the Portuguese failed and establish a meaningful ceasefire between Angola's conflicting liberation movements. These efforts culminated in October 1975 when the OAU Conciliation Commission on Angola met with representatives of the MPLA, FNLA, UNITA, and Portugal in Uganda. During the meeting the OAU "appealed to the three liberation movements... to bury their petty and ideological differences for the sake of the greater interest of Angola." The Conciliation Commission also requested Portugal "assume, without delay and in an impartial manner, its responsibilities in Angola." Foreign interference was also denounced and the OAU called for foreign countries to "immediately cease all interference in the internal affairs of Angola and supplying arms to the parties concerned."³² Though the commission made the proper assessments and recommendations, the OAU had no way to enforce its positions. Furthermore, the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA used the summit to merely hurl accusations at one another while foreign powers, specifically the U.S., South Africa, Soviet Union, and Cuba, continued to escalate the Angolan Civil War by introducing large amounts of weapons into Angola. Yet shortly after the OAU's meeting China, who had initially sparked an arms race in Angola with large shipments of weapons to the FNLA in 1973, withdrew from the conflict and encouraged the U.S. to take their place as the primary weapons supplier to the FNLA/UNITA coalition.

³² The Report of the OAU Conciliation Commission on Angola, October 1975, S-0972-0001-04, Items in Organization of Africa Unity, UNA.

U.S.-Chinese Diplomacy Surrounding Angola

But while Chinese diplomats pressured the U.S. into increased action in Angola China refused to provide any further aid to the FNLA/UNITA coalition despite the requests of U.S. leaders Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger. On 20 October 1975, a mere seven days before China left Angola, Chinese officials accused the United States of appeasing the Soviets in order to advance détente. China's Vice Premier of the State Council, Deng Xiaoping, claimed that after the Helsinki conference, where the U.S. promised not to intervene in Eastern Europe, "the Russians, they now feel you cannot restrain them."³³ Though Angola is not mentioned directly it appears the Chinese are challenging the U.S. to do more to ensure a MPLA defeat. For the Chinese, a negotiated settlement with the Soviets in Angola would amount to appeasement and prove that the U.S. could not restrain the Soviets.

When China and the U.S. discussed Angola directly, President Ford tried to bring China back into the conflict but to no avail. Ford even went on the defensive to prove the U.S. could deter the Soviets by citing the amount of U.S. aid to the FNLA and UNITA. During the Beijing summit of December 1975, Ford admitted to Mao Zedong, China's leader from 1949-1976, his concerns about the Soviets gaining a foothold in Angola. "You don't seem to have any means [to push the Soviets out of Angola]" Mao replied. Here Mao seems to be referencing the domestic opposition the U.S. faced regarding intervention in Angola. Ford responded that both the U.S. and China "could do better" to combat the Soviets in Angola, insinuating China could possibly return to Angola. However, Mao refused because of the involvement of South Africa. "This has offended the whole of black Africa," he said. "This complicates the whole matter."³⁴ Mao made an interesting point here. He grasps the racial aspect as to why black Africans resented apartheid

³³ Memorandum of Conversation, 25 January 1975, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 18, 772.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 865.

South Africa meddling in Angola's affairs, something the U.S. was apparently not concerned about judging by the level of U.S.-South African cooperation in the conflict.

Later in the conversation Ford continued his attempts to push Mao back into Africa. "I say again that time is of the essence because the other two forces need encouragement... It would be tragic if the MPLA should prevail after the efforts that have been made by us and by you and others." Yet Mao gave vague response: "That's hard to say. So you think that's about all?" Ford made one last attempt to prove the U.S. could restrain the Soviets in Angola remarking, "just before I left Washington I approved another \$35 million to help the other two forces. This is a solid indication to meet the challenge of the Soviet Union and defeat the MPLA." Mao's response was simply "Good."³⁵ It is clear that despite Ford's best efforts he could not persuade Mao to reenter the Angolan conflict. Furthermore, by the end of the conversation Ford is on the defensive trying to prove to Mao that he is taking the proper measures to combat the Soviets in Angola.

Chinese and U.S. officials continued their discussion of Angola the following day. Vice Premier Deng declared, "We have noticed that it seems recently the Soviet Union has adopted a tougher position—a fiercer position. And I believe that Mr. Secretary made a statement with regard to the problems in Angola." He went on to state that the Soviets were seeking a strategic military port in Angola. Furthermore, the Soviets were escalating their involvement due to the upcoming Party Congress and "their belief that détente should not prevent the Soviet Union from seeking hegemony." Deng went as far as to call the U.S. and its allies "empty cannons" and teased "we told the Europeans that at present the total military strength of the Soviet Union is stronger than that of the United States and Western Europe put together."³⁶ Here Deng is clearly

³⁵ Ibid, 866-867.

³⁶ Ibid, 878-879.

still questioning the U.S.'s ability to restrain the Soviets despite Ford's previous reassurance and disclosure of funds to the FNLA and UNITA. Deng also questioned the overall military strength of the U.S. and its allies, asserting that China believes the Soviets are more powerful than the U.S. and their "empty cannons."

Later in the conversation the idea of renewed Chinese aid to the FNLA/UNITA coalition was brought up. However, this time the Ford and Kissinger did not beat around the bush and directly asked the Chinese to support the FNLA and UNITA either directly or through their mutual ally Zaire. Deng asserted, "We have a good relationship with Zaire, but what we can help them with is only some light weapons." Kissinger countered, "We can give them weapons. What they need is training in guerrilla warfare. If you can give them light weapons it would help, but the major thing is training." Here Kissinger made a formal request that China renew their training of the FNLA/UNITA coalition. Yet, Deng brushed the request aside, stating that China had previously aided all three liberation movements "and the organization which we helped earliest was MPLA."³⁷

Ford and Kissinger continued to press for Chinese intervention, but Deng claimed that China could not transfer aid to the FNLA/UNITA coalition and reverted back to the issue of South Africa. "The primary problem is the involvement of South Africa. In those countries which originally did not support the MPLA, there is now a change in attitude exactly because of the involvement of South Africa." Ford responded, "We had nothing to do with the South African involvement."³⁸ In fact, CIA officers were collaborating with South Africans in the field sharing equipment and information.³⁹ Deng also referred to the fact that after South Africa invaded Angola many African countries who were neutral or favored the FNLA or UNITA

³⁷ Ibid, 890.

³⁸ Ibid, 890-891.

³⁹ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 187-188.

began supporting the MPLA simply because they were defending Angola from the invasion of apartheid South Africa.

After Deng explained the difficulty in funneling aid to the FNLA/UNITA coalition due to a lack of friendly African governments Ford still urged Chinese involvement: “Will you move in the north if we move in the south?” Northern Angola was a stronghold of the FNLA while South Africa and UNITA launched their assault from the southern and eastern regions of Angola. However, Deng refused to budge, “But you should give greater help in the north too,” he said. “As far as I know, you have many ways to help. Also through third countries.” Ford agreed that the U.S. needed to take on more responsibility in northern Angola without any real commitment from Deng to provide any further aid. So far in the conversation the Deng has halfheartedly agreed to “try” to deliver aid to the FNLA/UNITA coalition while convincing Ford to take even more responsibility in the conflict.⁴⁰

Despite the lack of Chinese commitment to provide any further aid or training in Angola Kissinger and Ford insisted they were up to the task of restraining the Soviets in Africa. Kissinger divulged that the U.S. was cooperating with France. “They will send some equipment and training,” he insisted. Ford reiterated the \$35 million he approved for the FNLA/UNITA coalition and Deng responded by encouraging “It is worth spending more money on that problem.”⁴¹ The conversation ended with the Ford and Kissinger accomplishing little while Deng convinced them to commit more resources and shoulder more of the burden in Angola.

