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THESIS

CUBA'S INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA AND ETHIOPIA:
A QUESTION OF AUTONOMY IN
CUBA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION

by

Lieutenant Stephanie Schehara Kessler

December, 1990

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92-04356



REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED			1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS			
2a SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			
2b DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE						
4 PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Naval Postgraduate School		6b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) NS		7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION Naval Postgraduate School		
6c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Monterey, CA 93943-5100			7b ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Monterey, CA 93943-5100			
8a NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)		9 PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS			
			Program Element No.	Project No.	Task No.	Work Unit Accession Number
11 TITLE (Include Security Classification) CUBA'S INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA AND ETHIOPIA: A QUESTION OF AUTONOMY IN CUBA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION						
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Kessler, Stephanie S.						
13a TYPE OF REPORT Master's Thesis		13b TIME COVERED From To		14. DATE OF REPORT (year, month, day) December 1990		15 PAGE COUNT 126 / 125
16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.						
17 COSATI CODES			18 SUBJECT TERMS (continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)			
FIELD	GROUP	SUBGROUP	Cuban Foreign Policy, Cuban-Soviet Relations, Cuba and Africa, Angola, Ethiopia			
19 ABSTRACT (continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)						
<p>This thesis examines Cuban involvement in Angola and Ethiopia in light of Cuba's foreign policy and Cuban-Soviet relations. Utilizing the two case studies, it analyzes the degree to which Cuban activities in Africa were Soviet-directed or Soviet-sponsored. The conclusion is that Cuba exhibited substantial relative autonomy in Angola, but limited autonomy in Ethiopia. That conclusion is applied to Cuba in the 1990's, in which the current wave of democracy spreading throughout Eastern Europe and the improved relations between the Soviet Union and the United States have resulted in increased pressures on Cuba's foreign and domestic policies. Four scenarios are posited for Cuba's future. Finally, the thesis discusses whether the levels of autonomy attained in the 1970's can be equalled in the 1990's.</p>						
20 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS REPORT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS				21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION		
22a NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Scott D. Tollefson			22b TELEPHONE (Include Area code) (408) 646-2863		22c OFFICE SYMBOL NS/TO	

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.
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Cuba's Relationship with the Soviet Union

by

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Lieutenant , United States Navy
B.A., University of Florida, 1985

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

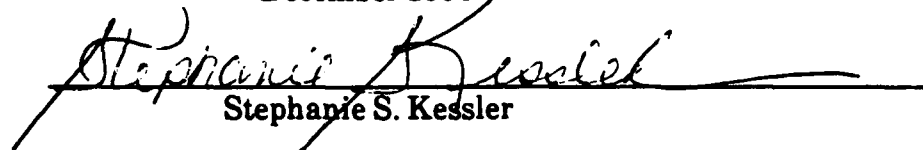
MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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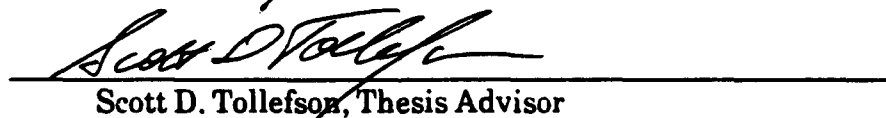
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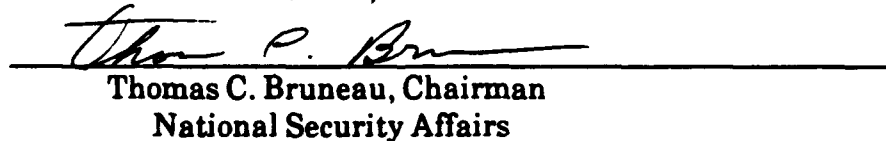
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Cuban involvement in Angola and Ethiopia in light of Cuba's foreign policy and Cuban-Soviet relations. Utilizing the two case studies, it analyzes the degree to which Cuban activities in Africa were Soviet-directed or Soviet-sponsored. The conclusion is that Cuba exhibited substantial relative autonomy in Angola, but limited autonomy in Ethiopia. That conclusion is applied to Cuba in the 1990's, in which the current wave of democracy spreading throughout Eastern Europe and the improved relations between the Soviet Union and the United States have resulted in increased pressures on Cuba's foreign and domestic policies. Four scenarios are posited for Cuba's future. Finally, the thesis discusses whether the levels of autonomy attained in the 1970's can be equalled in the 1990's.



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I. INTRODUCTION

Cuba has always had its own foreign policy agenda. In November 1975, Cuba deployed thousands of combat troops to Angola in support of a request by the leader of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Critics believe that this was a radical departure in Cuban foreign policy. They believe that the primary reasons President Fidel Castro sent troops to Angola were first, because Moscow told Castro he should; and second, because the Cuban deployment of troops would serve as a means of reducing Cuba's large debt to the Soviet Union. However, the literature¹ and history that has been written on Cuba's foreign policy and its involvement in Africa does not support these two assumptions very

¹Some of the key works that discuss Cuba's foreign policy and its involvement in Angola and Africa include: William M. LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa, 1959-1980*, Policy Papers in International Affairs Number 13 (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1980); William J. Durch, *The Cuban Military in Africa and the Middle East: From Algeria to Angola*, Professional Paper Number 201 (Arlington, Virginia: The Center for Naval Analysis, September 1977); John Marcum, *The Angolan Warfare, 1962-1976*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1978); Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War: A Study of Soviet Policy in the Third World* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1980); Colin Legum and Bill Lee, eds., *The Horn of Africa in Continuing Crisis* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1979); Jiri Valenta, "The Soviet-Cuban Alliance in Africa and the Caribbean," *The World Today* 34, no. 2 (February 1981): pp. 45-53; and Jiri Valenta, "Soviet-Cuban Intervention in the Horn of Africa: Impact and Lessons," *Journal of International Affairs* 37, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1980/81): pp. 353-367.

effectively. Cuba's involvement in Africa neither began in Angola nor did it end there. Rather Africa in many ways, met Cuba's foreign policy objectives most eloquently.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the Cuban-Soviet relationship with reference to Cuba's foreign policy initiatives and its involvement in the conflicts in Angola and Ethiopia. It will define the surrogacy and autonomy theories and it will discuss the problem with the surrogacy theory and attempt to apply the autonomy concept to these two conflicts. The thesis will try to determine how much autonomy a Third World nation must achieve in order not to be considered a surrogate. Using Cuba and the Soviet Union with Angola and Ethiopia as case studies, the primary questions to be answered in this thesis are: 1) Is Cuba a surrogate of the Soviet Union?; 2) Was Cuba acting as a surrogate for the Soviet Union or was it autonomous in the cases of Angola and Ethiopia?; and 3) What might relations be like for Cuba and the Soviet Union in the future and what are the its implications of those relations for Cuba's autonomy in the future?

A. WHAT IS SURROGACY/PROXY?²

Surrogate or proxy is defined as one entity that is authorized to act in the place of another, a substitute. Surrogacy is closely related to a country's *foreign policy* and to the amount of influence that one country possesses over another country's foreign policy decision making process. For the purpose of this paper influence will be defined as a bilateral state-to-state relationship, with the dominant country having the capacity to sway or control the other country's political decisions and to produce an effect on its foreign policy decisions.³ Thus, if a country has the ability to influence another country's foreign policy, then the latter will be considered a surrogate of the former. In the case of

²The following definitions of surrogacy, influence, dependency, and autonomy have been derived from readings on the subject, (i.e. Gary Gereffi and Peter Evans, "Transitional Corporations, Dependent Development, and State Policy on the Semiperiphery: A Comparison of Brazil and Mexico," *Latin America's Economic Development Institutional and Structuralist Perspectives*, eds., James L. Dietz and James H. Street (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987); Marina Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982); Denise L. Bark ed., *The Red Orchestra, The Case of Africa* vol. 2 (Stanford University, California: Hoover Institute, 1988); Carmelo-Mesa Lago and June S. Belk eds., *Cuba in Africa* (University of Pittsburgh: Center for Latin American Studies, University Center for International Studies, 1982); William M. LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*; and Robert A. Pastor, "Does Cuba Act Alone," *The Cuba Reader* eds., Paul Brenner, William M. LeoGrande, Donna Rich, Daniel Siegel (New York: Grove Press, 1989), pp. 296-307).

³Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence*, pp. 10-11.

Cuba and the Soviet Union, this paper will attempt to illustrate that Cuba has always possessed its own foreign policy agenda even if the Soviet Union has, on occasion, influenced Cuba's foreign policy decisions (i.e. Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979).

An important question to ask is, if a country is considered a surrogate once, then is it always considered a surrogate? The answer to this is no. Relationships are dynamic and in one situation two countries may be in agreement while in another situation they may be distinctively different. This thesis will illustrate how the Soviet Union supported Cuba's military solution to the situation in Angola. On the other hand, in Ethiopia, Cuba pushed for a diplomatic solution, while both the Soviet Union and Ethiopia pushed for a military solution. The end result was Cuba assisting Ethiopia with a military solution even though this was not the means that Cuba desired to pursue.

It is useful at this juncture to also define dependency. Dependency refers to one entity being unable to exist or function satisfactorily without the aid or support of another. Dependency, as opposed to surrogacy, is closely related in terms of a country's domestic policy (economic, political, and military). Gary Gereffi and Peter Evans state that

Dependency and nondependency are relative concepts that must be interpreted in the context of a country's overall position in the capitalist world economy. Dependency implies vulnerability to the external economy and a significant degree of external control over the local

productive apparatus. Nondependency, on the other hand, means diminished external determination of a country's development. It means having an internal productive structure that is capable of producing a broad range of goods and that also is locally owned and controlled to a substantial degree, especially the "leading sectors" in terms of capital accumulation and sectors where considerable market power is exercised by the major firms.⁴

A superpower who supplies a country with economic and military aid does not necessarily buy the right to wield coercive influence over that country's foreign or domestic policy. However, the aid that is provided may have a significant impact on the capabilities of the country. In the case of Cuba, without Soviet assistance in the early 1970's in building up and training the Cuban Armed Forces, they may not have been able to assist the MPLA in Angola as successfully as they did. Thus, on the basis of the conceptual description presented thus far in this thesis, the following assumptions can be made: Cuba has been influenced by the Soviet Union and has, on occasion, played the surrogate role for the Soviet Union; Cuba is irrefutably dependent on the Soviet Union to function satisfactorily domestically; and, the Soviet Union's aid to Cuba has influenced Cuba's capability to involve itself abroad. The question then is, "can a surrogate country ever achieve autonomy?"

⁴Gereffi and Evans, "Transnational Corporations," p. 184.

B. WHAT IS AUTONOMY?

Autonomy shall be defined for the purpose of this paper as independent, self-contained or self-governing. It can be reasonably stated that complete autonomy does not exist, thus making autonomy relative in concept. Despite this, when discussing autonomy and a superpower, such as the United States, there is an overall perception that the U.S. is relatively autonomous. Does this apply to a Third World nation? Does a Third World nation's dependency on another country prevent it from achieving relative autonomy even if it has once acted as a surrogate? If autonomy is relative then what things are necessary for any country to achieve some level of autonomy?

There seems to be three requirements for achieving autonomy. First, a country must have its own foreign policy initiatives. Second, a country must be able, with or without assistance, to set in place these foreign policy initiatives and attempt to achieve their objectives. However, success is not a requirement of the end result. Third, in carrying out its foreign policy, a country must be recognized as having a legitimate position in the international arena. Furthermore, the more situations in which a country exerts its own foreign policy initiatives the more autonomy the country will be perceived as possessing, thus making autonomy not only relative but also perceptual or "context-specific" in concept. Thus, a country can, in effect, "manufacture" more autonomy

for itself. As soon as a country supports or participates in a situation that is globally viewed as not being in line with its own foreign policy but rather as a surrogate to some other country, then, it will be recognized as not possessing the same levels of autonomy for that situation.

