

NEW U.S. OPTIONS IN ANGOLA AND NAMIBIA

The time has come for the United States to change its policy toward Angola and Namibia. For several years the U.S. has tried to broker an accommodation between South Africa and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Marxist group which took power in Angola in 1975. The heart of Washington's plan has been to persuade the MPLA to seek the withdrawal of the 30,000 Cuban troops from Angola. They have been there nearly a decade. The deal sought by the U.S. would trade the Cuban departure for South African cooperation in implementing United Nations Resolution 435 (1978), granting independence to Namibia, which South Africa has controlled under a League of Nations mandate granted in 1920.

Washington has been putting the Namibian cart before the Angolan horse. The MPLA's top leaders are fully dependent on Cuban troops to protect themselves from the Angolan people, including many rank and file MPLA members. The Cuban forces, for example, put down a coup by MPLA soldiers in 1977 against the MPLA leadership. The South Africans understandably are reluctant to grant Namibian independence if this leads to a dictatorship of the Marxist Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO), backed by Cuban troops and supported by Moscow.

Rather than brokering this kind of deal, the U.S. should be working toward an independent Angola, free of a foreign Communist military occupation, after which a free and democratic regime in Namibia could evolve. The vehicle for this policy is the Union for the Total Independence of Angola--or UNITA--headed by Jonas Savimbi. In recent years, his troops have routed the MPLA and even the Cubans, and now control much of Angola. UNITA is today one of the world's most successful and broadly supported liberation movements. Savimbi is no stranger to the U.S. A decade ago he was backed by Washington and may have been on the verge of winning control of Angola. At a critical moment in 1975, however, the U.S. cut off all help to his forces.

The U.S. Clark Amendment made South Africa the only logical place for Savimbi to seek help. This he does only with extreme reluctance and distaste, for understandably he strongly opposes apartheid. But he needs arms, funds, and access to the rest of the world. This would not be the case were Washington to give Savimbi the option of turning to the U.S. for aid. This also would allow the Reagan Administration to forge a new policy

for Angola and Namibia that better reflects reality and serves U.S. interests.

Specifically, the Reagan Administration should restate its determination to help establish free and democratic states in Angola and Namibia based on free elections, participation of all tribes and factions, and a free economy. These also seem the aims of Savimbi.

A number of specific steps would further these objectives:

1) Repeal the Clark Amendment. This would raise UNITA's morale, encourage those within the MPLA who oppose the outside Cuban and other Communist domination, and set an example for other countries; 2) Draw attention to the repression inside Angola at meetings of human rights groups and international organizations. Humanitarian aid should be delivered to parts of Angola controlled by UNITA. For this the U.S. should ask Angola's neighbors to permit the transit of supplies from Africa, Europe, and America; 3) Raise the profile and legitimacy of UNITA. The U.S. also should encourage missions by prominent Africans, Europeans, and Americans to UNITA's capital of Jamba and should provide scholarships for UNITA's youth to provide the base for a Western and private sector-oriented middle class in Angola.

Such steps would bolster international support for efforts to end foreign rule in Angola. They would increase the pressure on the MPLA's top leaders, many of whom are quietly buying retirement homes in Portugal. On the other hand, these steps would hearten the MPLA rank and file, who would welcome an end to the fighting with UNITA and the chance of a national reconciliation. The MPLA's eighth brigade, for instance, already has indicated unwillingness to fight their fellow Angolans of UNITA.

A new U.S. policy would also weaken further the already low morale of the Cuban military forces in Angola. They have suffered thousands of casualties and encounter ambushes whenever they venture out of their heavily secured bases. And a defeat for the MPLA and Cubans will be a Soviet defeat, since Moscow is not about to send its own troops to Angola.

Thus, the time is right for a reassessment of U.S. policy toward Angola and Namibia. Current policy has not achieved any significant advances and in some ways may be falling apart, as the recent South African decision to establish a new self-governing authority in Namibia indicates. A new U.S. policy must be grounded firmly on one essential point: a resolution of the Angola conflict on terms providing for its independence from Soviet-bloc control with a significant role for UNITA is the only way in which a Namibian settlement can be reached and, therefore, is the key to assuring stability, as well as the protection of Western interests, in the region.

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