However, Kissinger reported the outcome of the December 1975 summit in Beijing much differently in his memoirs. He states, “Mao went along with Ford’s request” to provide more arms to the FNLA/UNITA coalition. Kissinger continued, “three months later, when I was

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, 25 January 1975, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 18, 891.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 891.

shuttling around Africa, I found that Mao had, in fact, kept his promise and delivered some thirty tanks” via Zaire.⁴² It appears Kissinger is distorting the facts to make his argument on the subject look better. Neither Mao nor Deng ever agreed to send any further aid to the FNLA/UNITA coalition; the official transcripts of the conversations prove that. Moreover, the tanks Kissinger claims China had delivered to Zaire may have been mentioned in a June 1975 intelligence cable stating the Chinese “gave Mobutu a substantial quantity of military equipment, including tanks.”⁴³ The tanks Kissinger saw on his visit to Zaire in 1976 were most likely delivered prior to China’s withdraw from the conflict in October 1975 and belonged to the Zairian army *not* the FNLA/UNITA coalition. Kissinger’s claims that China continued providing military aid via Zaire after October 1975 are further disputed by numerous other intelligence reports. A National Intelligence Bulletin from November 1975 stated: “Peking reportedly has placed restrictions on Zairian army use of Chinese-supplied artillery to support Front units in Angola.”⁴⁴ If China did not want previously delivered military equipment used in Angola, why would they continue to supply weapons to the FNLA/UNITA coalition as Kissinger claimed?

The next time U.S. and Chinese officials discussed Angola was May of 1976, after the MPLA won control of Angola. Kissinger defended U.S. policy in Angola while the Chinese were highly critical. Kissinger stated, “we are not going to permit another Angola to develop... The Secretary of Defense will go to Zaire in July to discuss military assistance to that country. We are working closely with Zambia and other countries.” Huang Chen, chief of China’s Liaison Office, responded “Frankly speaking, we think the United States should learn a lesson from Angola.” Huang continued, “the fact that the military situation in Angola developed to the point

⁴² Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 893.

⁴³ Cable, “Chinese Contact With Angolan Nationalist Groups,” June 1975, Digital National Security Archives (DNSA), China and the United States: From Hostility to Engagement 1960-1998, CH00355.

⁴⁴ National Intelligence Bulletin, “China-Angola,” 5 November 1975, DNSA, China and the United States: From Hostility to Engagement 1960-1998, CH00386.

it did is inseparable from U.S. policy towards the Soviets. U.S. policy abetted the Soviet efforts.” It is clear that Huang believes the U.S. did not do enough to restrain the Soviets in Angola. In response, Kissinger blamed Congress for not allowing the U.S. to do what was necessary to contain the Soviets. “We would have defeated the Soviets in Angola if Congress had not stopped our assistance,” he declared.⁴⁵

Three months later the U.S. is still on the defensive dealing with the Chinese. Huang remarked to Kissinger, “I have the impression that Soviet influence has been expanding in an even more pronounced way in Africa.” Kissinger agreed and defended U.S. policy in Africa stating that the U.S. provided weapons to Zaire and Kenya in an attempt to stem Soviet expansion in Africa. Yet despite Kissinger’s attempted reassurance Huang is still critical of the America strategy towards the Soviet Union: “a policy of détente with the Soviet Union is less and less effective.”⁴⁶ The U.S. and China still did not see eye to eye on Angola two months later during an exchange in New York City. Chiao Kuan-hua, China’s Foreign Minister, referred back to Helsinki and the U.S. policy of “appeasing” the Soviets, which led to an MPLA victory in Angola. Chiao asserted that, “After Helsinki the Soviets went on a large scale offensive in Angola and we believe this was caused by the weak attitude you adopted at Helsinki toward the Soviets.” Again, Chiao is on the offensive and the Kissinger is forced to defend U.S. policies. Kissinger stated U.S. policy in Africa: “What we want—and it is a complicated process—is to create a basis for resisting Soviet intervention while not obstructing liberation movements.”⁴⁷

However, Chiao is not buying what Kissinger is selling. “Just not opposing liberation movements is not enough,” he responded. Kissinger countered by insisting the U.S. supported liberation movements. But Chiao still had his doubts, “You are not thoroughgoing, speaking

⁴⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, 25 January 1975, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 18, 926.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 946-947.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 964-965.

quite frankly.” He continued, “I don’t want to go into details, but your efforts are only half measures. You may keep on trying, but you may find that the result is the opposite of what you expect. You may end up angering the blacks.”⁴⁸ Despite assuring the Chinese for a year neither Ford nor Kissinger could convince China’s leaders that the U.S. was committed to restraining the Soviets in Africa. Furthermore, Chiao’s prediction proves true, future U.S. policy in Africa, specifically, continuing support of UNITA and improved relations with apartheid South Africa would prove unpopular.

As the conversation continued Chinese criticism of détente becomes more acute. Chiao stated, “Our view is that the Soviets, through Helsinki, see your weakness.” Kissinger acknowledged U.S. “weakness” replying “we are temporarily weak until after our elections. We have gone through a period of temporary weakness when the forces which overthrew Nixon have been dominant in this country.” Yet Chiao persists, “The Soviets, through Helsinki, have come to feel that the West is anxious to reach agreement. This is a long-range problem and nothing very terrible but it is a fact that the Soviets have reached such a conclusion.”⁴⁹ It seems the U.S. and China had come to a head regarding Angola and détente. No matter how much money the U.S. threw into Angola China kept pressuring them for more, essentially burdening them to fight a battle they started. Furthermore, no matter how much the U.S. tried to convince the Chinese that détente was not appeasement or that China should resume aid to the FNLA/UNITA coalition, the Chinese would not budge.

Motives Behind China’s Angolan Policies

Yet to decipher the motives behind China’s policies in Angola, namely, the undermining of the Alvor Agreement, its insistence on U.S. intervention, condemnation of détente, and reversal

⁴⁸ Ibid, 965-966.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 969.

of triangular diplomacy one must see the events from China's perspective. During the Angolan conflict the U.S. was going through a period of weakness, as asserted by Chiao and acknowledged by Kissinger. Within the span of a few years the U.S. had been defeated in Vietnam and suffered through the Watergate scandal all while enduring an OPEC initiated energy crisis, an economic recession, and a series of Congressional hearings lamenting the covert actions of the CIA that resulted in the Clark Amendment. It would seem, as a result of these series of crises, that the U.S. would fold into itself in what Kissinger called "a watered-down version of Wilsonianism."⁵⁰ Mao Zedong voiced these concerns to Kissinger as early as 1973 when he asked if the Watergate scandal could possibly lead to the election of Democrats who would "adopt the policy of isolationism."⁵¹ However, it was in China's best interest that the U.S. not pursue a policy of isolationism during the 1970s.