Given that autonomy is relative and context-specific it can be applied to each situation in which a country participates. For superpowers with seemingly unlimited capabilities, monies, and resources, autonomy is easy and rarely questioned. For example, in the 1990 Persian Gulf crisis American objectives include preventing Iraq's further expansion in the region and forcing it out of Kuwait. The means to these ends entail a complete air and sea embargo. By late 1990, the United States has been partially successful but not without the assistance of many nations. When a superpower requires the assistance of another country or countries to achieve its foreign policy objectives, its autonomy is seldom questioned. On the other hand, when a Third World nation requires external assistance its autonomy is scrutinized. Thus a Third World nation can reach a level of autonomy in one situation and be perceived as a surrogate possessing little or no autonomy in another.

C. CUBA'S PRIMARY FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

When a Third World nation aligns itself with a superpower, it is usually in its own best interest to support the foreign

policy initiatives set forth by the superpower. This alignment may occur as a result of a convergence of interests or ideologies. However, a Third World nation's foreign policy initiatives will not always converge with those of the superpower in every situation. Whether or not the Third World country can carry out its independent initiatives during these periods will determine whether the country possesses more or less autonomy. During periods when foreign policy initiatives do converge, labels such as "surrogate," "proxy," and "puppet" are quickly attached to these Third World nations; especially to those Third World countries that are most closely aligned in interest and in ideology.

One of the main drawbacks to "labelling" is that it may well obscure rather than clarify the degree of "autonomy" a nation possesses. Indeed labels make it very difficult to determine a Third World country's independence or autonomy. The Cuban case is particularly instructive: it has been struggling with this problem since before independence. First, it was a colony of Spain (1513-1902), then a protectorate of the United States (1902-1962), and finally economically reliant on the Soviet Union (1962-to the present).

Pamela Falk writes that "...[I]t is not unusual for a developing nation, newly independent, to establish a bold and assertive foreign policy to compensate for domestic

frustrations and internal failures."⁵ Cuba is an excellent example. As early as 1898, when the country gained its independence from Spain, Cuba pursued a bold and assertive foreign policy. Cuba's primary objectives in developing its foreign policy were to establish not only national autonomy but also to gain international recognition. These objectives have remained constant from the late nineteenth century through the Cuban revolution and into the present day.

During the early 1970's, Cuba underwent a massive restructuring and build-up of its armed forces with critical assistance provided by the Soviet Union. As a result of this enlarged military, a new foreign policy objective was included in its agenda: Cuba's expansion of influence to the rest of the Third World. Thus, by the mid-1970's, Cuba possessed a very bold and assertive foreign policy with its three primary objectives being 1) to establish national autonomy; 2) to gain international recognition; and 3) to expand its influence throughout the rest of the Third World.

Allied with the United States, Cuba found itself being directed with a heavy hand in both its foreign and domestic policy objectives. Allied with the Soviet Union, Cuba has been able to develop relatively successful foreign policy initiatives in Africa and in Central America. Consequently, this thesis will illustrate how Cuba has managed to achieve

⁵Falk, *Cuban Foreign Policy*, p. 4.

greater autonomy in its foreign policy the past twenty-eight years aligned with the Soviet Union than they were ever able to accomplish in the previous 57 years allied with the United States.

Nevertheless, Cuba's foreign policy success coupled with its economic reliance on the Soviet Union continues to be the primary factor behind its label as a surrogate or proxy of the Soviet Union.

The following sections of this thesis will be divided accordingly: chapter two presents an historical overview tracing Cuba's foreign policy from the pre-Castro era to the present. Chapter three discusses the developing relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union and the value Cuba has to the Soviet Union. Chapter four assesses Cuban and Soviet interests in Africa. In the Cuba portion of this chapter it discusses Cuba's involvement in Africa and the role Ernesto "Che" Guevara played in the development of Cuban-African relations. Chapters five and six discuss Cuba's involvement in Angola and Ethiopia. They also assess the results of Cuban involvement and Soviet military aid in these two countries. Chapter seven compares Cuba's role in Angola and Ethiopia and answers the primary questions outlined in the introduction. Based on this analysis, the conclusion, chapter eight, discusses four possible scenarios Castro may face in the future. It outlines Castro's primary concerns in order to maintain his leadership position and most importantly what

effect it will have for future Cuban-Soviet relations. Finally, it suggests which of the scenarios are most likely to occur and how this could affect the prospects for future autonomy in Cuba's foreign policy.

II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

A. FOREIGN POLICY PRIOR TO CUBAN REVOLUTION

Cuban foreign/domestic policy from independence until World War II met with relatively small gains and high frustrations as a result of U.S. hegemony over the region.

Early on, during its struggle for independence, Cuba learned that "international recognition would be the key to international leverage."⁶ Cuba's first attempt at foreign policy was established while it was trying to gain its independence from Spain by broadening diplomatic contacts. Cuban independence leaders were quite successful at this task. Support for Cuban independence and national autonomy was not just regional by countries such as Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia; it was also global. Besides the United States, countries such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Italy also supported Cuba's goal for autonomy.

However, Cuba found out that independence with the help of their northern neighbors had its price. In Cuba's struggle for independence, Cuban revolutionaries enlisted the aid of the United States. The United States entered the Cuban war for independence only after the following incident:

⁶Falk., p. 5.

After the Cubans had staged their second rebellion against Spain in 1895, President McKinley sent the U.S. battleship Maine down to Havana in order to protect U.S. citizens and property. The ship suffered a severe explosion and sunk. The United States accused Spain for this incident and consequently allied with Cuba and proclaimed war against Spain.⁷

The Spanish-American War lasted four years. In December 1898, the United States and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris which granted independence to Cuba.⁸ Although the war was over, Cuba gained independence but did not obtain national autonomy. This was a result of the United States occupying the country for the four years after independence.

1. Cuba's Foreign Policy Under The Platt Amendment

The Platt Amendment of 1901 made Cuba a protectorate of the United States. The amendment became a U.S. law, and was adopted by Cuban legislature to become an annex to the Cuban Constitution.⁹ Basically, this amendment allowed the United States to intervene militarily in Cuban affairs whenever the U.S. deemed necessary.

⁷Ibid., pp. 7-18; Roger W. Fountain, *On Negotiating with Cuba* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975), p. 7.

⁸This treaty is also noteworthy in that it awarded the United States with other Spanish territories such as Puerto Rico as war booty.

⁹Jaime Suchlicki, *Cuba, From Columbus to Castro* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 97.

Despite this amendment, Cuba's first elected president, Tomas Estrada-Palma, viewed foreign policy as the key to international prestige. Thus he set out to make foreign policy his first order of business, as did the majority of his predecessors. "Estrada-Palma, eager to create the fact and appearance of a new independent republic, encouraged the Cuban Congress to increase expenditures on the national budget to assume the cost of domestic defense,"¹⁰ and quickly enlarged Cuba's armed forces.

This increase in forces also served the best interests of the United States. Cuba's importance to the U.S. was three-fold. First, it stemmed primarily from its proximity to the sea lanes of the Caribbean which provided access routes to trade with Latin America. Second, Cuban sugar production provided the United States and Western Europe with their sugar supply. Finally, the construction of the Panama Canal heightened Cuba's strategic value to the United States.¹¹ In military terms, Cuba would serve as the "watchdog" of the Caribbean. Thus the United States hoped that Estrada-Palma's military build-up would provide Cuban soldiers to defend U.S. interests in the Caribbean.

Although the Cuban economy flourished, as a direct result of increased U.S. investment, domestic corruption

¹⁰Falk, *Cuban Foreign Policy*, p. 8.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; Fountain, *Negotiating with Cuba*, p. 7.

undermined the administration of Estrada-Palma. This corruption bred resentment which the government met with repression. Consequently in 1906, under the authority of the Platt Amendment, the United States intervened in Cuba's domestic affairs. The first Cuban presidency thus ended in failure and the United States occupied Cuba once again.

During the second U.S. occupation, "Cuba had virtually no independence in foreign policy making."¹² Despite U.S. intervention and attempts to settle differences diplomatically, the government remained disorderly.¹³ As a result, Theodore Roosevelt declared that by the end of his term U.S. intervention would cease and Cuba would be ruled by its own elected leaders.

2. Foreign Policy During World War I

Cuba was under great pressure to support the United States in World War I. While most of Latin America was divided over what position to take, "...Cuba favored a declaration of war for two reasons: first, Cuba [would be] able to exert its leadership role, and second, Cuba's economy [would] clearly [benefit] from the sale of sugar to the United States."¹⁴

¹²Falk, *Cuban Foreign Policy*, p. 9.

¹³Suchlicki, *Columbus to Castro*, p. 21.

¹⁴Falk, *Cuban Foreign Policy*, p. 10.

World War I provided Cuba with its second major foreign policy initiative since diplomatic contacts were established during the struggle for independence. Instead of soldiers, Cuba's first technical assistance abroad supplied France with approximately one hundred doctors and medical personnel.¹⁵

In spite of U.S. pressure and intervention, by the 1930's Cuba had established itself as a regional negotiator. Consequently, confronted with Cuba's increased role in South America, U.S. policy shifted. In 1934, the Roosevelt administration prompted Congress to rescind the Platt Amendment, thus providing concrete expression to the President's "Good Neighbor Policy."

3. Foreign Policy During World War II

After Roosevelt's abrogation of the Platt Amendment, Cuba experienced very little direct U.S. intervention. Nonetheless, during this time, Cuba's foreign policy was structured by strong bilateral economic and military cooperation with the United States. During World War II, Cuba's markets to Europe were cut off, and Cuba began to rely economically and politically on the United States. The United States had large investments in Cuba's sugar, tobacco, cattle ranching, mining, manufacturing, public utilities, and banking

¹⁵Harold Eugene Davis, John J. Fiman, and F. Taylor Peck, eds., *Latin American Diplomatic History* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), p. 193.

industries. Eighty percent of Cuba's imports came from the United States.¹⁶

Although President Fulgencio Batista y Zaldivar initially vowed a policy of neutrality in World War II, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor drastically changed his policy. Cuba not only declared war on Japan, but also declared war on Germany and Italy. During this period, Cuba also established its first diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

World War II provided Cuba the international recognition for which it had been striving since independence. The war resulted in positive effects on Cuban foreign policy objectives and on the Cuban economy, because of wartime sugar sales.

However, as the cold war began to dominate the hemispheric politics after WWII, tensions between Cuba and the United States mounted. Cuba also began to face internal political problems as three opposition parties were established, increasing tensions with the United States even further. Fulgencio Batista became president for a second time. The cold war brought significant changes to Cuba; the threat of communism and the decline in world sugar prices

¹⁶Suchlicki, *Columbus to Castro*, p. 22.

brought about economic hard times. Batista used these conditions as an excuse for a repressive internal rule.¹⁷

Batista terminated foreign policy initiatives that would include alliances with reform movements in Latin America and Europe.¹⁸ While the opposition to Batista pleaded for the United States, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations to intervene, no direct intervention occurred. Indeed, until 1958, foreign policy in Cuba was Batista's alone. The revolution would sharply re-order Cuban foreign policy objectives and alignments.

¹⁷Falk, *Cuban Foreign Policy*, p. 18.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

III. RELATIONS BETWEEN CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION

A. CUBA'S FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES UNDER CASTRO

Since independence, the American predominance over the region created stressful relations with Cuba. The Cuban revolution was the major watershed for U.S.-Cuban relations. Castro initially intended, to utilize "democracy" as a tool to promote his revolution. However, the United States' persistent intervention during the early part of Castro's rule forced him to reveal his penchant for authoritarianism.

Castro did not foresee the shape of his future government while he was fighting in the Sierra Maestra mountains; nor did he understand the role the United States would play. "Fidel naively believed that the rebels could make a radical social revolution democratically. Since his basic aim was revolution, and democracy was simply the method he thought he could use, when the crunch came he changed his method, not his goal."¹⁹ Thus, Fidel broke with the democratic process and pursued a Marxist-Leninist line in his revolution.²⁰ Within the first eighteen months he suspended the Army, the Navy, and

¹⁹Andrew Sinclair, *Che Guevara* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), p. 51.

²⁰While Castro and the other rebels were fighting, he was heavily influenced by Ernesto "Che" Guevara on Marxist-Leninism. In many ways Che was instrumental in Castro's conversion to communism.

the National Police Force and developed a more centralized government. He implemented this centralized government by filling high-ranking positions with those individuals who had fought with him in the revolution. In 1959, the United States tried unsuccessfully to utilize its influence over Cuba as the U.S. opposed the leftist government Castro had begun to set in motion. By April 1961, Castro declared Cuba a socialist country.

