
The role of U.S. investment in Southern Africa has been a longstanding concern of many church groups. For more than ten years, church investors and other organizations have requested corporations with operations in southern Africa to take a number of steps: to discuss information on operations; to end loans to South Africa; and to cease expansion or withdraw from white-ruled areas.

Both U.S. policy toward southern Africa and the situation there have changed dramatically in the last 18 months. This "CIC Brief" reviews the recent history of the area, the shifts in U.S. policy, and focuses on a study by the African-American Scholars Council for the Agency for International Development. While this article does not examine particular corporations, it analyzes the connections between U.S. policy in Namibia and Zimbabwe and the future of U.S. corporate operations in those countries.

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The United States and Southern Africa

Americans are becoming increasingly aware that in the last two years the United States government has begun to speak of southern Africa in a new way. Ten years ago American policymakers ritually attacked apartheid and colonialism. Today, however, they do so cautiously. They avoided aggressive attacks on Portugal, South Africa or Southern Rhodesia. Today the United States appears to have launched an international campaign to bring justice to southern Africa. The U.S. government presents itself as the champion of human rights there, as an ally in the struggle against apartheid. The United States is now in the forefront of efforts to bring to an end the white minority regimes and to bring an FNLA-UNITA coalition to power.

In 1969 a new and conservative U.S. administration took office. President Nixon's national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, called for a major review of U.S. policy toward the whole area in April of 1969. By the end of the summer of that year the National Security Council had prepared an analysis of the situation and of the options for U.S. policy. In early 1970 President Nixon chose the new famous "Option Two," and began to move the United States toward "closer relations" with Portugal, South Africa and, to some extent, Southern Rhodesia. This decision to support the minority regimes was "understood" at the time. President Nixon's objective was to strengthen those regimes in their efforts to hold back the liberation movements, thus ensuring stability.

As a result, the United States began actively intervening in southern Africa affairs. The new and more active policy failed nonetheless. A few troop transports, helicopters, other weapons, loans, and diplomatic support were simply not enough to stem the tide. In April 1974 the Portuguese military revolted and overthrew the Caetano regime. Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau were on their way to independence. The whole political-military situation in southern Africa was transformed. Southern Rhodesia and South Africa suddenly found the liberation struggle carried to their borders. Western interest and concern grew. It was feared that the collapse of the Portuguese empire might start a chain reaction which would topple the South African regime itself, with frightening and far-reaching consequences for Western interests.

By the end of 1974 it seemed to Western analysts that just such a chain reaction was beginning in Angola. The MPLA was gaining ascendancy in the political competition against the FNLA and UNITA. In the view of most Western analysts and of the South African government, the MPLA government was bound to support the liberation struggle, especially in Namibia, throwing the whole region into turmoil.

The Western reaction to this prospect was a massive, covert action designed to eliminate the MPLA and to bring an FNLA-UNITA coalition to power. The United States, Zaire, South Africa and several other countries coordinated efforts to achieve that end from the beginning of 1975. The initial covert operation, however, failed. In the late autumn of 1975 South Africa invaded Angola in force, sending armored columns up the coast and the interior to seizure Luanda, which was already occupied by the FNL A and Zaire regular forces. Secretary of State Kissinger, ignoring the South African invasion and calling for resistance to "Soviet imperialism," appealed for $800 million for funds to expand U.S. support for FNLA and UNITA. The appeal failed, prohibiting the expansion of American aid. The FNLA were quickly pushed out of northern Angola. Within a few months MPLA and Cuban troops had pushed the South Africans across the southern border and back into Namibia.

The United States suffered a humiliating defeat in Angola. It is important to know why Ford and Kissinger took the risks they did. They may have been driven by more subtle approaches to intervention developed somewhat later. In testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in early 1976, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Robert Ellsworth, indicated that U.S. security interests were at stake in Angola. He made three points at the time:

1. Angola had to be viewed in the context of the crisis in southern Africa;
2. Angola could be used to mount military opposition to South Africa; and
3. the United States did not want such operations to be mounted.

Thus the United States intervened in Angola because it was concerned with the "stability" of South Africa. A former National Security Council aide summarized the U.S. government view not long ago. 