It was in China's best interest that the Cold War continue as usual, that is, the U.S. continue its policy of Third World interventions to combat supposed "communists" who were sometimes backed by the Soviets. The more the Soviets and Americans battled each other for influence in far off places the less resources the Soviets could devote to undermining or invading China. In laymen's terms every gun the Soviets committed to battling the Americans was one less gun to put on the Sino-Soviet border. Moreover, with the U.S. and Soviet Union conducting proxy wars throughout the Third World China could continue denouncing foreign imperialism and present itself as a legitimate third option to developing countries, and developing economies. This policy of pressuring the U.S. to continue its Third World interventions allowed China to emerge unscathed from the Angolan crisis and focus its attention at home on issues such as political succession and strengthening border defenses.

⁵⁰ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 830.

⁵¹ Memorandum of Conversation, 12 November 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 18, 398.

Furthermore, Chinese policy in the Angolan crisis was tied to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which lasted from 1966-1976. During the Angolan crisis, which coincided with the twilight of the Cultural Revolution, China, like the U.S., was going through a period of weakness. As a result of the political turmoil that marred the Cultural Revolution and the deteriorating health of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, China's two most prominent leaders, China faced serious domestic concerns regarding the succession of top leadership in the CCP. By the mid 1970s Zhou's health was failing and he died in January 1976. Likewise, Mao was in his 80s during the Angolan crisis and after his death in September 1976 the political leadership of the CCP was in shambles due to the various purges of the Cultural Revolution. A power struggle ensued after Mao's death leading to the arrest of the "Gang of Four," the most radical members of Mao's inner circle. The deteriorating health conditions of China's top two leaders and the issue of their succession led China to focus on domestic concerns, rather than competing for influence in the Third World against the Soviets. No doubt the CCP was more concerned about Mao's successor than the Soviets gaining a foothold in Angola; a task they passed off to the Americans. Furthermore, with the impending death of China's top leaders the smartest move for the Chinese was to pull away from the Angolan conflict and cover all its bases by extending "warm congratulations" to the new MPLA led Angolan government while at the same time condemning the foreign interference of the U.S. and Soviet Union.⁵²

China's economy during the Cultural Revolution especially from 1973-1975, its most involved period in the Angolan conflict, can also shed light on its policy decisions during the Angolan crisis. During the last years of the Cultural Revolution China experienced remarkable industrial growth. Yet there was a catch, although "Significant achievements were scored in

⁵² For China's full message to the new MPLA led People's Republic of Angola see Statement of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China to United Nations, 15 November 1975, S-0442-0190-03, PO230 ANGOL, UNA.

industry” the Cultural Revolution was also “responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the [Chinese Communist] Party, the state and the people since the founding of the People’s Republic.”⁵³ During China’s participation in the Angolan conflict its “Indices of Gross Industrial Output Value” increased 16 percent.⁵⁴ This shows that China had the industrial capability to continue supplying the FNLA/UNITA coalition, but chose to allow the U.S. shoulder the burden while China focused on domestic concerns. The FNLA/UNITA coalition were not the only ones feeling the squeeze and China also drastically cut its military aid to North Vietnam.⁵⁵ While China was cutting its military aid to the Third World in 1975 it increased its “Expenditure for National Defense” roughly 9 million Yuan from the previous year.⁵⁶ This further illustrates the shift in China’s policies during the latter years of the Cultural Revolution and Angolan crisis, from competing with the Soviets for influence in the Third World to focusing on the domestic issues of political succession and possible Soviet invasion.

Though the Soviet Union and China were both communist countries they became bitter rivals in the 1950s after the death of Joseph Stalin and the rise of revisionist Soviet leaders, who were highly critical of Stalin’s policies. The Soviet Union and China also disagreed about their mutual border, and the Sino-Soviet border dispute became violent in late 1960s when armed conflict broke out and claimed both Soviet and Chinese casualties.⁵⁷ The renewed threat of a Soviet attack was one of the reasons the Chinese sought rapprochement with the U.S., using the U.S. as a counter balance to the Soviets. During the earliest exchanges between U.S. and Chinese

⁵³ “*Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China*,” Adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on June 27, 1981.

⁵⁴ Department of Comprehensive Statistics of National Bureau of Statistics, *Comprehensive Statistical Data and Materials on 50 Years of New China* (Beijing: China State Statistics Press, 1999), 37.

⁵⁵ Chen Jian, *Mao’s China & The Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 228.

⁵⁶ National Bureau of Statistics, *Comprehensive Statistical Data*, 12.

⁵⁷ For more information on the Sino-Soviet split see Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

diplomats Deng Xiaoping claimed that the Soviets were attempting to “encircle” China.⁵⁸ The possibility of a Soviet attack continued to be a determinate in Chinese policy during the Angolan crisis. In 1974, as Chinese military advisors trained the FNLA in Zaire Deng told Kissinger, “the Soviet policy of hostility against China has not changed.” He continued, “The threats that they continue to use are military threat and subversion.”⁵⁹ Though the Chinese were concerned about Soviet expansionism in Angola, they had to focus on the more pressing matter of a possible Soviet invasion of China. Therefore, China prodded the U.S. into escalating the conflict in Angola rather than commit its own resources, which would be better spent protecting China’s borders and though U.S. officials tried their utmost to bring China back into Angola, their efforts were mute.

Furthermore, as the Sino-Soviet split widened the Soviets and Chinese began to compete for influence in the Third World. In a 1974 UN General Assembly Meeting, Deng declared that the Soviet Union and U.S. compromised the First World, Europe made up the Second World, while the nations of Africa, Latin America, and Asia (excluding Japan) were part of the Third World.⁶⁰ Mao Zedong identified China as a Third World country due to China’s history of economic exploitation at the hands of colonial powers. He also saw China as a leader of the Third World because it had shed this exploitation while the Soviet Union had become an imperial power exploiting its client states in Eastern Europe.⁶¹ Additionally, the rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, “implied the radicalization of China’s foreign policy interests,”⁶² and compelled China to assist those struggling for independence in the Third World. China also

⁵⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, 10 December 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1973, Vol. 17, 616.

⁵⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, 27 November 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 18, 603.

⁶⁰ For Deng Xiaoping’s full speech see *Speech By Chairman of the Delegation of the People’s Republic of China, Teng Hsiao-Ping, At the Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1974).

⁶¹ For more information about China’s ideological and economic reasons for intervening in the Third World see *China and the Third World: Champion or Challenger?* (Dover: Auburn House Publishing Company, 1986) edited by Lillian Craig Harris and Robert L. Worden.

⁶² Mark Mancall, *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 432.

aspired to become a member of the United Nations and saw Africa as the perfect place to secure the votes necessary for UN membership. Hence, the involvement of South Africa weighed heavily on China's decision to withdraw from the Angolan conflict and outsource its support of the FNLA and UNITA to the U.S.