B. THE EARLY 1960'S

Cautiously, the Soviet Union became committed to Cuba and by 1962 the Soviet Union recognized Cuba as such. During the 1960's, Cuban-Soviet relations depended heavily on maintaining economic and military relations. This new alliance came at a great cost for the Soviet Union. The initial Soviet economic aid package provided a \$100 million U.S. dollars credit line to purchase Soviet industrial equipment and the Soviets agreed to purchase 425,000 tons of Cuban sugar.²¹ In 1989, Cuba received between four and six billion dollars annually from Moscow, with additional aid programs accounting for as much as twenty percent of the Cuban Gross National Product (GNP).²²

²¹H. Michael Erisman, *Cuba's International Relations, The Anatomy of a Nationalistic Foreign Policy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 17.

²²Howard W. French, "Write Off Castro? The Odds Change," *The New York Times*, 13 May 1990, p. 2E; Larry Rohter, "Castro Says He'll Resist Changes Like Those Sweeping Soviet Bloc," *The New York Times*, 9 December 1989, p. 9A; Joseph B.

Cuban foreign policy during this adjustment period was primarily regional rather than global.²³ The focus of policy was in the Western Hemisphere, "...where Cuba sought to break diplomatic and economic isolation imposed by the United States by promoting revolutions throughout the region."²⁴

Initially the Soviet Union was skeptical about Cuba's style of radical, anti-Americanism and its revolutionary capacity, but with time the Soviets grew increasingly more interested. The long standing concept of "geographic fatalism"²⁵ soon disappeared as relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union developed. By allying themselves with Cuba, the Soviets gained access to the Western Hemisphere. They were able to capitalize on Cuba's strategic value against the

Treaster, "Other Walls May Fall, But In Fortress Cuba Castro Stands Firm," *The New York Times*, 28 January 1990, p. 2E; and Michael Putzel, "Castro to Welcome Gorbachev Today," *The Monterey Herald*, 2 April 1989, p. 4A.

²³In the early 1960's, Cuba was able to provide some support for its revolutionary cause abroad to Africa. This assistance, however, was minimal until the early 1970's. The faction receiving the foremost assistance was the *Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola* (MPLA) which is discussed later in chapter V.

²⁴LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, p. 1.

²⁵The Soviet Union's approach prior to the 1960's has been characterized by Joseph G. Whelan and Michael J. Dixon as "...that doctrine [which] held that Latin America was largely off limits to the Soviets because of the United States' overwhelming influence in the Western Hemisphere and a consequent lack of Soviet opportunity." Further discussion of geographic fatalism is described in Joseph G. Whelan and Michael J. Dixon's *The Soviet Union in the Third World: Threat to World Peace* (Washington, D.C.: Pergamon Press, 1986), p. 8.

United States by utilizing foreign posts, military air bases, and training facilities for ground troops. Additionally, where Cuba was once considered to be the "watchdog" of the Caribbean for the United States, installation of Soviet intelligence-gathering facilities in Cuba provided the Soviet Union with a "strategic backyard" to the U.S.

Despite many ideological and political bonds between Cuba and the Soviet Union, bilateral relations have been marked by periodic stress. Indeed their relationship has survived several critical disputes: during the 1960's, Cuba's refusal to side with the Soviet's dispute with China; 1962, the Cuban Missile crisis; 1963, Castro's refusal to sign the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty; and 1967, Castro's refusal to support the Nuclear-Non-Proliferation Treaty.²⁶

1. The Late 1960's

In the late 1960's, the Vietnam War provided Castro with the opportunity he needed to secure Cuba's national security and to reduce its dependency on the Soviet Union. A new radical foreign policy was established with two strategic objectives:

1. To spark revolution in Latin America, thus ending Cuba's hemispheric isolation and also easing pressure on Vietnam because the United States would be forced with two, three, maybe many Vietnams.

²⁶Suchlicki, *Columbus to Castro*, pp. 149-151; W. Raymond Duncan, *The Soviet Union and Cuba: Interests and Influence* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), pp. 40-45.

2. To form a third force within the socialist camp composed of Cuba, Vietnam, and North Korea to promote militant socialist solidarity in the face of U.S. aggression.²⁷

Not only did neither one of its foreign policy initiatives succeed, but they placed a heavy strain on Soviet-Cuban relations. Consequently, in early 1968, Soviet petroleum shipments to Cuba were delayed. Cuban analyst, Jorge I. Dominguez and others interpreted this delay as politically motivated.²⁸ Whatever the motivation of the Brezhnev administration, the incident served to emphasize the dependence of the Cuban economy on the Soviet Union.

Consequently, as a means of reconciliation, in August 1968 Castro used the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia as an opportunity to improve relations with Moscow. In an uncharacteristic move, Castro publicly applauded the invasion despite historical support for the underdog.²⁹ Castro's perspective was that if Dubcek was endangering socialism in Czechoslovakia, as charged by the Soviets, then some sort of action was justified.³⁰

²⁷LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, p. 6.

²⁸Jorge I. Dominguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 162-165.

²⁹Carla Anne Robbins, *The Cuban Threat* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983), pp. 153-154.

³⁰LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, p. 7.

One of the Soviet's initial hesitations with adopting Cuba as an ally was Cuba's radical approach in its foreign policy. The Soviets maintained a less violent policy in support of national liberation movements. In the early 1960's this difference in approach added to the tensions between Cuba and the Soviet Union. However, during the latter part of the 1960's, Cuba's foreign policy was overshadowed by heightened domestic problems. These domestic problems were largely a result of Cuba's failure to produce the ten million tons of sugar as agreed with the USSR in 1970. While Cuba's foreign policy objectives remained unchanged, the specific policies to achieve its goals became quite different. Given deteriorating economic conditions in Cuba, as the Soviets adopted a less confrontational approach, Castro felt compelled to follow. Consequently tensions between Moscow and Havana began to decrease.

2. The 1970'S

Thus, by 1970, Cuban-Soviet relations reached a turning point and improved tremendously. "Cuba's great leap approach to development had failed, and its subsequent economic reforms brought Cuba much closer to the Soviet model of socialist construction, [rather than China] eliminating a major source of Cuban-Soviet friction which existed in the 1960's."³¹

³¹Ibid.

The global transition from cold war to detente heavily influenced Cuba's foreign policy. While Cuba policy towards Latin America remained the same, "...the new climate of detente made conciliation a more viable strategy than revolution."³²

Internally, the most noticeable change that occurred in Cuba was the massive restructuring and build-up of Cuban armed forces with the assistance of the Soviets. The missions of this improved Cuban armed force were, "to provide territorial defense, to maintain internal security, and to provide military aid and/or assistance to selected foreign countries or groups."³³ Externally, the most significant change in Cuba's foreign policy was with Cuba's relations not only within the region but with the rest of the Third World as well.

Cuba's new foreign policy objective was to expand its influence in the rest of the Third World. This new objective was pursued by an expansion of Cuban aid missions, a much more vocal Cuban role in the Movement of Non-aligned Nations (NAM), and eventually, the deployment of Cuban combat troops to Africa. While the 1960's resulted in a decade of internal

³²Ibid., p. 8. Additionally, Che Guevara's death while fighting in Bolivia and promoting revolution also waned the Cubans traditional revolutionary ideology.

³³Department of Defense Document, *Handbook of the Cuban Armed Forces, 1979*, by The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), DDB-2680-62-79, 1979, p. 1-5.

consolidation for the Castro Revolution, the 1970's would thus result in a period of external projection and a transition from regional actor to global actor.³⁴

³⁴Wolf Grabendorff, "Cuba's Involvement in Africa: An Interpretation of Objectives, Reactions, and Limitations," *Journal of Interamerican Studies* 22, no. 1 (February 1980): p. 8.

IV. SOVIET AND CUBAN INTERESTS IN AFRICA

A. WHY AFRICA? A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In the early part of the fifteenth century, the first exploration of Africa brought the Portuguese to the area of Senegal, Guinea and to the islands west of Africa. However, Portuguese colonization occurred only because it was permitted by the other more aggressive colonial powers, France and Great Britain. Portugal was allowed to assume control only of those poor territories that were not already occupied by the French and the British. Portugal's main African colonies included Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sao Tome Principe, and Guinea-Bissau. "By 1939 the European colonial powers were as firmly in control of their African territories as they ever would be....[with] few major challenges to their authority."³⁵ (See figure 2 for illustration of the division of colonies by 1940).

The striving for independence began in earnest in Africa during World War II. By the 1960's Portuguese colonialism in Africa began to dissipate. More and more, portions of the economy in Portuguese Africa were being opened to foreign investment. Much of the African economy began to be managed by other external actors such as Belgium, Great Britain, and

³⁵Michael Crowder, ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa; From c. 1940 to c. 1975* 8 (Cambridge Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 8.

the United States.³⁶ In Angola, the burgeoning oil industry was the most noticeable segment of the economy attracting foreign investment.

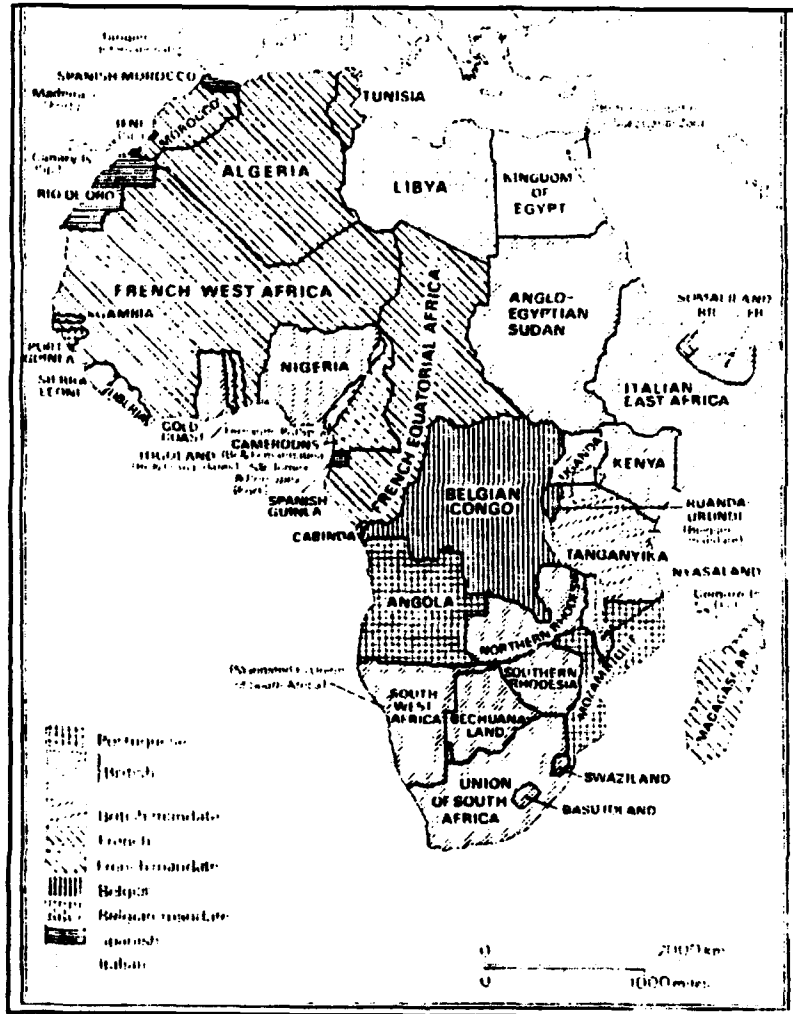


Figure 2 Africa, 1940 (Reproduced from Michael Crowder, ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa*, p. 3.)

³⁶Falk, *Cuban Foreign Policy*, p. 84.