"According to the CIA," he said, "Angola was strategically important not only for its internal wealth but most of all [emphasis added] for its location adjacent to Namibia (Southwest Africa), from which a radical regime could support an insurgency against South Africa."16

The failure of paramilitary intervention in Angola did not, however, change American objectives in southern Africa. The reasons which had prompted intervention in the first place seemed as compelling to policymakers as they had ever been. Indeed, with the emergence of an independent and radical Angola, the "stability" of minority rule was more precarious than ever. The maintenance of close ties between southern Africa and the West seemed of critical importance for the future.17

A CIC Brief appears in each edition of The Corporate Examiner, a monthly newsletter on corporate social responsibility. Each CIC Brief highlights a particular social area - foreign investment, environment, military contracting, consumerism, or policies affecting minorities and women - and focuses on one or more corporations. It also provides information about action options and resources for times studied.

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New U.S. Policy

On April 27, 1976, in Lusaka, Zambia, Secretary of State Kissinger unveiled what appeared to be an entirely new U.S. policy toward Southern Africa. 18 In a major speech during his trip to Africa, he outlined a policy which seemed much more supportive of the goals of the liberation movements. He indicated that the United States had concluded the principle of majority rule for Zimbabwe and Namibia, stating that the U.S. would work actively to help achieve it. He did not press the question of majority rule for South Africa, but he expressed hope for a "peaceful end to institutionalized inequality," which he considered to be "in the interest of all South Africans." 19 The major emphasis in his speech, however, was on the need to accelerate economic development in southern Africa. 20 He promised an extensive new program for manpower training, rural development, and the like for Zimbabwe and Namibia, stating that the United States seemed much more supportive of the goals of the liberation movements. He indicated that the U.S. government needed information. There are very few specialists on southern Africa in the government, and the obvious place to turn for information was the universities. In August of 1976 the AID selected Dr. Samuel Adams to head the project within the African-American Scholars Council. Dr. Adams had been chief of the AID Africa Bureau and had considerable experience in Africa. Three academics from the white university establishment were selected as the principal directors of research for the project. Stewart North of the University of Houston was to analyze the human resource issues in the study. 27 The first strange feature of the project became evident almost immediately. AID had meant to involve the black American community in the study. With the exception of Dr. Adams, the white professors were from all white. The project staff seemed to come exclusively from the AID and related institutions. One black American slated to play an important role in the project was Dr. Walton Johnson of Rutgers, a man with some knowledge of southern Africa who was meant to be Dr. Adams's assistant. Dr. Johnson, however, resigned from the project at a very early stage. 28 Other aspects of the project were controversial from the beginning. There are still many people in Washington who are aware of the way that AID used scholarly work before and during the Indochina debacle. Government agencies had commissioned hundreds, perhaps thousands, of detailed studies of various aspects of Thai society simply in order to find the means of controlling or subjugating them. 26 It was therefore natural to be skeptical of the project from the start. 29

Context of the Report

It is important to stress the fact that the AASC study was being drawn up in a particular context. In the summer of 1976 guerrilla wars were spreading through Zimbabwe and Namibia. South Africa and the Smith regime spoke of "independence" for Namibia and of "majority rule" in Zimbabwe. But, as events have proven, they were doing more little more than trying to buy time. Neither South Africa nor the Rhodesian illegal regime had any intention of surrendering power to the liberation movements. And, it is given that these illegal regimes and their diplomatic and other kinds of support to both regimes, were exceedingly worried about the possibility of the liberation movements' coming to power through elections. In fact, when representatives of the Zimbabwean movements and SWAPO met with the researchers and were asked about their future economic plans, they were the first to voice the fear of U.S. government intervention. 30 By late summer, AASC project staff and consultants were preparing materials and interviewing experts familiar with southern African problems. The staff made available a paper describing the scope of the project's investigations which raised a storm of controversy. Some scholars who worked on the project were being directed to define the levels of power which could be used by those outside to influence the governments of southern Africa to control the pace and pattern of change.