Though South Africa intervened in Angola on the side of China's allies, the FNLA/UNITA coalition, China would not align its interests in with South Africa for two reasons. Firstly, South Africa's apartheid government was based on the racial supremacy of whites in a country and continent where the vast majority of the population was black. This made South Africa very unpopular in regional and international politics. Secondly, South Africa was a colonial power and maintained an iron grip over its colony Namibia. The South West People's Organization or SWAPO, a nationalist liberation movement, challenged South Africa's colonial rule in Namibia. Though SWAPO received most of its aid from the Soviets they were "by no means anti-Chinese. SWAPO volunteers had been trained in China since the early sixties."⁶³ China could not continue supporting the FNLA and UNITA in Angola after the coalition allied with South Africa, this would fundamentally undermined its position with SWAPO and the anti-colonial, anti-racist⁶⁴ rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution.

Still, South Africa's invasion of Angola provided China with a concrete reason for denying repeated U.S. requests that China continue aiding and training the FNLA/UNITA coalition. Moreover, South Africa's meddling in the Angolan Civil War gave China the pretext to leave the conflict and focus on political succession in the CCP and strengthening the Sino-Soviet border.

⁶³ Ronald Dreyer, *Namibia and South Africa: Regional Dynamics of Decolonization 1945-90* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994), 61.

⁶⁴ Though Chinese leaders preached anti-racism many African students who were awarded scholarships to study in China during the Cultural Revolution reported wide spread racism and discrimination from their Chinese peers. See Philip Snow's "China and Africa: Consensus and Camouflage" in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) edited by Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh.

China also showed possible allies in Africa that it would never ally with apartheid South Africa, despite its feverish anti-Soviet policies. Though the Chinese played a crucial role in escalating the Angolan conflict they withdrew when it became clear other foreign powers, namely the U.S., South Africa, Soviet Union, and Cuba were stepping up their aid to Angola's liberation movements in 1975.

Foreign Aid, Intervention, and Escalation

The first Angolan liberation movement to receive foreign aid was Neto's MPLA. In 1958 the MPLA received "verbal support and a limited amount of material aid from both the PRC and the Soviet Union."⁶⁵ During the 1960s MPLA delegations visited and studied in both Beijing and Moscow. However, the MPLA refused to take sides in the Sino-Soviet conflict, was plagued with internal factionalism, and received little support from the competing communist nations. As a result, Yugoslavia, who acted independently of the Soviet Union, emerged as the MPLA's closest ally until 1974. Yet in 1971, Neto visited China and twelve MPLA commanders received military and political training there.⁶⁶ Up until 1973 China was truly neutral, extending training and limited aid to all three Angolan liberation movements. Moreover, in June 1975 while the MPLA and FNLA clashed in Angola, the Chinese invited a MPLA delegation to Beijing in an attempt to "establish a degree of influence in all three Angolan nationalist groups."⁶⁷ Though China committed itself to the FNLA and UNITA in 1973 it still kept the door open to relations with the MPLA. This put China in a much more advantageous position than the U.S. after the MPLA's victory in 1976.

⁶⁵ Eugene K. Lawson, "China's Policy in Ethiopia and Angola," in *Soviet and Chinese Aid to African Nations*, eds. Warren Weinstein and Thomas H. Henriksen (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), 169.

⁶⁶ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 242-243.

⁶⁷ Cable, "Chinese Contact With Angolan Nationalist Groups," June 1975, DNSA, China and the United States: From Hostility to Engagement 1960-1998, CH00355.

The Soviet Union, like China, provided limited aid and vocal support to the MPLA in the late 1950s. In contrast to China, however, the Soviet Union did not lend assistance to the FNLA or UNITA, preferring to stay on the side of those who proclaimed to be Marxists. Soviet aid to the MPLA prior to late 1974 was paltry at best due to animosity within the group. For instance, in 1972 a high ranking member of the group, Daniel Chipenda, became disappointed with the MPLA after Portuguese scorched earth attacks in eastern Angola and led an “Eastern Revolt” against the “intellectuals, mulattos, whites, and northerners in the MPLA.”⁶⁸ Chipenda would eventually defect to the FNLA, taking a band of supporters with him.

Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador to the U.S., claimed Moscow’s aid to the MPLA was “withdrawn when the movement became locked in its own internal struggles.”⁶⁹ However, Soviet documents show that during Chipenda’s revolt assistance to the MPLA amounted to “a trickle of military and financial support.”⁷⁰ Furthermore, the Soviets did not trust the MPLA due to their ties and open communication with the Chinese. From the late 1950s to early 1970s the Soviets took a cautious approach to supporting the MPLA, only increasing their aid when China began arming the MPLA’s rivals in 1973. In late 1974 the Soviets established a generous aid package for the MPLA and arms began arriving in early 1975, just in time undercut the principles of the Alvor Agreement. As the war escalated in 1975 the Soviets committed heavy weapons, ammunition, tanks, and fighter planes to the MPLA, often using Cuba as an intermediary.

The fact that the Soviets moved in Angola in response to the Chinese, and not the U.S. is noteworthy. According to Westad, “Soviet experts did not believe that the United States would

⁶⁸ Glesijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 237.

⁶⁹ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents (1962-1986)* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 360.

⁷⁰ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 217.

stage a massive intervention... Their main worry was the Chinese, who had stepped up their FNLA assistance program from bases in Zaire.”⁷¹ Through Soviet documents, Westad shows that the U.S. became involved in a conflict that was originally a proxy war between Beijing and Moscow. Yet in the end, the United States did China’s dirty work, combating the Soviets and Cubans after China withdrew in October of 1975. Though China started an arms race in Angola by committing significant amounts of arms and military instructors to the FNLA they abandoned their assistance when apartheid South Africa and the U.S. became more involved in the conflict.

Nudging the Soviets along in Angola was Cuba’s Fidel Castro, who had aided multiple African liberation movements since the early 1960s. In contrast to their allies in Moscow, Cuba took a more active role in Angola training MPLA soldiers in Congo during the mid 1960s. However, “the Cubans were disappointed in the military performance of the MPLA and critical of the failure of its leaders to join guerillas in the field.”⁷² A rift developed between Cuba and the MPLA and after the departure of Cuban advisors in 1967 relations between the two faded. Cuba turned its attention to more successful African liberation movements in Guinea and Cape Verde. Still, during Cuba’s misadventure with the MPLA in Congo they planted the seeds for future cooperation. Castro would only re-enter the fold, at the request of Neto,⁷³ after the Soviet Union made a major commitment to the MPLA in 1975. In November 1975, Castro sent his special forces into Angola to combat South Africa who invaded Angola to supposedly protect an infrastructure investment but began advancing into the Angolan heartland. Castro remarked that, “The objective was for the racist South African forces coming from the south to meet up with

⁷¹ Ibid, 226.

⁷² Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 184.

⁷³ For Neto’s full letter to Fidel Castro see Letter from Neto to Cuban Leadership, 26 January 1975. Cold War International History Project (CWIHP): Cold War in Africa Collection.

Mobutu's mercenaries from the north and occupy Luanda."⁷⁴ Cuba would eventually commit thousands of troops, substantial amounts of military hardware, and the Cuban/MPLA army would eventually rout the FNLA, UNITA, Zaire, and South Africa effectively winning Angola for the MPLA.