B. AFRICA'S STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL VALUE

Africa possesses viable strategic and political value. Strategically Africa provides external actors access to naval, air, and communications facilities. The Horn of Africa alone commands access to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal and it is in close proximity to the Middle Eastern oil fields.³⁷ At the southern tip of the continent, the Cape of Good Hope sits astride one of the world's greatest shipping routes. Africa also possesses strategic resources that are of great value particularly chromium and titanium. Africa is also rich in oil, diamonds, iron, silver, manganese, copper, and phosphates.³⁸ In a continent of such size and diversity, to obtain political influence is a difficult task. Indeed for the United States, the Soviet Union, and China, none of whom were colonial powers in Africa, securing political influence has been time consuming and only partially successful. Instead, African governments have managed to utilize geographic location and strategic resources more as a means of leverage over these great powers than the other way around.

³⁷Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence*, p. 3.

³⁸Gerald J. Bender, "Angola, the Cubans, and American Anxieties," *Foreign Policy* no. 31 (Summer 1978): p. 3.

C. THE SOVIET UNION AND AFRICA

"The Soviets have always been aware of Africa in their global thinking....Only during the Nikita Khrushchev era did interests of the Soviet Union and African leaders become a reality."³⁹ Under Khrushchev, the Soviets became flexible in dealing with Third World regimes and broadened the base of Soviet relations with Third World Nations. The Soviets assumed that these Third World nations would have resilience and possibly serve Soviet foreign policy objectives.

1. The Key Factors Behind Soviet Involvement

Five key factors during this period led to Soviet involvement in Africa. First, "...[W]ith the collapse of colonialism in Africa, prospects were good for revolutionary transformations...and it tried to associate the USSR with the forces there that it felt would effect such changes."⁴⁰ In *The Communist Challenge to Africa*, Ian Greig discusses how Lenin stressed the value of colonial territories to Communism. In Lenin's view the industrial states and Western Europe specifically were obliged to embark upon programs of colonial acquisition in order to develop new markets in which to sell their goods and to discover new sources of raw materials.

³⁹Milene Charles, *The Soviet Union and Africa, The History of Involvement*, ed., Jo Fisher (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1980), p. 148.

⁴⁰David E. Albright, *Soviet Policy Toward Africa Revisited* 6 (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1987), p. 13.

According to Greig, Lenin concluded that control of these colonial territories was essential for the continued existence of European Capitalist states. Thus, Lenin declared "...that if the colonies could be wrested out of colonial control, a mortal blow could have been struck to the whole capitalist system itself-thus easing the way for the ultimate victory of Communism."⁴¹

The second key factor leading to Soviet involvement in Africa was the difficulties Moscow was experiencing in relations with its Arab allies in the Middle East primarily over the treatment of local communists. If relations failed to improve, Africa appeared to be a good alternative Third World ally for the USSR. Third, between 1958 and 1970, Chinese contracts in Africa had increased rapidly and the Soviet Union would find satisfaction in any successful policy that would block the Chinese position.⁴²

Fourth, in the 1960's, the Soviet Union began utilizing military instruments as the key policy tool to obtain strategic and political positions in Africa. Strategically, the Soviet Union had begun to expand its forces to the Indian Ocean. "The acquisition of naval access

⁴¹Ian Greig, *The Communist Challenge to Africa, An Analysis of Contemporary Soviet, Chinese and Cuban Policies* (Grosvenor, England: Foreign Affairs Publishing Co. Ltd., 1977), pp. 42-43.

⁴²Bruce D. Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949-1970: The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 45.

privileges bordering [the African region] serves both operational and political purposes. The use [of these] facilities contributes to Moscow's ability to sustain worldwide deployments and monitor Western naval forces."⁴³

Fifth, the Soviet Union figured that supporting National Liberation Movements by supplying them with military aid might allow the Soviet Union to obtain leverage and hence some political influence. Although the Soviet Union found it difficult to achieve significant influence in the region, the influence it did obtain served to accomplish two of the Soviet Union's primary foreign policy objectives: countering the United States and countering China in the region.

Overall, Soviet global planning involved that successful Soviet policy in Africa might well enhance Moscow's leverage in world affairs. These calculations reignited Soviet interest, and ultimately adventurism in Africa.

2. Initial Involvement: The Congo Crisis

Prior to 1960, the Soviet Union did not have any real ties with Africa except for some minor diplomatic relations

⁴³Melvin A. Goodman, "The Soviet Union and the Third World: The Military Dimension," *The Soviet Union and the Third World: The Last Three Decades*, eds., Andrzej Korbonski and Francis Fukuyama (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 48. Another example of favorable African ports are those located on the Mediterranean. The capability of being able to use the Algerian naval and air bases would obviously be of considerable advantage to the Soviet Union in the furtherance of its strategic policies in the Mediterranean since the United States maintains such a high level of activity in the area.

with the already independent states of Ethiopia, Sudan, Ghana, and Guinea. Beyond diplomatic ties, the Soviet Union did not have a definitive African foreign policy. The Congo Crisis of 1960 provided the first indication of Moscow's new interests in African affairs.

As nationalism swept the colony in the late 1950's, the impetuous preparations for Congolese independence by Belgium could not make up for the lack of an educated cadre to run the government and the economy. On July 5, 1960, the newly installed independent government confronted an attempted coup d'etat by the Congolese army. Right at independence the Congo began to quickly deteriorate into chaos and violence. The Belgians responded by dispatching forces to the Congo to protect Belgian citizens and economic and mining interests.

However, the Belgian intervention was done without the permission of the recognized government of the newly independent Congo which was headed by President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba. Both Kasavubu and Lumumba solicited support of the United Nations against the Belgian intervention and requested assistance to restore the Congolese administration. By July 11, 1960, the province of Katanga declared its independence from the Congo, creating opposing factions within this new state.

As a supporter of National Liberation Movements and early independence everywhere, the Soviet Union opposed the Belgium intervention in the Congo. The Soviet Union publicly

condemned the Belgian intervention, and "officially condemned it in an uncompromising tone and blamed the Belgian move on the N.A.T.O."⁴⁴ Soviet Union President Nikita Khrushchev received a request from the recognized Congolese government for assistance with the United Nations. The Soviets obliged this request and additionally offered the Congolese government 10,000 tons of emergency food supplies.⁴⁵ Consequently, the Soviet Union became intensely involved in the Congo Crisis providing economic and eventually military assistance. Henceforth, from 1960 to the mid-1980's, the Soviet Union maintained heavy commitments towards Africa.

D. CUBA AND AFRICA

"We have supported the progressive governments and revolutionary movements in Africa since the triumph of our revolution and we shall continue to do so."

Fidel Castro, 1975

1. Brief Overview of Cuba's Involvement in Africa

Cuban foreign policy in Africa was consistent and well established for more than a decade prior to the large-scale build-up in Angola which occurred in the Autumn of 1975. In 1959, Cuba began establishing active missions throughout Africa. In order to help defeat the French in Algeria, from 1960 to 1961, Castro sent medical personnel and arms to the National Liberation Front in Algeria. In 1961, the Cubans

⁴⁴Charles, *The Soviet Union and Africa*, pp. 96-97.

⁴⁵*Ibid.* p. 97.

were also present in Ghana. They set up a training facility which specialized in training guerilla warfare techniques.

During the border conflict between Algeria and Morocco (1963-1965), Cuban combat troops were deployed to assist the Algerians. From 1965-1966, Cuba installed a sizeable advisory military mission in the Congo-Brazzaville, headed by Ernesto "Che" Guevara. It was this mission that assisted in deterring a Congolese Army revolt in June 1966.

By June 1966, Castro had begun to supply military aid to the regime of Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea. Assistance was not only in the form of weapons but personnel as well. Cuba provided military personnel to augment Sekou Toure's Presidential Guard. In the late 1960's Cuban domestic problems resulted in a decline of Cuba's military involvement in Africa. This meant not a withdrawal of personnel and equipment already in place but rather a reluctance to provide additional personnel and equipment.

The early 1970's, after the restructuring and build-up of the Cuban armed forces, initiated a period of accelerated Cuban aid to Africa. Castro dispatched new military missions to Sierra Leone in 1972, Somalia in 1974, and Algeria in 1975. Che Guevara was a very important figure that assisted Cuba in its successful ability to establish a good rapport with Africa and establish a Cuban foreign policy in the region.

2. Ernesto "Che" Guevara

Ernesto "Che" Guevara (1928-1967) was born in Argentina and very well educated. In 1953, he received a medical degree from the University of Buenos Aires. After he obtained this degree he began to travel extensively throughout Latin America. In conjunction with his travels he acquired connections with leftist movements primarily in Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. "It was in Guatemala which finally convinced him of the necessity for armed struggle and for taking the initiative against imperialism."⁴⁶ Che joined Castro's revolutionary group while Castro was exiled in Mexico and he trained Castro's forces in guerilla warfare. Che later wrote about his first meeting with Castro and his decision to join Castro's cause, "It would have taken very little to persuade me to join any revolution against tyranny."⁴⁷

Guevara was an avid Marxist-Leninist and heavily influenced Castro in his decision to align Cuba with other communist nations. After the revolution, he became one of Castro's main advisors and served as President of the National Bank of Cuba from 1959-1961. Later he became minister of industry as well. After four years, Guevara became disenchanted and longed to wage the revolutionary cause once

⁴⁶Sinclair, *Che Guevara*, p. 12.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

again. Thus, in 1965, Che left Cuba to further the cause of revolutionary activities elsewhere.

In April of 1965, Che led two hundred Cuban "international soldiers" to establish an anti-imperialist alliance and to conduct warfare in the Congo against secessionist movements. Additionally, during this period, he toured the countries of the Casablanca Group: Algeria, Guinea, Ghana, and Congo-Brazzaville. It was during this trip that Guevara "established contacts and laid the groundwork for many of the policy decisions that [Cuba] followed in the next 10-15 years."⁴⁸

Although Guevara was unsuccessful in organizing the anti-imperialist alliance, he considered "...Africa to be one of the most important if not the most important battlefield against all forms of exploitation in the world."⁴⁹

3. How Africa Meets Cuba's Foreign Policy Objectives

Why was Cuba so motivated in its foreign policy objectives towards Africa? Many observers, such as Wayne S. Smith and Paul Bia Abudu, have written that Cuba's policy toward Africa was internationalist. That is, conflict involving a Cuban ally becomes internationalized by incurring

⁴⁸Michael A. Samuels, et al., eds., *Implications of Soviet and Cuban Activities in Africa for U.S. Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Georgetown University, 1979), p. 44.

⁴⁹Durch, *From Algeria to Angola*, p. 18.

the involvement of Western or of pro-Western nations, then Cuba will undoubtedly respond within the limits of its military capability. Thus, in Africa, "Cuba had little to gain economically or strategically by promoting revolution.... Ideologically, however, Cuba has always taken the principle of international solidarity very seriously--no doubt because the survival of the Cuban revolution itself has been so dependent upon international assistance."⁵⁰

Africa met Cuba's foreign policy objectives most eloquently. It was Cuba's solid commitment to African liberation struggles, as emphasized above, that has made it possible to understand why Cuba has been so motivated in its foreign policy objectives towards Africa. Africa had become "an ideal [show] place to [demonstrate] international solidarity that [was] needed to win the wars of national liberation."⁵¹

It is evident that Cuba possessed an African policy for more than a decade prior to the Angolan War in 1975. Cuba's involvement in Africa was primarily self-motivated and based on similar ideologies. Its presence in Africa sought to

⁵⁰Wayne S. Smith, "Castro's Cuba: Soviet Partner or Nonaligned?" *The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society*, eds., Phillip Brenner, William M. LeoGrande, Donna Rich, and Daniel Siegel, (New York: Grove Press, 1989), p. 377. Also see Paul Bia Abudu, *Cuban Policy Toward Africa and African Responses 1959-1976* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1983), pp. 10-16.

⁵¹Paul Bia Abudu, *Cuban Policy Toward Africa*, p. 4.

broaden Cuba's political and diplomatic relations, and to furnish elements of military assistance whenever it appeared appropriate. Africa also provided Castro with other motivations for him to send his troops: as colonialism collapsed in Portuguese-Africa, Africa appeared to be more ripe for revolution than in Latin America. Besides which, the United States tended to be much less active in Africa than in Latin America; allowing Castro more room to operate.