For instance, the "principal investigator" dealing with political questions was asked to assess "the attitudes of government and liberation movements to majority rule" and "the possible U.S. role associated therewith." He was asked as well to survey the assets which the U.S. may have available to it in implementing "its" policies towards Zimbabwe and Namibia. Dr. Adams, however, was suspicious of the project from the start. He indicated that the U.S. may have available to it in implementing "its" policies towards Zimbabwe and Namibia. 21

Thus there was growing criticism of the AASC project throughout Washington and at the United Nations even before the researchers had begun to write their preliminary reports. And the criticisms made were aired in the press, AID officials, and Dr. Adams in particular, went out of their way to meet with scholars and others in an effort to explain what the project was doing. It must be said, however, that as those discussions proceeded, suspicion deepened.

By the late autumn the AASC had begun to recognize the first draft report in turn.

The drafts on Namibia dealt with a variety of subjects, from politics and health through economic growth and education. The drafts on Zimbabwe covered similar vague topics, but with much more attention to the details of economic organization.

By November 15 the project had also produced two interim reports, one for each country, bringing together the preliminary findings of the AASC staff and its consultants. Taken together these drafts presented a "map" of the structure of society in each country.

Study by AASC

However, to set in motion such a plan, the government needed information. There are very few specialists on southern Africa in the U.S. government, and the obvious place to turn for information was the universities. In August of 1976 the Agency for International Development signed a contract with the African-American Scholars Council for a major report on southern Africa. The AASC was founded for the purpose of channeling government research contracts to black American scholars. Thus it could at once marshal scholarly resources for the black American community in the development of Mr. Kissinger's policy of "enlightened assistance" to emerging countries in southern Africa. The August contract provided for a payment, on a cost reimbursable basis, of $340,000 for the Zimbabwe-Namibia study. 25 The contract called for the hiring of six senior academic analysts for a total of about $160,000 a man-month of work. The bulk of the money, $222,000, was not for direct salaries but for consultants and subcontracts. Interim reports were to be ready in October and November of last year. Final reports on both Zimbabwe and Namibia were due in early 1977.

It was clear from the beginning that AID was interested in more than academic analyses. The original contract called for the AASC to produce not a report but an "Assessment of Problems, Recommendations, and Policies." 26 In discussing the problems arising from the transition to majority rule. He was also asked to assess "their openness to and attitudes towards U.S. policy and programs related to transition. He was asked "the interests other nations might have in facilitating the transition to majority rule" and "the possible U.S. role associated therewith." He was asked as well to survey the assets which the U.S. may have available to it in implementing "its" policies towards Zimbabwe and Namibia. 21
slipped out of the Western sphere of influence (as had already happened in Mozambique and Angola in 1974). Western observers feared internal coups or other forms of percussions, not only in South Africa but in other parts of Africa as well. The crucial issue in the second half of 1976 for the U.S. government and its European counterparts, was how to maintain the balance of power in Africa between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Therefore, objectively, U.S. policy was opposed to the movement toward socialism in the region.

For the peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia, however, the crucial issue was whether apartheid and colonialism in those countries could continue or whether radical change was the only way to block any kind of radical change in Zimbabwe or Namibia as seen from the Western perspective of colonialism and was used in the past against African and other peoples subjugated by the colonial powers. To take an example, we may cite the initial draft of the Domestic Policy paper submitted, which questioned the basic assumptions about the United States' position in Namibia and Zimbabwe, were insisting that major policy changes could be made to help achieve the goals of the United States. The last two chapters of the report recommended a particular policy for the United States, but they argued against any major policy changes that would have been in the interest of the United States. The final report did not discuss the kinds of problems which have become a familiar part of the United States' policy in the region. Some of the draft was oriented toward the new world economic order. It ignored the problem of mobilizing to end poverty. It ignored the problem of eliminating the excessive privilege of the white minority. It ignored the problem of radical change in those countries. The report assumed that the United States could exert a significant influence on the situation in those countries.

The second marked bias in the report was the perspective of the United States' position in the region. The report assumed that the United States could exert a significant influence on the situation in those countries. The report assumed that the United States could exert a significant influence on the situation in those countries. The report assumed that the United States could exert a significant influence on the situation in those countries.
report, which was sponsored and funded by the U.S. government, could scarcely be seen as an argument against U.S. involvement in Zimbabwe and Namibia. It was, in fact, merely an extension of the commitment of the U.S. government to achieve one particular kind of “solution” in those countries, a gradualist “solution” through “peaceful change.”