The FNLA was the next movement to garner outside external support. Zaire was the FNLA's first foreign sympathizer and allowed the FNLA to set up exile military bases in its territory. Zaire gave the FNLA arms, uniforms, and used its air force to shuttle the FNLA around Angola.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Zaire's leader, Mobutu Sese Seko, had been lobbying the U.S. for a more active policy in Angola and warning of the dangers the communist MPLA posed since 1970.⁷⁶ Mobutu also used his influence with the U.S. government to assert the credentials of his brother in law, Holden Roberto. In 1975 more than 1,000 Zairian troops joined the FNLA in its war against the MPLA in Angola.⁷⁷

However, Zaire was not the only country to aid the FNLA. In 1963 Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi promised aid to Roberto and the FNLA. Roberto announced he would travel to China within a month but it took ten years. When Roberto finally did travel to Beijing in 1973, Zaire had diplomatically recognized China and received a thirty-year interest free loan.⁷⁸ Displaying their new alliance with both Zaire and the FNLA, 450 tons of Chinese weapons earmarked for the FNLA arrived in Zaire in 1973 and 112 Chinese military advisors arrived the following year.⁷⁹ Though China was the first foreign country to introduce considerable amounts of military aid and advisors to an Angola liberation movement, it was also the first to back out.

⁷⁴ Fidel Castro and Ignacio Ramonet, *Fidel Castro, My Life: A Spoken Autobiography* (New York: Scribner, 2007), 318.

⁷⁵ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 250.

⁷⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, 4 August 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 28, 210-211.

⁷⁷ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 257.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 238.

⁷⁹ Stockwell, *In Search Of Enemies*, 257.

After South Africa set its sights on Luanda in October 1975 and subsequently allied with the FNLA and UNITA, China withdrew. If China wanted to maintain its self imposed reputation as a leader of the Third World it could not align its interests with apartheid South Africa, the most hated nation in the region.

Holden Roberto also received covert assistance from the U.S. government since the Kennedy administration. Roberto “had met with the new President while he was still a senator and, like many African nationalists, had admired him for his public support for the cause of Algerian independence.”⁸⁰ During the Kennedy administration the U.S. denounced Portuguese colonialism and Roberto had been receiving a small “subsistence” fund since at least 1961. This subsistence fund was “in return for specific information and under no circumstances in a magnitude to permit the purchase of arms.”⁸¹ However, Kennedy had to walk a diplomatic tightrope: Portugal was a vital NATO ally and use of its Azores military base was of crucial importance to the U.S. The Azores islands provided a key refueling point for the U.S. Air Force and Navy on the long journey between the U.S. and Europe. In the end, Kennedy sided with Portugal and “edged back into the NATO fold” as Portugal “had successfully set such a policy retreat as its price for continued American use of the strategic Azores base.”⁸²

UNITA was the last liberation movement to receive foreign aid, Savimbi established contact with the Chinese early and in 1964 traveled to China where he and a few of his followers were trained in guerilla warfare and politics at Nanking Military Academy.⁸³ He proved an astute learner and prolonged the Angolan Civil War until his death in 2002. Savimbi was also a diplomatic chameleon playing to whoever would give him aid. When receiving aid from the

⁸⁰ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution Vol. 1*, 182.

⁸¹ Memorandum From the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman), 17 July 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. 21, Document 352.

⁸² Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution Vol. 1*, 315.

⁸³ Daniel Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc.), 51.

Chinese during the 1960s and 1970s he opposed the Soviet Union and praised Maoism. Yet during the 1980s, when Savimbi received aid from the U.S., he presented himself to President Reagan as a staunch anti-communist and advocate of the free market.

Like the Soviet Union, the United States was at first reluctant to get involved in Angola during the 1970s. But after the Soviets augmented their aid to the MPLA in late 1974 the CIA began to covertly fund the MPLA's rivals. Just as the ink on the Alvor Agreement was drying, on 23 January 1975 the "40 Committee," the National Security Council sub-committee on covert affairs, approved an initial \$300,000 for the FNLA and massively increased funding later that year in response to increased battles between the FNLA and MPLA. Dubbed Operation IAFEATURE the 40 Committee authorized payment of \$14 million to both the FNLA and UNITA to combat the Soviet-Cuban backed MPLA in July of 1975. The CIA also lent aid to mercenaries to assist the FNLA/UNITA coalition.⁸⁴

However, when word of a covert intervention in Angola leaked to the press the CIA began to take flak from both Congress and the American public. Leslie Gelb of the *New York Times* first broke the story in September of 1975. Gelb's article is more informative than opinionated and focuses on the amount and type of military aid the U.S. and China were funneling through Zaire. It also highlighted that the Soviets were delivering significant amounts of weapons to the MPLA.⁸⁵ Commentary on the CIA's Angola operation took a more critical turn within a few months and began to draw comparisons to Vietnam. The *New York Times* remarked, "Angola is rapidly escalating into an international conflict reminiscent of Vietnam and United States spokesmen are grossly distorting the real issues involved."⁸⁶ With evidence of CIA

⁸⁴ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 258-259.

⁸⁵ Leslie Gelb, "U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola," *New York Times*, September 25, 1975.

⁸⁶ George M. Houser, "Communism and the War in Angola," *New York Times*, December 14, 1975.

intervention and public pressure mounting the U.S. was forced to withdraw their support of the FNLA and UNITA in 1976.

The U.S. also coordinated their support of the FNLA/UNITA coalition with their regional allies, Zaire and South Africa, who were adamant communism not gain a foothold in Angola. Under the guise of protecting the Calueque Dam in southern Angola, South African troops rolled into Angola in August 1975 and occupied the site.⁸⁷ The dam was financed by South Africa and provided electricity and water to South Africa's colony Namibia, which bordered Angola to the south. R. F. Botha, South Africa's representative to the United Nations justified the invasion stating, "arrangements were made with the Portuguese authorities for them to assume protection of the Calueque Dam, and for South Africa to carry out the task until they arrived."⁸⁸ However, Portugal's ambassador, Jose Manuel Galvo Teles, disputed South Africa's claim and asserted South African troops entered Angola "with neither the knowledge nor advance authorization of the Portuguese Government." Teles continued, "the affirmation that the Portuguese Government had asked South Africa to remain in the Calueque area and to continue to assume the safety of work in progress at the dam, is completely without foundation."⁸⁹ South Africa's penetration into southern Angola was welcomed by UNITA, who operated in the southeastern portion of Angola.

But South Africa would not stop at the Calueque area in southern Angola. South Africa's military began pushing further into Angola to assure it would not have a communist neighbor to the north. On 14 October 1975 South African troops started moving north to Angola's capital, Luanda, covering "forty to forty-five miles a day." South Africa's invasion force, codenamed Zulu, was "composed of more than 1,000 black Angolans and a smaller number of white South

⁸⁷ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 259.

⁸⁸ R. F. Botha to United Nations, 31 March 1976, S-0442-0190-03, PO230 ANGOL, UNA.

⁸⁹ Jose Manuel Galvo Teles to United Nations, 23 March 1976, S-0442-0190-03, PO230 ANGOL, UNA.