Castro's revolution required legitimacy. Assisting national liberation movements in Africa enabled him to present the Cuban people with a "cause" they could easily relate to and rally behind. By expanding his revolution to Africa it fulfilled, what he probably perceived as, his internationalist responsibility of supporting Third World nations and being the exemplary force behind the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Furthermore, Castro increased his military force to more than ten times what would be required for a country the size of Cuba, thus, deploying to Africa allowed Castro a larger stage with which to demonstrate his growing successes of utilizing an autonomous foreign policy.

The following section will examine Cuba's involvement in the Angolan War. It will attempt to illustrate that even though Cuba required the assistance of the Soviet Union to be successful, Cuba's decision to assist in this situation was an autonomous decision.

V. CUBA AND ANGOLA

A. THE ANGOLAN WAR

Today, Angola remains engulfed in a brutal civil war. The cause is a simple one: who is going to control the country. The origins of this ongoing struggle for power can be traced directly to Portuguese colonialism and the three factions that emerged to challenge the Portuguese. Currently, only two of the original three groups remain locked in this brutal struggle.

Struggle for power originated in the April 1974 military coup against the Portuguese government of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. In January 1975, the new Portuguese leadership agreed to transfer power in Angola over to a Transitional Government that was composed of three political parties that possessed disparate ideological positions.⁵² The three factions included: the Movimiento Popular de Libertacao (MPLA), the Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola (FNLA), and the Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA). Consequently, the Angolan War centered around these three nationalistic movements vying for power by the proposed independence day of November 11, 1975.

⁵²Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, pp. 9-11.

1. Background On the Three Movements: The MPLA

The MPLA is the oldest liberation movement in Angola, the most ideologically sophisticated and today controls the government of Luanda. It is composed of Angolans who have been subjected to Portuguese education and influenced by Portuguese culture.⁵³ This faction is urban-oriented and urban-based. It draws its support from the Mbundu people who are situated in Luanda. The MPLA is composed mostly of *assimilados* (Africans who have been subjected to Portuguese education and influenced by Portuguese culture; these people are treated almost as equals) and *mesticos* (individuals with one white parent and one negro parent; mulattoes).

Since the mid-1960's, the MPLA has been supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba. In fact, many leaders studied in Cuba including some who later became members of the MPLA Central Committee and Ministers of the Angolan Government.⁵⁴ When the MPLA was initially established in 1956 they contended that they "...would fight for an independent Marxist Angola, governed by a democratic and popular government of the working

⁵³John Marcum, *The Angolan Warfare*, pp. 276-277.

⁵⁴Jorge I. Dominguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution, Cuba's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 131-132.

people, irrespective of racial distinction, social origin, religious belief, and the individual make-up.⁵⁵

Between 1962 and 1979 Agostinho Neto was the elected president of the MPLA. In 1962, when Neto first became the leader, an ultra-leftist group headed up by the Secretary-General, Veriato da Cruz, initially refused to accept Neto's position and attempted to set up a splinter MPLA.⁵⁶ Consequently, under Neto, the MPLA experienced personal and factional rivalries resulting in an evident disunity within the movement. This disunity became a major setback to MPLA objectives.

2. The FNLA

Although the FNLA was the strongest faction that existed at the start of the Angolan war, ultimately it was unable to survive its own battlefield errors and the cessation of external assistance. Founded in 1958, the FNLA, like UNITA, possessed a primitive ideological mixture of racism and tribal populism. The FNLA members were less educated, less urban and although they lacked a coherent ideology, they maintained strong anti-Marxist sentiments.⁵⁷ They drew their

⁵⁵Falk, *Cuban Foreign Policy*, p. 84; Oleg Ignatyev, *Secret Weapon in Africa*, trans. David Fidlon (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 7.

⁵⁶Marina Ottaway and David Ottaway, *Afrocommunism* (New York: African Publishing Company, 1986), p. 101.

⁵⁷Marcum, *The Angolan Warfare*, pp. 276-277; Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, p. 13.

support from the BaKongo people who were situated in the far north-west (near Zaire) and in Cabinda. Within this faction the authority of the FNLA was not only black, but racist as well. The FNLA vilified not only the Portuguese settlers but the mesticos and assimilados they had created. While the MPLA focused primarily on education and mobilization, the FNLA's approach was basically military. Led by Holden Roberto, "the FNLA [in 1975] had more men under arms than the MPLA and UNITA combined and it had the most convenient base of operations, in Zaire."⁵⁸ The FNLA was heavily supported by the United States, South Africa, China, and Zaire.

3. UNITA

Along with the MPLA, UNITA is the other key contender for power in the Angolan civil war today. UNITA, formed in 1966, was the last of the three movements to be formed. Jonas Savimbi, an ex-FNLA member, established this movement. Initially UNITA seriously lacked educated men and arms, but it had the largest ethnic base. Located near the southeastern border, it relied heavily on the neighbor nation of Zambia. Initially, Cuba trained and supported both members of the MPLA and members of UNITA since both factions were fighting against Portugal. However, by 1974, UNITA and the MPLA were fighting each other and as a result, Cuba discontinued its support of UNITA and maintained the MPLA as the faction that should take

⁵⁸Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, p. 13.

control of the government.⁵⁹ Eventually, UNITA found it necessary to form a coalition with the FNLA if it was to have a chance of survival. With significant external backing by the United States and South Africa, UNITA has been able to prevent the MPLA from consolidating its control in Angola.

B. TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE: THE ALVOR AGREEMENT

In Mombasa, Kenya, between January 3-5, 1975, President Jomo Kenyatta, of Kenya, attempted to bring the three movement leaders (Neto, Roberto, and Savimbi) together to work out an agreement that would prevent a civil war in Angola. From this meeting they reached an agreement of cooperation. The Alvor Agreement, of January 15, 1975, called for the installation of a Transitional Government, composed of 8,000 men from each movement and 24,000 Portuguese troops by January 31st.⁶⁰ The success of this Transitional Government would lead to Angolan independence by November 11, 1975 and the removal of all Portuguese soldiers.

Kenyatta was able to achieve only temporary success with this cooperation agreement. The factionalization within the MPLA created problems in cooperation. The already expelled Daniel Chipenda and 2,000-3,000 of his affiliated troops aligned themselves with the FNLA. The MPLA viewed the FNLA's

⁵⁹Dominguez, *To Make a World Safe*, pp. 131-132.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 15.

acceptance of these troops as an infringement of the Alvor Agreement and hostilities increased significantly. Another factor that eventually led to the continued Angolan conflict was the increased support the three movements received from external sources.

C. THE MAJOR EXTERNAL ACTORS

1. The Soviet Union

Although the Soviet Union has always been interested in Africa, until 1974 the Soviets provided only nominal political, ideological, and military support to the MPLA. The Soviet Union viewed the MPLA "as the only legitimate liberation organization in Angola,"⁶¹ and began supplying assistance in order to guarantee that the MPLA would emerge as the future government in Angola.

MPLA leader Agostinho Neto's ties to the Soviet Union were extensive even before he took over. Shortly after he was elected president of the MPLA, the Soviet Union began to actively support the MPLA. Support was provided in terms of military assistance, arms and training, and education in Soviet institutions.

Early on the Soviets saw that the MPLA suffered from factionalization and encouraged unification among them. They even discontinued military assistance temporarily so that the

⁶¹Kurt M. Campbell, "Southern Africa in Soviet Foreign Policy," *Adelphi Papers* no. 227 (Winter 1987/88): p. 6.

arms that were provided would not be viewed as a contributing factor to the strife the MPLA was experiencing. Prior to the Alvor Agreement, the MPLA agreed to unify, but, this did not last long.

Although the Soviets believed that the MPLA should be the leading force after Angola's independence, the Soviets supported the prevention of an Angolan civil war. When the Alvor Agreement was signed by all members, the Soviets encouraged the MPLA to adopt it and abide by it. In their continued struggle for power, the FNLA troops, along with their new allies of the Chipenda faction, moved into Angola from Zaire and began initiating small attacks against MPLA members. This was made possible because shortly after the Alvor Agreement was signed and the FNLA began receiving increased aid from both the United States and China. This aid allowed the FNLA to achieve "apparent military primacy."⁶²

The U.S. used a "crisis management committee," composed of senior policymakers to oversee covert operations. This committee was known as the "40 Committee." Immediately after the signing of the Alvor Agreement, the "40 committee" began making policy decisions to support the pro-Western movements and augmented covert aid to the FNLA. Such an increase in U.S. aid resulted in undermining the loyalty of the FNLA's participation to the Alvor Agreement. Additionally

⁶²John Marcum, "Lessons of Angola," *Foreign Affairs* 54, no. 3 (April 1976): p. 41³.

China, provided the FNLA with hundreds of tons of arms as well as Chinese instructors.⁶³ "The levels of foreign assistance [were] of paramount political importance in the Angolan conflict. Certain foreign actions, no doubt, sparked action and reaction."⁶⁴ Consequently, the Soviets bolstered their assistance to the MPLA. Although the weaponry was provided, the MPLA lacked the training and expertise to operate these Soviet arms. Extensive training began in order to better equip the MPLA and bring the troops up to military parity with the FNLA.⁶⁵ The Soviets claimed that their increased support to the MPLA was to provide them with sufficient weaponry to counter the FNLA/UNITA coalition and also to counter the United States and Chinese support of the FNLA.

In a July summit conference held by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) another attempt was made to try to reconcile the three movements. To show their support of the conference, the Soviet Union, for a second time, discontinued military support in hopes that the OAU would be able to convince the three movements that negotiated settlements were

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Falk, *Cuban Foreign Policy*, p. 85.

⁶⁵Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, p. 16. Also Marcum, *The Angolan Warfare*, p. 413, provides detailed accounts of these events that took place in Angola. He suggests that the Soviets renewed assistance was "perhaps a move triggered, more than anything else, by the unpleasant prospect of seeing their global rival[s]...for influence among revolutionaries, China [and the U.S.] assist the movement of [their] choice to military victory."

in everyone's best interest. Consequently, the Soviet Union did not re-establish its arms support until September/October 1975.⁶⁶

Neto requested another increase in extensive Soviet Union military assistance (i.e. trained combat troops), but was turned down and the MPLA became increasingly skeptical of the reliability of the Soviet Union's commitment to assistance. The Soviet Union feared that the sending of troops would lead to the deterioration of detente with the United States. Thus, Neto turned to Fidel Castro, who subsequently provided the MPLA with Cuban combat troops to fight along side Neto's forces. Once Cuba committed their troops to the Angolan conflict, the Soviet Union provided extensive military assistance. The combination of Soviet military arms and logistic equipment along with Cuban combat troops secured what initially appeared to be a total victory for the MPLA. In reality, however, the victory meant control of the capital, Luanda, the oil fields of Cabinda, and control of the immediate surrounding areas. The rest of Angola largely came under the control of UNITA.

2. Cuba

Cuba's early alliance with the MPLA was based primarily on ideological reasons. They "were anxious to play a leadership role in the Third World and [they] had a strong

⁶⁶Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, pp. 22-23.

ideological commitment to furthering the cause of socialism."⁶⁷ In 1965, the Cubans began providing aid, military training, and education to the MPLA. Unlike the Soviet Union, Cuba was not under the same constraints of establishing and maintaining world-wide detente. Thus, the Cubans were able to continuously supply the MPLA with the necessities they required.

Cuba's commitment to send combat troops was probably an independent decision based on Cuban foreign policy objectives and their long time alliance with the MPLA. William M. LeoGrande provides statements made by Castro in *Granma Weekly Review*, dated April 18, 1976 that states, "The USSR is extraordinarily respectful in its relations with Cuba. A decision of that nature could only be made by our own party." Cuba's decision to assist the MPLA was self-motivated and consistent with its foreign policy initiatives. Some critics claim that the Soviets had "no idea" of the decision but that is probably presumptuous.⁶⁸ It appears to be evident that the decision made by Cuba was an autonomous one.