In the context of the debate going on at the time it is therefore impossible to construe the final report as anything but a manual on how to implement the policy of trying to impose that “solution,” for it was clear that the actors in the southern African drama were not by themselves acting to ensure the peaceful transfer of power to the African majority.

Finally, then, we may ask what the policy recommended by the AASC meant. Can it justifiably be claimed that the AASC report was part of an effort to block radical or far-reaching change in Zimbabwe and Namibia?

We believe that that claim is justified. For, as has already been indicated, the whole analytical approach of the project was one-sided. The project must have been based on unstated assumptions to a conclusion, while attempting to maintain an air of reasonableness and objectivity. The implicit premises of the project were the following:

1. Zimbabwe and Namibia are already closely linked to the Western countries and to South Africa;
2. the Western countries must maintain their involvement in the periphery of southern Africa in order to maintain it in South Africa itself;
3. accelerated economic growth within the existing system will bring an end to the kinds of inequality created by colonialism and apartheid;
4. there are no meaningful options for policy in Zimbabwe and Namibia except 3 above;
5. 3 above will lead not only to the end of, or significant reductions in, inequality, but also to “progress.”

Taken together these assumptions lead ineluctably to one conclusion: that the interests of the peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia would be well served by the maintenance of existing links with South Africa and the Western countries and by the acceleration of economic growth within that framework of capitalism or a “mixed economy” is the only kind of growth and change talked about in the report. This type of economic climate, of course, is one in which investment and trade by U.S. transnational corporations would flourish.

The report arrives at its conclusion by insinuation, not by asserting its righteousness but by excluding any consideration of other arguments and options for Zimbabwe and Namibia. Such methods, of course, seek to lead a reader or listener to particular conclusions by manipulation rather than by reasoning. The fact that the AASC final report is manipulative in this sense is clear from the faith with which policy makers have in their assumptions and arguments about southern Africa policy. Such methods are used because no one dares to explain the real reasons for, and the real meaning of, the policy of “peaceful change” now being urged upon Africa by Western governments.

NOTES
1. This was particularly true in the United Nations, where virtually every African ambassador to that body periodically devoted a speech to explaining U.S. policy, and to expressing regret at the United States’ failure to support the movement for self-determination of the peoples of southern Africa. The opening of the Security Council on the United States’ arms embargo against South Africa: United States Mission to the United Nations, press release No. 4235, 2 August 1976.
2. Policy is no longer made on the basis of a consideration of national interests alone, U.S. policy towards southern Africa, for instance, is based upon a consideration of the interests of the North Atlantic basin countries in general. (See, for instance, the Israeli embassy.)
4. The report was prepared under contract to AID (Contract Numbers C-1254), and several AID officials supervised the work of the project from the beginning.
5. The formal request for that review was contained in a letter from Henry Kissinger to the Secretaries of State and Defense and to the Director of Central Intelligence, dated 10 April 1969. His request was pursuant to a directive from President Nixon.
6. This is certainly the thrust of much of the discussion of development problems and of the new world economic order in many of the arguments of the Third World today. See, for instance, Isaac Amis, Unequal Development: The Third World in the Post-Imperial Era (New York, 1977). The work of Amis and others such as Thomas and Gwynn has had a great influence on thinking in many developing countries in Africa and elsewhere.
7. This was the first of the series of occasional papers presented by the AASC in Namibia, an Interim Report, published on 1 November 1976.
10. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
11. The information is from a copy of the Final Report, which was sponsored and funded by the AASC.
13. This was in the logic of the original policy shift and of the commitment to support the FLNLA-UNITA coalition in Angola.
16. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
22. Ibid., p. 676.
23. Ibid., p. 676.
26. Ibid.
27. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
28. Ibid.
30. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
32. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
33. The information is from a copy of the original contract, negotiated contract No. AID/AFR-C-1254.
34. Information from private notes made available to the authors.
36. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
37. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
38. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
39. This has been maintained by some official spokesmen for AID that such consultations were held.
40. The information is from a copy of the Final Report, which was sponsored and funded by the AASC.
41. Ibid., p. 1.
42. Ibid., p. 1.