Africa soldiers.”⁹⁰ Despite the fact that South Africa was the regional pariah, a state based on the racial supremacy of whites, Washington coordinated their efforts with the South African military. This alliance caused a congressional inquiry and U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger lied to Congress about U.S. collaboration with South Africa.⁹¹

Neither the U.S. nor China wanted to be publicly linked to South Africa’s involvement in Angola or seen as supporting the FNLA/UNITA coalition that South Africa was fighting alongside. South Africa invaded Angola on 14 October and China withdrew their advisors to the FNLA thirteen days later. China’s goal in Africa was to lend aid to nationalist liberation movements, hoping that when those nations became independent China could rely on their votes for UN membership and investment opportunities. Aligning their interests in Angola with South Africa would have created an anti-Chinese backlash in the region, costing China valuable allies in the developing world. China had withdrawn from an arms race it effectively started two years ago by introducing large amounts of arms and instructors into Zaire for the FNLA. Not only had China withdrawn when the fighting started to heat up, it left the U.S., Zaire, and South Africa to support the FNLA/UNITA coalition.

The U.S. acknowledged the possibility of China outsourcing its role supporting Third World liberation movements to other more technologically advanced countries as early as November 1974. An Army intelligence report assessing Chinese aid to Third World liberation movements the stated that due to China’s outdated military technology it might try to “find sufficient other clients to maintain a military assistance program at current levels.” Furthermore, China limited its aid to Third World clients to focus on “domestic political affairs and the threat

⁹⁰ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 300-301.

⁹¹ South Africa formally requested the U.S. provide FNLA and UNITA with military equipment on 27 November, 1975. See Confidential Cable, “Angola: SAG Requests USG Provide FNLA/UNITA with Military Equipment,” 27 November 1975, DNSA, South Africa Collection, SA00545. Also see Gleijeses’ *Conflicting Missions* pages 273-299.

of Soviet military action against the PRC.”⁹² Despite their accurate assessment the U.S. failed to connect the dots and realize that it would soon become a “sufficient client to maintain military assistance” to the FNLA and UNITA while China saved face and focused on domestic politics and the Soviet menace on their border.

After China withdrew its advisors to the FNLA, the CIA reached similar conclusions regarding the situation in Angola: “As long as other countries maintain their current levels of assistance to the National Front and National Union,” the CIA reported in a December 1975 National Intelligence Bulletin, “China can be expected to maintain a low profile... and score propaganda points at Moscow’s expense.”⁹³ China did just that at a United Nations General Assembly plenary meeting on 8 December 1975. Huang Hua, China’s representative to the United Nations, stated that the Soviets “deliberately created division among the three Angolan liberation organizations, one-sidedly supporting one and attacking the other two.” What the CIA did not realize was that China also scored propaganda points at its expense as well, as China denounced *all* foreign intervention in Angola. Huang remarked, “Angola was entirely the result of the rivalry between the super-powers” and the U.S. “had not lagged behind and was getting actively involved; it had even incited the South Africa authorities to direct intervention in Angola.”⁹⁴ However, while China condemned U.S. interference in Angola publicly, the Chinese encouraged it in private meetings with U.S. authorities. Furthermore, while China had been denouncing Soviet and American imperialism in the Third World for years, the Angolan crisis spurred their discourse into overdrive.

⁹² Intelligence Report, “An Assessment of the Military Assistance Programs of the People’s Republic of China,” 15 November 1974, DNSA, China and The United States: From Hostility to Engagement 1960-1998, CH00319.

⁹³ CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. National Intelligence Bulletin, China-Angola. 11 December 1975.

⁹⁴ *The Yearbook of the United Nations 1975*, 146-147.

The CCP ensured Chinese citizens were well aware of super-power imperialism in Africa and the threat détente posed to the world. A *Peking Review* article from early 1976 stated: “behind the smokescreen of ‘détente,’ both superpowers stepped up their rivalry for world domination and quickened their pace towards a new world war.” Furthermore, “In its contention for hegemony with the other superpower, the Soviet Union instigated and kept intensifying the civil war in Angola. The other superpower had no desire to be outdone.”⁹⁵ Despite the new American-Chinese relationship and China’s insistence that the U.S. escalate its aid to the FNLA/UNITA coalition, China, still adhering to the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution, publicly admonished the “imperialism” of the U.S.

With Angola quickly becoming a proxy war between Washington and Moscow, China could not afford to get caught up in a conflict of détente. Furthermore, détente was not in China’s best interest. High tensions between the Soviets and U.S., and their competition for influence in the Third World compelled the Soviets to focus their resources on battling the Americans, not the Chinese. Moreover, China could continue denouncing super power imperialism in the Third World. During multiple meetings with U.S. diplomats in 1975 Chinese officials compared the Helsinki Accords to the appeasement of Nazi Germany during the 1930s.⁹⁶ If China saw the U.S. strategy of détente as appeasing Soviet expansionism, why would they continue to support the same side as the U.S. in the Angolan conflict? For all China knew the U.S. would appease the Soviets in Angola and with China supporting the same side as the U.S., China in turn would look weak vis-à-vis the Soviets. China’s interests would be better served pressuring the U.S. to combat the Soviets in Angola as it had more pressing matters to deal with at home, namely, the succession of dying leaders in the CCP and the growing threat on the Sino-Soviet border.

⁹⁵ Jen Ku-ping, “Factors for Both War and Revolution Are Increasing,” *The Peking Review*, January 2, 1976.

⁹⁶ See Memorandum of Conversation, 28 September 1975, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 18, 727-750 and Memorandum of Conversation, 20 October 1975, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 18, 765-778.

As much as the Chinese detested détente they were eager to play the U.S. off against the Soviets. As early as 1973 China pointed out that triangular diplomacy enabled the U.S. to “reach out to the Soviet Union by standing on Chinese shoulders.”⁹⁷ Now it was time for the Chinese to reach out against the Soviets by standing on America’s shoulders. China did this by pulling its advisors and aid from the FNLA/UNITA coalition and allowing the U.S. and its regional allies to risk their time, money, and international prestige battling the Soviet and Cuban-backed MPLA. China timed its withdrawal from Angola beautifully, just as more foreign powers were intervening China left and allowed them to shoulder the burden.

But shortly after China left the conflict the MPLA, despite the efforts of the U.S., Zaire, and South Africa, gained the upper hand after the battle of Quifangondo, a village just outside of Luanda. The battle became a turning point in the war and shifted momentum to the MPLA. It was fought on 10 November and with Angolan’s independence scheduled for the next day it became clear that whoever held the capital, Luanda, would emerge as the leader of the newly independent nation of Angola. With Cuban and MPLA soldiers occupying defensive positions in Luanda and Quifangondo, it was their battle to lose. Quifangondo was “protected on all sides” by marshes, the Bengo River to its northwest, a lone bridge spanning the river, and single road leading into the village.⁹⁸ MPLA and Cuban troops occupied a small hill south of Quifangondo giving them a perfect view of the approaching enemy. As South African soldiers, Portuguese mercenaries, and FNLA troops marched towards the Bengo River they were slaughtered by a rain of heavy artillery. Their route became known as “Death’s Road.” The next day, 11 November 1975, the People’s Republic of Angola (PRA) was established by the MPLA with Agostinho Neto as president.

⁹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, 25 January 1975, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 18, 38.

⁹⁸ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 310.