The best indication of this autonomous decision is that initially Cuba deployed its troops to Africa without the

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁶⁸LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, p. 21, makes this presumption. In another article by David Binder, "Kissinger Believes Cuba Exports Revolution Again," *The New York Times*, 5 February 1976, p. 15C, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger articulates his opinion to the same effect.

assistance of the Soviet Union. The first Cuban-deployed ships landed at Pointe Noire in early October 1975. These troops were then taken by train to Cabinda. Other Cuban-deployed ships disembarked troops directly at Port Amboim, which is south of Luanda.⁶⁹ Cuban airlift transports also provided troops to Angola. However, upon the request of the United States, essential refueling stations such as Barbados, the Azores, Santa Maria, and Portugal, began denying Cuba access. Consequently, the Cubans requested assistance from the Soviet Union to transport troops. In early January 1976, the Soviet Union provided two IL-62's to Cuba, and began flying Cuban troops into Luanda. Cuban arrivals to Luanda increased from 400 a week in December 1975, when Cuba was transporting its troops, to 1000 a week in January 1976 with Soviet assistance.⁷⁰

Cuba's military involvement in Angola consisted of five separate roles: 1) to train and arm the MPLA with Soviet weapons in the Congo and Cuba; 2) to provide advisors to the MPLA within Angola; 3) to establish military training centers in four Angolan locations; 4) to furnish the MPLA with Cuban combat troops for incorporation into MPLA units; and 5) to

⁶⁹Durch, *From Algeria to Angola*, p. 44.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

dispatch intact and trained military units for combat alongside the MPLA.⁷¹

As the South African⁷² offensive increased so did the dispatch of additional Cuban troops. Between November 1975, when the MPLA requested Cuban troops to assist them, and March 1976, when the MPLA had taken control of the offensive, between 18,000 and 36,000 Cuban combat troops had arrived in Angola.⁷³ LeoGrande notes that "[m]ilitarily, Cuba's troops made the difference."⁷⁴

There was a brief period when Cuban combat troops began withdrawing from Angola. This withdrawal process was a direct result of the cessation of aid to the FNLA and UNITA by the United States. However, South African support did not dissipate and as a result of continued conflict in the region

⁷¹Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, p. 111.

⁷²South Africa's increased involvement in the region was partly motivated by what it perceived would be continuous and significant U.S. backing. However, once the Cubans began sending forces to assist the MPLA and regained the offensive back, the U.S. Congress, on December 16, 1980, passed the Clark Amendment which stated complete and total disassociation with Angola. As the legislation stated, "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no assistance of any kind may be provided for the purpose, or which would have the effect, of promoting or augmenting, directly or indirectly, the capacity of any nation, group, organization, movement, or individual to conduct military or paramilitary operations in Angola..." ([Emphasis added] Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, *Possible Violation or Circumvention of the Clark Amendment*. 100th Cong., 1st Sess., 1 July 1987, p. 109)

⁷³LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, p. 20.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 19.

Cuba halted the withdrawal upon the request of the MPLA. Consequently, between 1975 and 1989 there was a significant Cuban presence in Angola of approximately 50,000 troops. Since the recent withdrawal of Cuban troops (which will be discussed later), approximately 15,000 still remain as August 1990.⁷⁵

3. Cuban-Soviet Cooperation

Prior to 1975, Cuban and Soviet policies towards Angola were markedly different. Cuba pursued a militant policy based on its fundamental ideology of spreading revolution and supporting liberal progressive movements. The Soviet Union's purpose was not so much ideological as it was strategic and political. This was an area in which Cuba publicly criticized the Soviets.

Politically, the Soviet Union viewed that the success of an MPLA government in Angola which possessed pro-Marxist views, would be beneficial to the Soviet Union. Consequently, aid provided to the MPLA faction was given in the belief that the Soviet Union would have some political influence over Angola if the MPLA were successful. It would mark the first time that the Soviet Union would have the ability to become a major actor in the region's political affairs.⁷⁶

⁷⁵"35,000 Soldiers said to Leave Angola," *The Miami Herald*, 5 August 1990, P. 4A.

⁷⁶Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, p. 28.

Strategically, Soviet influence over the region could be "...analyzed in terms of superpower competition..."⁷⁷ Soviet presence in the region could "jeopardize the security of the United States and other Western powers as the flow of oil around the Cape could be obstructed by Soviet ships stationed in Angolan ports."⁷⁸

By the 1970's, Cuba's foreign policy objectives evolved while the Soviet Union's basically remained the same. Cuba began placing an increasing emphasis on expanding its influence throughout the Third World. The Soviets continued to view Africa as a political and strategic asset and strived, as its principal objective, to reduce Western and Chinese influence in this region and other Third World nations.⁷⁹

The Cuban-Soviet partnership in the Angolan War was not completely orchestrated from beginning to end. Until November 1975, the two countries acted fairly independently. However, this partnership provided the perfect situation where both countries could achieve their individual foreign policy objectives. "Their policy objectives, though not identical,

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 73.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 76.

⁷⁹LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, pp. 30-31, 65. Also Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, pp. 73-76, 119.

were not in conflict, [they] were attainable only through cooperation."⁸⁰

4. The Chinese Impact

The only movement which received substantial Chinese backing was that of the FNLA. In 1974, an agreement was signed for military aid to be provided to the FNLA. China provided 112 military instructors to Zaire in order to train FNLA guerrillas which would eventually be able to form an army division. Two-thirds of this army would be equipped with Chinese arms. Arms supply continued for approximately fourteen months, but with the increased Soviet-Cuban arms build-up to the MPLA, and the decrease in U.S. support, the Chinese to, virtually ceased all transfers by the end of 1975.⁸¹ China terminated its arms transfers when South Africa began supporting the pro-western movements. Sensitive to what China saw as its leadership role in Africa, China did not want to be associated with "racist" South Africa in any way.

⁸⁰LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, p. 31. It should be noted that in the case of Ethiopia, Cuba was less willing to provide combat troops and favored negotiated settlements instead. However, with the Soviets insistence, the Cubans provided the necessary troops. Consequently, as a result of the Cubans reluctance, the Soviet-Cuban alliance in Ethiopia was more planned out than the alliance in Angola. This will be discussed in detail in the following section.

⁸¹*World Armaments and Disarmament, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 1976* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1976), p. 57.

5. The United States

During the early 1970's, conditions existed in the United States that prevented the U.S. from taking a more assertive or vocal role towards Cuban and Soviet involvement in Africa. These conditions included: public and congressional preoccupation with "avoiding anymore Vietnams;" the weakening of the American presidency as a result of the Watergate affair; and the unwillingness of U.S. policy-makers to use military power in the Third World.⁸² Consequently, the United States had accepted the fact that it would have to live with Fidel Castro, and, given the fear of another Vietnam in Africa, would not consider sending U.S. troops overseas to stop him.

Since its independence, the United States supported Zaire (formerly the Belgian Congo). The FNLA movement in Angola requested aid and assistance from Zaire, fully aware of its ties with the United States. Zaire had been the key to American policy in the region. Thus, it was not unusual that the United States would support Zaire's preference for the FNLA.

While there are some arguments which suggest that Soviet assistance to the MPLA was in direct reaction to the United State's "40 Committee" assistance to the FNLA, this argument cannot be viewed as valid. First, the Soviets began

⁸²Jiri Valenta, "The Soviet-Cuban Alliance in Africa," *The World Today*, p. 47.

providing military assistance to the MPLA immediately after the military coup in 1974. Although Zaire began providing increased aid to the FNLA soon after the coup,⁸³ it was not until March 1975 that the United States made this policy official. The policy, formulated by the "40 Committee," was to increase aid to Zaire and Zambia for the direct purpose of helping them assist the FNLA and the UNITA.

Secondly, if further Soviet aid, after the signing of the Alvor Agreement, was in reaction to American covert aid, the Soviet response was clearly disproportionate, "...the United States only provided a small amount of cash [and arms] while the Soviet Union introduced a large quantity of arms."⁸⁴ The United State's role in Angola was minimal in comparison to that of the Soviet Union.

In November 1975, when there was an increase in Cuban and Soviet involvement, the Senate voted to decrease support for the FNLA. By March 1976, when the MPLA had won the offensive, the U.S. voted to terminate aid altogether.

6. Cuban-U.S. Relations

Cuban-U.S. relations began to improve in the early 1970's. Until November 1975, these improved relations showed signs of increased economic opportunities for Cuba. The

⁸³It appears that the first shipment from the U.S. to Zaire was to resupply Zaire with aid they had already been distributed to the FNLA.

⁸⁴Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, p. 89.

Soviets saw this as a possible chance to be relieved of some of their economic responsibilities.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger issued a statement on March 1, 1975 that stated "that the U.S. government saw *no virtue* in perpetual antagonism with Cuba [emphasis in original]..."⁸⁵ However, this situation regressed with the advent of Cuban combat troops dispatched to Angola in November 1975. Consequently, Cuban-U.S. relations began to deteriorate quickly because the United States viewed Cuba's involvement as jeopardizing any chance for continued improvement of relations. Cuba did not succumb. It viewed this threat as another example of the United States seeking to influence Cuba's foreign policy behavior. President Gerald Ford reiterated that in the U.S. view, "The action of the Cuban government in sending combat forces to Angola destroys any opportunity for improvement of relations with the United States."⁸⁶

Moreover, the United States refused to recognize the regime in Luanda, it sought to isolate the Angolan government from World Bank loans, U.S. foreign aid or other assistance; and it ultimately resumed direct assistance to UNITA following the revocation of the Clark Amendment.

⁸⁵Erisman, *Cuba's International Relations*, p. 44.

⁸⁶Lou Cannon, "Ford Assails Cuba, Russia Over Angola," *The Washington Post*, 21 December 1975, pp. 1A, 15A.

D. CURRENT RESULTS OF CUBAN AND SOVIET ASSISTANCE TO AFRICA

"...[T]he history of Angola has been one of discontinuity and crisis. War among the three nationalist movements and infighting among the top MPLA leaders have consumed the country for many years."⁸⁷ Although the MPLA was successful in obtaining the offensive and has since been recognized globally as the faction in control of Angola, problems continued. First, the death of President Neto in 1979 reopened the question of leadership within the MPLA. Second, the early 1980's proved to be a period when UNITA joined forces with South Africa to fight against the MPLA. This amounted to extra time and effort on the part of the MPLA to maintain national defense. By 1988 it appeared that the continuous civil war had yet to run its full course. The Cubans still maintained a sizeable force in the region (50,000 troops) and the Soviet Union continued to provide large amounts of aid to the MPLA with no real apparent end to the civil war on the horizon. It became obvious that a solution to end the struggle was necessary. No longer could Cuban and Soviet support be a factor in this conflict. Diplomatic solutions would be required.

1. Cuba's Withdrawal of Troops from Angola

Three summits were held in Africa in 1988. The Gbadolite Summit on June 22nd, the Harare Summit on August

⁸⁷Ottaway and Ottaway, *Afrocommunism*, p. 125.

22nd, and the Kinshasa Summit on September 11th.⁸⁸ The Summit goals were to establish a cease-fire and to initiate direct political negotiations. They were unable to achieve either. The willingness to achieve these objectives was present in these meetings but some participants questioned the impartiality of the mediator, President Mobutu. Consequently, on December 22, 1988 in New York, the United States brokered an external settlement. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Chester A. Crocker was in charge of mediating this round of negotiations which ended successfully, resulting in an agreement signed by South Africa, Angola, and Cuba.

In 1987, prior to the three summits, Cuban officials had already indicated that they were ready to take part in discussions that would initiate the withdrawal of Cuban troops in Angola. Under the agreement signed in December, Cuban troops would withdraw from Angola. South Africa agreed to end support for the rebels and to grant independence to Namibia. Completion of this withdrawal was scheduled for mid-1990.⁸⁹

⁸⁸Warren Clark, Jr., "National Reconciliation Efforts for Angola," *United States Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs* 1217 (Washington, D.C.: 7 November 1989): p. 1.

⁸⁹*Ibid.* Additionally, Michael G. Kozak, "Cuba: A Threat to Peace and Security in Our Hemisphere," *United States Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs* 1204 (Washington, D.C.: 4 September 1989): p. 4A.