Though the MPLA continued to battle the FNLA/UNITA coalition by late December and early January, with foreign aid tapering off, the FNLA/UNITA alliance broke down and they began battling each other.⁹⁹ Squabbling between the FNLA and UNITA made them easy targets for the MPLA/Cuban army. The FNLA folded and eventually assimilated into Angola as a political party, UNITA, however, did not. Savimbi went underground and waged a brutal guerilla war, funded by the U.S. during the 1980s, against the Angolan government until his death in 2002. In contrast, shortly after Angola became independent in November of 1975 China extended “warm congratulations on this victory to the Angolan people and all three Angolan liberation movements.” Though China condemned “the rivalry between the two superpowers”¹⁰⁰ in Angola even while encouraging U.S. interference in private, they ran a savvy public relations campaign that left the possibility of relations with the new Angolan government wide open. The U.S. on the other hand did not, and their image in Africa would continue to deteriorate.

Soon after the establishment of the MPLA led People’s Republic of Angola the Ford administration lost its campaign for support in Angola. Operation IAFEATURE came out of the CIA’s budget and therefore needed no congressional approval. However, with the funds of IAFEATURE depleted any additional money had to be approved by Congress. But Congress and the American public were reluctant to intervene in another Third World conflict so soon after the Vietnam debacle, effectively handcuffing President Ford’s ability to restrain the Soviets in Angola. On 19 December 1975 the Senate “overwhelmingly” passed the Clark Amendment instituting a “cutoff for funds of covert military support operations in Angola.” Ford called the decision a “deep tragedy for all countries whose security depends on the United States.” The passing of the Clark Amendment also ignited a debate about “the role Congress should play in

⁹⁹ Ibid, 340.

¹⁰⁰ Statement of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China to United Nations, 15 November 1975, S-0442-0190-03, PO230 ANGOL, UNA.

determining foreign policy, and especially in determining and controlling covert intelligence operations.”¹⁰¹ Though the Clark Amendment was passed in late 1975, U.S. aid to the FNLA and UNITA continued until April of 1976.¹⁰²

Henry Kissinger was particularly vexed by Congress’ lack of support in Angola. Kissinger commented that the Congress of 1975 “represented the high point of the radical protest.” Furthermore, “It was violently opposed to intervention abroad, especially in the developing world, ever suspicious of the CIA, deeply hostile to covert operations, and distrustful of the veracity of the executive branch.”¹⁰³ Yet, the skepticism of Congress, the American public, and the Senate was well justified after the embarrassment of Vietnam and the abuse of executive power during the Nixon years, something Kissinger failed to comprehend. As a result of Clark Amendment the CIA began shopping for more mercenaries, some of them Portuguese, and while these mercenaries were paid in advance they did little fighting.¹⁰⁴

The CIA was not alone. With the FNLA’s foreign funds running low Roberto hired 150 British and American mercenaries, with U.S. money of course.¹⁰⁵ Those Americans who were recruited returned home in coffins, if at all. Yet the move to utilize mercenaries in the Angolan conflict, especially white and/or Portuguese mercenaries, was short sighted at best and idiotic at worst. John Stockwell, a CIA officer who operated in Angola at the time, acknowledged this with remarkable clarity. Stockwell commented, “The black Angolans had just won a bloody fifteen-year struggle against the Portuguese. To ally ourselves with the same Portuguese losers, especially when the Soviets were represented in Angola by popular Cuban revolutionaries, was

¹⁰¹ David Binder, “Senate Votes to Cut Off Aid to Angolans,” *New York Times*, December 20, 1975.

¹⁰² Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 260.

¹⁰³ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 893.

¹⁰⁴ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 220.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 223.

the height of foolishness.”¹⁰⁶ Between hiring white Portuguese mercenaries and colluding with apartheid South Africa the U.S. proved it had absolutely no grasp on the political, social, and most importantly, racial attitudes of everyday Africans.

Recognition of Angola and Effects of the War

The war between the FNLA, UNITA, and MPLA had a profound effect on Angola. After the MPLA’s victory the People’s Republic of Angola was admitted to the Organization of African Unity on 11 February 1976. International recognition came shortly thereafter and by 20 February Angola had been “recognized by some 70 countries including the major Western countries except the United States.” France, who apparently was committing weapons to fight the MPLA just three months earlier, was the first Western country to recognize the MPLA led Angolan government. France was followed by Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom and Canada, two of America’s most stalwart allies, “accompanied the recognition with the withdraw of all foreign forces in Angola.”¹⁰⁷ Though this was pointed foremost at Cuba and South Africa it applied to the U.S. as well, the CIA continued to provide support to the FNLA and UNITA until April of 1976.

Angola’s path to United Nations membership would be more tumultuous than its admittance to the OAU and recognition by other countries. Though Angola first applied for UN membership on 22 April 1976, “final approval of the application would have to await the beginning of the 31st General Assembly sessions” in September.¹⁰⁸ When September rolled around only two countries opposed Angola’s admittance to the UN, the U.S. and China. The U.S.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 222.

¹⁰⁷ Information Note on Angola from M.K. Pedanou to UN Secretary General Waldheim, 20 February 1976, S-0904-65, Angola-Prior to Admission, UNA.

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of a Meeting Held in the Office of Secretary-General, 29 April 1976, S-0904-65, Angola-Prior to Admission, UNA.

claimed, “it still had serious doubts about the true independence of the Angolan Government. It was hard to reconcile the presence of a massive contingent of Cuban troops.” Likewise, China argued, “although Angola won its independence, its internal affairs were still being subjected to crude interference... by what China termed Soviet social-imperialism.”¹⁰⁹

Both Cuba and the Soviet Union responded by asserting that the Angolan government requested their aid and presence. Other UN members remarked, “Many United Nations Member States had foreign troops on their soil... and the requirements for admission said nothing about foreign troops.” Furthermore, “Angola was an independent and sovereign country and had the right to request assistance from any State.” The People’s Republic of Angola was officially admitted to UN on 1 December 1976 by a vote of 116 to 0 with only the U.S. absenting, China did not vote.¹¹⁰ China’s position on Angola’s UN membership did not sour relations between the two and China would formalize relations with Angola in 1983. The U.S. on the other hand, attempted to overthrow the internationally recognized Angolan government via Jonas Savimbi and UNITA during the 1980s.

UNITA’s guerilla war against the Angolan government would last twenty-six long years for two reasons: natural resources and foreign aid. Diamonds mined or stolen by UNITA were sold on the black market to fund their war effort. Likewise, hefty profits and taxes from the lucrative Angolan oil industry were used to support the Angolan government, including the military. Furthermore, Cubans troops stayed on in Angola until 1991 assisting the PRA and supplying weapons. UNITA, on the other hand found allies in U.S. President Ronald Reagan, who deemed Savimbi a freedom fighter, and apartheid South Africa. UNITA’s foreign sympathizers kept Savimbi’s group well armed during the 1980s. Furthermore, UNITA

¹⁰⁹ *The Yearbook of the United Nations 1976*, 305-311.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 305-311.

stockpiled weapons it received from the U.S. and South Africa, which allowed Savimbi to keep fighting throughout the 1990s when foreign aid dried up.

As the Angolan Civil War continued casualties mounted and reports of extensive human rights violations by both sides began coming out of Angola. The Angolan authorities imprisoned thousands of suspected government opponents, some which of were “presented at public rallies or press conferences and reportedly compelled to make self incriminating statements.”¹¹¹ In 1985 Amnesty International reported “arbitrary detention by UNITA forces of civilians not involved in the armed conflict.”¹¹² UNITA was also accused of torturing prisoners and Savimbi was notorious for eliminating rivals within the group to consolidate his power. In 1992 Angola got a glimpse of democracy and held elections that were deemed legitimate by international observers.¹¹³ However, Savimbi lost, declared the elections fraudulent, and though a run-off was scheduled UNITA returned to the battlefield. The war would only end in 2002 when Savimbi was killed by government forces in the southeastern countryside. For all intensive purposes China unleashed a monster on Angola when they began supporting Savimbi during the 1960s. Yet while China unleashed the monster it was the U.S. who sustained him through the 1970s and 1980s.

During the Cold War U.S. policy in Angola was a series of failures. In 1976 restrained by a Congress skeptical of Third World interventions, the U.S. failed to defeat the MPLA via its proxies the FNLA and UNITA. After the MPLA’s victory the U.S. could not stop international recognition of the People’s Republic of Angola. Ronald Reagan’s efforts to dethrone the MPLA led Angolan government during the 1980s also resulted in failure. U.S. efforts came to a

¹¹¹ Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 1985* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1985), 17.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 18.

¹¹³ Bauer and Taylor, *Politics in Southern Africa*, 159.

democratic climax in the 1992 Angolan elections where UNITA could finally prove its legitimacy as a political movement. However, when a majority of the Angolan people decided they did not want to be represented by Jonas Savimbi, Reagan's freedom fighter stormed back to the Angolan bush and took up arms, losing what little credibility he had left.

While the MPLA led People's Republic of Angola did not have a stellar human rights record it was still an internationally recognized government and efforts to destabilize the PRA clearly prompted further government crackdowns on human rights. Furthermore, the fact that Savimbi did not respect the 1992 election results showed he was never interested in democracy, just ruling Angola with an iron fist much like he did with UNITA. In contrast, instead of trying to overthrow the Angolan government the Chinese attempted to work with Angola. They opened diplomatic relations with Angola in 1983 and became one of the major foreign investors in Africa's infrastructure despite starting an arms race in Angola in the early 1970s.

Conclusion

The Angolan Civil War proved a vital episode in the Cold War for the U.S., China, and Soviet Union. In the U.S. the Angolan conflict largely sounded the death toll for the policy of détente and after Jimmy Carter's election as President in 1976 one of the chief architects of détente, Henry Kissinger, was removed as Secretary of State. Moreover, after Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 he pursued a foreign policy, characterized by the Reagan Doctrine that was largely the polar opposite of détente. Under Reagan tensions with the Soviets were notoriously high and for Reagan "détente was perpetuating the Cold War rather than hastening its end."¹¹⁴ The Reagan Doctrine was a return to the classical, at times fanatical, anti-communism that classified early U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War. Still, Reagan's eagerness to battle the

¹¹⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 175.

Soviets led to alliances with notoriously corrupt and brutal organizations in the Third World, namely UNITA, apartheid South Africa, the Nicaraguan Contras, and the Afghan mujahedeen.

China, on the other hand, was affected much differently by the Angolan Civil War. For China the Angolan conflict showed that despite the new U.S.-Chinese rapprochement China would not sacrifice its overall foreign policy goals in the Third World for the sake of the United States. If the U.S. wanted to ally with unpopular characters such as apartheid South Africa or Jonas Savimbi, it could go right on doing so, but would receive no support from China in the process. Moreover, China proved it could manipulate U.S. fears of the Soviet Union to its advantage and encourage the U.S. to carry out foreign policy initiatives against the Soviets that would have been detrimental to China's interests in the developing world had China pursued those policies itself. Angola also represented the different Cold War worldviews China and the U.S. held. China saw the People's Republic of Angola not as a Soviet puppet, but as a nation filled with abundant natural resources, a potential ally, and a place where Soviet interests in the region could be undermined with appropriate developmental aid. On the other hand, the U.S. saw the PRA as simply a Soviet client that needed to be violently overthrown.

However, China's willingness to provide developmental aid to nations in Africa is a double-edged sword. Whereas aid from the U.S., World Bank, or International Monetary Fund is usually attached to respect for human rights and transition to a democratic system of government, China's aid comes with no strings attached. Though Chinese companies are awarded hefty contracts from African countries many are from nations that are blatantly corrupt and have no respect for the human rights of its citizens. This gives China a mixed reputation in Africa: China is a country willing to provide crucial aid to some of Africa's poorest nations, but also has no concern for the well being of the general population in nations that receive Chinese

aid. Moreover, some of the aid China provides African nations is not developmental, but military, and China has shown it will sell weapons to just about anyone, even the worst dictators in Africa whose countries are under strict arms embargos.

For the Soviets Angola represented the height of their power during the Cold War, having defeated the U.S. in Vietnam and Angola consecutively. The Angolan conflict also encouraged a more active Soviet foreign policy in the Third World for years to come. Anatoly Dobrynin remarked, “having suffered no major international complications because of its interference in Angola, Moscow had no scruples about escalating its activities in other countries, first Ethiopia, then Yemen, a number of African and Middle Eastern states, and, to crown it all Afghanistan.”¹¹⁵ Here, Dobrynin highlights an interesting trend: after the Soviet’s victory in Angola they became all too willing to intervene in regional conflicts and conduct proxy wars against the U.S. in the developing world. However, these aggressive new policies in the Third World would contribute to the downfall of the Soviet Union.

While the dust in Angola settled the Soviets became embroiled in the Ogaden War between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1977. The Soviets gave Ethiopia “more than \$1 billion worth of military equipment” and also sent one thousand military advisors to help the Ethiopian army defeat Somalia.¹¹⁶ Though the Soviets backed the winning side, “For the people of the Horn of Africa the war and the interventions of the late 1970s would beget apocalyptic consequences.”¹¹⁷ The Ogaden War fundamentally destabilized Somalia and the Horn of Africa remains notoriously unstable to this day, especially Somalia. Furthermore, lucrative military aid to its Third World clients would eventually bankrupt the Soviets. Though the Soviets were able to win the Ogaden War they would pay dearly for their aggressive new Third World policy in Afghanistan. In

¹¹⁵ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 403-404.

¹¹⁶ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 276.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 286.

Afghanistan the Afghan mujahedeen, aided by the U.S. and China among others, bled the Soviet military dry. Just when the Soviets began to gain the upper hand in the Cold War they overreached in the Third World and the Soviet system came crashing down.

The dynamics and effects of the Angolan conflict make it one of the most important subjects in Cold War history. The crisis was a litmus test for the new U.S.-Chinese relationship and resulted in one of the largest shifts in the history of American foreign policy. From détente with the Soviet Union to a more belligerent policy of aiding anyone, despite their human rights record, who stood against the Soviets in the Third World. The Angolan Civil War illuminated China's rise as an international power and aid donor to developing countries around the world. China also showed that despite rapprochement with the U.S. it would still conduct relations with countries deemed Soviet puppets by the United States. Moreover, the rise of the Soviet Union's power and confidence after victories in Vietnam and Angola was short lived and their empire came crashing down after the new confidence they gained in Africa led them into Afghanistan.

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