2. Temporary Suspension of Withdrawal

In January 1990, Cuba temporarily suspended the withdrawal of its troops from Angola as a protest to the killing of four Cuban soldiers by U.S.-backed Angolan rebels. Of the estimated 50,000 troops that had been deployed to Angola over the past fifteen years, approximately 31,000 troops had departed by the time that Cuba initially suspended troop withdrawal.⁹⁰ All indications to date show that the withdrawal continues now and no further problems have occurred. Since January 1990, approximately 4,000 additional Cuban troops have exited Angola and as a result of the temporary suspension, the completion of the Agreement has been pushed back to mid-1991.⁹¹

Is the current situation, with the withdrawal of Cuban combat troops, a result of Soviet pressures or a result of Cuba's own foreign policy initiatives? While there has been no verbal direct pressure, the Soviet Union's disengagement throughout the Third World, in order to deal with its own problems, has forced Soviet Third World clients to re-evaluate their foreign policy. Thus, it appears, from the little that has been written about the Cuban troop withdrawal, that it was the Cubans that suggested the United States preside over these

⁹⁰Elaine Sciolino, "Blaming U.S., Cuba Suspends Pullout," *The New York Times*, 26 January 1990, p. 12A.

⁹¹"35,000 Soldiers said to leave Angola," *The Miami Herald*, 5 August 1990.

negotiations. Soviet representation was not a part of these meetings. The successful outcome of this Summit, in New York, benefitted not only the Angolans and South Africans but also the Cubans. Consequently, Cuban withdrawal of troops has not been primarily as a result of any direct pressure from the Soviet Union, but rather based on agreements between the MPLA, UNITA, South Africa, and Cuba.

While there are no records indicating direct pressure has been applied for Cuba's withdrawal from Angola, the significant indirect pressures should be noted. First, at the Twenty-seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), held in February 1986, Gorbachev focused primarily on his country's domestic-economic concerns and on improving and stabilizing relations with the United States. Little to no reference was made to Soviet goals towards the Third World. The conspicuous lack of Third World reference was significant because it illustrated that Moscow's role in the Third World was of less importance than it had been in previous years.⁹² This caused concern among many key Soviet client leaders, specifically, Mengitsu of Ethiopia, Dos Santos of Angola, and of course, Castro.

Second, the Soviet Union has come out and stated that it intends to resolve regional conflicts and no longer call

⁹²Francis T. Miko, "The 27th Soviet Party Congress and the West," *Survival* 28, no. 4 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, July/August 1986): pp. 291-305; Goodman, "The Military Dimension," pp. 59-61.

for the violent overthrow of South Africa. Finally, the Soviet Union's domestic problems are so great that it is too expensive to continue supplying countries like Angola or Cuba with the levels of aid they had previously been receiving. With this in mind it is evident that Cuba and Angola probably felt a real constraint, and coming to some sort of terms in the region was necessary.

Thus, the reduction does not indicate that Castro has abandoned his goals of promoting revolution abroad nor does it indicate that the withdrawal be done at the cost of their basic socialist ideology (as seen by their temporary halt of withdrawing troops in January). This withdrawal will allow Cuba to focus on its domestic policy and to try to reduce the costs of deploying troops abroad.

VI. CUBA AND ETHIOPIA

A. BACKGROUND ON CONFLICTS WITHIN THE REGION

In 1941, for the second time, Haile Selassie became Emperor of Ethiopia with the support of both Great Britain and the United States. For the following 33 years the United States was Ethiopia's primary foreign ally and purveyor of economic and military assistance. In February 1974, Emperor Haile Selassie's troops refused to act against urban strikers and demonstrators. The aging Haile Selassie lost the support and the loyalty of his troops. Within two months, the military had established an alternative center of government power, the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), referred to as the Dergue.⁹³ In September, the Emperor had been deposed and by December the Dergue stated that its ultimate objective was socialism.⁹⁴

This placed both the Soviet Union and Cuba in a dilemma. Although they were gladdened that the Dergue was pursuing a communist course, both countries had armed and trained separatist guerrillas in the Ethiopian provinces of Eritrea

⁹³Legum and Lee, eds., *The Horn of Africa* pp. vii-xiii; William M. LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, pp. 35-36.

⁹⁴Morris Rothenberg, *The USSR and Africa: New Dimensions of Soviet Global Power* (The University of Miami: Advanced International Studies Institute in Association with, 1980), p. 34.

and Tigre and had done the same for the Somalian army. Each were Marxist-Leninist organizations contending for autonomy from the central government. As long as the central government was pro-Western and backed by the United States and other Western countries, Cuban and Soviet interests in the region supported these opposing guerrillas and the Somalian army. The question arose to what they should do now that these Marxist-Leninist factions they had been supporting for more than a decade were fighting a newly proclaimed Marxist-Leninist government.

1. Ethiopia and Somalia

One of the biggest internal conflicts within the Horn of Africa has been the dispute of territory between Ethiopia and Somalia known as the Ogaden desert. Relations between the two countries have been strained since the 1960's when Somalia gained its independence. The Ogaden is not the only disputed territory Somalia claims. Other sources of conflict are the territories of Djibouti and Northern Kenya (See Figure 3 for illustration of the region).

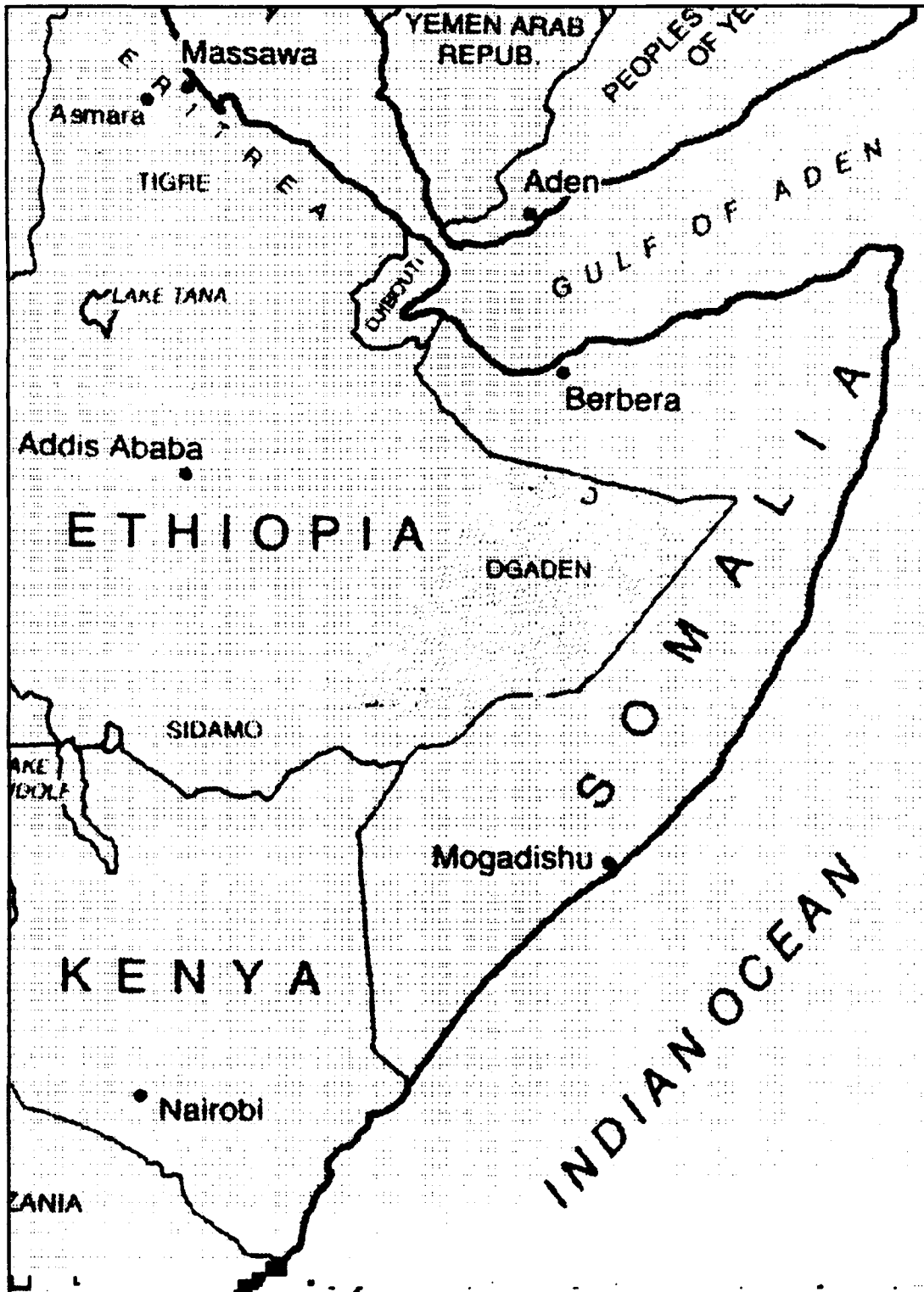


Figure 3

These quarrels were a result of the failure of the European colonialists to delineate acceptable territorial boundaries in the region. Throughout the years, small skirmishes have been common and sometimes exploded into brief armed conflicts between regular forces.

2. Ethiopia and Eritrea

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) has been fighting against the Ethiopian government since 1960. It is Marxist in orientation and is situated in the north along the Red Sea. The area itself is of little importance, and was hardest hit by the famines of the 1980's. Its importance lies in its ports, for without them Ethiopia is a landlocked nation (See figure 4 for illustration of the region).

Eritrea was a separate territory under Italian control during the colonial period. The Eritrean insurgency was a result of the Ethiopian government, in 1962, unilaterally abrogating an approved United Nations' agreement.

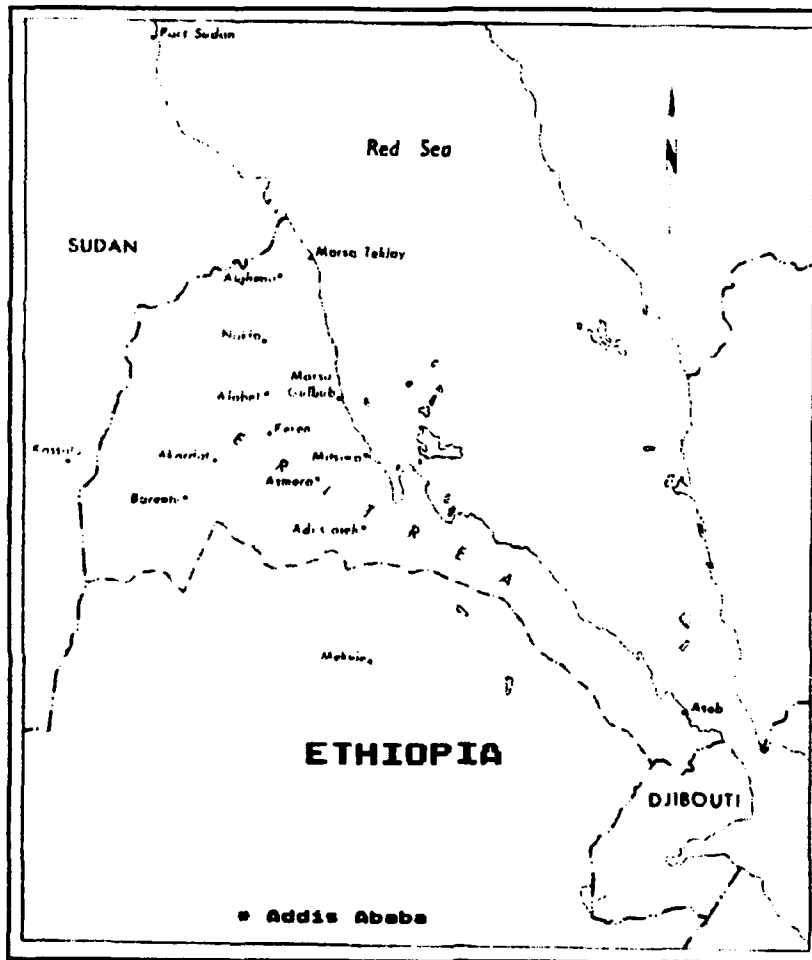


Figure 4

The agreement, approved in 1952, joined Eritrea and Ethiopia as a federal state. "Historically the Eritrean's greatest weakness has been internal conflicts. In 1970 the [EPLF] split from the pro-Islamic Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), and the rival movements spent much of the subsequent decade fighting one another. In July 1977, however, when Somalia invaded the Ogaden, the ELF and EPLF signed an agreement at Sudanese urging to coordinate 90 percent of Eritrea's territory and population and held the provincial capital of Asmara under siege."⁹⁵ Originally, Eritrea fought to regain Eritrean status in Ethiopia, but as the struggle has prolonged and intensified, their objectives have changed. The Eritrean's goal now is to become completely independent.

B. THE SOVIET UNION'S INTEREST IN ETHIOPIA

In order to fully understand the difference between Cuba's involvement in Angola and its involvement in Ethiopia it is important to illustrate the long ties the Soviet Union has had with Ethiopia. The history of the Russian involvement in Ethiopia is far more extensive than that of the United States, China, or Cuba for that matter. Those who could not understand the sudden willingness of the Soviet Union to switch from an alliance with the Somalis to one with the Ethiopians in 1976-1977 were probably not aware of the rich

⁹⁵LeoGrande, *Cuba's Policy in Africa*, p. 42.

hundred-year relationship of the Russians and the Ethiopians. The Russian hospital in Addis Ababa has been a highly visible symbol of interest since its construction in the mid-19th century; and Ethiopian history records the important role of Russian military advisors in the defeat of the Italian army in 1896. The stated Russian purpose in 1896 was not that different from the intention in 1976: "to defeat the forces of imperialism (Italy, Britain, and the Ottomans) in a region where Russia had been excluded from the imperialist spoils."⁹⁶

It was these ties and the strategic importance of Ethiopia that preceded the Soviets' allegiance to this nation and brought the Cubans in to assist, as it was Cuba's ties and ideological bonds with Angola that brought the Soviets in to assist in that conflict. The key difference is that in Angola the Soviets were not asked to compromise their foreign policy objectives or ideological bonds. In Ethiopia, in contrast, Cuba recognized the serious problems that could develop between Cuba and the Soviet Union if Cuba could not find a way to converge its foreign policy interests with the Soviet Union in Ethiopia. The Cubans reassessed their position regarding the conflicts in Ethiopia. Cuba found it easier in the

⁹⁶Charles B. McLane, *Soviet-African Relations, Volume Three of Soviet-Third World Relations* (London: Central Asian Research Center, 1974), pp. 7-8.

conflict with Somalia than it did in the conflict with the Eritreans to support the Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

C. THE SOVIETS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE OGA DEN DISPUTE

The Horn of Africa is of important strategic value to the Soviets. It provides them with a staging area for reconnaissance, a facility for repairs and storage of tactical surface-to-surface missiles and fuel, and a long range receiving station.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Soviet presence in the Horn of Africa place them in a position to exert control over the important choke point at the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. Finally, the Soviet Union was acutely aware of the strategic importance this area had for the West as well.

Imperial Russian interests in Ethiopia dates back to the 19th century. As a consequence of their common adherence to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the two countries maintained diplomatic ties. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, as the Soviets began being more and more interested in Africa as a Third World ally, they attempted to court Selassie. This was to no avail, except for an increase in diplomatic ties and a \$100 million credit agreement between the two countries. It was the United States that had assisted Selassie in obtaining his position and it was the United States and Western Europe which largely supplied the Ethiopian army. Additionally,

⁹⁷Jiri Valenta, "Soviet-Cuban Intervention," p. 356.

Ethiopia and the United States signed a "special friendship" agreement in 1953 providing the United States access to the communications facility at Kagnaw station in Eritrea for twenty-five years. Unhappy with its lack of success in Ethiopia, the Soviets turned elsewhere in the region in hopes of increasing their position in the Horn.

1. The Soviet Union and Somalia

Since its independence in 1960, Somalia had been seeking to develop ties with a number of Western countries for military aid in order to build up its army to be able to fight and regain the land they felt belonged to them. However, no Western country appeared to be interested in Somalia enough to provide it with the aid it was requesting. Furthermore, none of the countries supported Somalia's irredentism because it would inevitably become a point of contention within the region. "Eager to establish a military foothold in the Horn and already developing ambitions in the Indian Ocean, the Soviets capitalized on the best opening they could get."⁹⁸ Thus, in 1963, the Soviet Union began equipping and supplying the Somalia armed forces.

In 1969, the para-military democracy was ousted by a military coup led by the chief of staff of the army, Siad Barre. This new revolutionary government was more closely

⁹⁸Paul Henze, *Russians and the Horn: Opportunism and the Long View* no. 5 (Marine Del Rey, California: European American Institute for Security Research, 1983.), p. 7.

aligned to Soviet ideology. Consequently, Soviet military aid flowed in to the area more rapidly than previously and additional Soviet advisors were sent to assist.

By the early 1970's, Soviet policy objectives were achieved by relying on the military instrument of policy. They had obtained access to the Berbera and Mogadishu naval port facilities and there was a Soviet presence in Somalia. Soviet support to Somalia was a means of countering U.S. support to Ethiopia. Additionally, the Soviets were the key in developing the Somali army. "...[T]he Soviet Union started having an impact by helping to shape the country's political institutions and security systems....While the coup had not been engineered by the Soviets, the net result had been that the army they had created was in power."⁹⁹

2. The Soviets Switch Allegiance and Support Ethiopia

In 1974, the Soviets received another opportunity to penetrate into Ethiopia. The creation of the Dergue eventually led to the emergence of a radical extremist named Mengitsu Haile Mariam. The Dergue, with Mengitsu as leader, was "...an authoritarian narrowly based military committee with the ambition to catapult Ethiopia from feudalism to socialism in a short span of time."¹⁰⁰ Thus, the Soviets saw this opportunity as a means of directly countering the United

⁹⁹Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence*, p. 79.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

States and the West by supporting the new Marxist-leaning revolutionary government and possibly obtaining a stronger strategic foothold in the Horn.

In December 1976, the Soviets made an arms deal with Mengitsu for \$200 million in arms. In May 1977, the Dergue terminated its arms agreement with the United States. It is presumed that the December negotiations led to the termination of ties between the United States and Ethiopia and this subsequently led to a second military aid agreement between Mengitsu and the Soviets. This second agreement was for an arms aid program for an estimated amount of \$500 million.¹⁰¹

The outbreak of the war between Ethiopia and Somalia, in the summer of 1977 in the Ogaden desert, forced the Soviets to decide which country they favored more. With the termination of U.S.-Ethiopian military ties in May, the Soviets attempted to use the dispute to their advantage by influencing a greater portion of the Horn of Africa.

Now playing both sides of the fence, the Soviet Union began to push harder for negotiated settlements. While assuring Siad Barre that favorable relations between the Soviet Union and Somalia would continue, the Soviets continued supplying Ethiopia with arms. By November 1977, the Somalia

¹⁰¹Carol A. Rohel, *Anti-Revolutionary Guerilla Struggles in Africa: Case Studies of Ethiopia and Angola* (Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, 13 May 1983), p. 21.

government, feeling betrayed, expelled the Soviet Union from its country.

It was at this point that Soviet aid to Ethiopia increased tremendously. During the initial phase of the conflict, victory for Somalia seemed imminent. However, two key factors led to the break-down of the Somalia offensive and forced them to retreat from the Ogaden region. First, the Soviets staged one of the largest air and sealifts of equipment in history. According to an article published in *Air Force Magazine*, beginning in November 1977, "...[T]here were fifty flights in the first six days....It is estimated that the Soviet Union sent almost \$1 billion of military equipment to Ethiopia between November and July 1978."¹⁰² The importance of the airlift was not only in the volume but also in the quickness. "...[T]he Soviet Union was able to get the first shipments to Ethiopia. These provided a boost in the morale of the Ethiopian forces during a critical point in their struggle against the advancing Somali forces."¹⁰³ The second key factor to the break-down of the Somalia offensive was the arrival of 15,000 Cuban troops to fight alongside the Ethiopian forces.

The decision the Soviets made in the mid-1970's to support Ethiopia was a calculated decision and did not come

¹⁰²Bonner Day, "Soviet Airlift to Ethiopia," *Air Force Magazine* (September 1978): p. 33.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

cheaply. The Soviet Union had invested fifteen years of building a loyal client state in Somalia and poured more than \$285 million in military assistance into the country.¹⁰⁴ However, the Soviets saw several advantages in supporting Ethiopia: first, Ethiopia possessed a population which was nine times larger than the population of Somalia; second, Ethiopia's Gross National Product was approximately eight times larger; third, Ethiopia possessed greater natural resources; and fourth, Ethiopia had a greater influence over the Sub-Saharan region. However, supporting Ethiopia placed the Soviet Union in yet another difficult position, that of the Eritrean insurgency.

D. THE SOVIET UNION'S INVOLVEMENT IN ERITREA

In the 1960's, when the Soviets were seeking ties with Ethiopia, they began supplying the Eritrean rebels with military aid as a means of countering Western influence throughout the rest of the region. The Soviets initially saw the Eritreans as a means of countering the pro-Western Haile Selassie. However, once Mengitsu took control of Ethiopia, the Eritreans no longer were of any real importance to the Soviets. Unlike the MPLA in Angola and Siad Barre's regime in Somalia, providing the Eritreans with military aid did not afford the Soviets any sort of leverage in Ethiopia. It

¹⁰⁴Paul Henze, *Russians and the Horn*, p. 20.

seemed Mengitsu possessed the power in the country and the Soviets had an ally in him. Indeed, the Eritreans were now counter-productive to Moscow's new goal of stabilizing a pro-Soviet government in Addis Ababa.

When the Soviets began voicing support for the new revolutionary government of Ethiopia, Soviet support to the Eritrean rebels was surreptitious. However, the Cubans and the Chinese made no qualms in their support for Eritrean independence and continued to support the Eritreans. Early in the conflict, under Mengitsu's rule, the Soviets supported Cuba's argument that diplomacy was the best solution for the situation. Soviet support for diplomacy would, however, quickly change.

In 1977, the Soviets began backing Mengitsu's government against the Eritreans. Initially the Cubans were not able to support the Ethiopians. As the conflict progressed in Somalia, however, with great reluctance¹⁰⁵ the Cubans eventually began supporting the Soviets' decision to back Ethiopia in the Eritrean conflict. In a 1989 RAND study, Paul Henze estimates that \$11 billion has been invested in the Ethiopian armed forces since 1977.¹⁰⁶ Support has been in terms of arms, technical assistance, and training.

¹⁰⁵Like Somalia, the Cubans had been supporting the Eritreans since the early 1960's. In fact they trained them in Cuba.

¹⁰⁶Paul Henze, *Eritrean Options and Ethiopia's Future* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, September 1989), p. 11.

Additionally, Soviet, East European, and Cuban advisors have been sent to oversee and direct the utilization of the resources the Soviets have made available to the Ethiopian armed forces.

Cuba's investment has been costly, with little or no return. Since 1977, the Cubans have continually tried to persuade the Soviet Union push for negotiated settlements, however this has been to no avail. Negotiated settlements would be for naught because there is no way that Mengitsu would concede independence to Eritrea and lose access to the Red Sea. Thus, the battle continues to wage in Ethiopia with the Soviets seemingly losing more and more influence there as compared to the 1970's.

E. CUBA'S ROLE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

1. Somalia

Prior to 1976, Cuban involvement in the Horn of Africa was minimal. For several years Cuba had military instructors in Somalia itself training the army which the Soviets had helped to create. However, unlike the Soviet Union, Cuba possessed no strategic desire to obtain military facilities in the Horn, nor did it aspire to obtain economic advantage from its military and technical assistance in Somalia. Cuba's support to Somalia was not even done in response to Soviet request, rather it was by Somali request and in adherence to Cuba's foreign policy initiatives. Additionally, these two

countries held similar characteristics which were expressed by Castro during a visit in 1977:

...because the two countries' views are close on all current international problems and in defence of the principles of socialism....We are both small and poor countries and we must tackle enormous difficulties; we want to build many schools, hospitals and universities, develop agriculture and build factories....Our natural resources are meager; they are still to be uncovered and exploited, but we have revolutionary principles and we have dignity.¹⁰⁷

As the Soviets began supporting Ethiopia, the Cubans outwardly expressed their concern and intimated that the tensions between the two countries required a diplomatic solution. Castro believed the best solution would be to form a socialist federation. However, Somalia's interpretation of this union and Ethiopia's interpretation were quite different. Mengitsu proposed an alliance that would make up a "common anti-imperialist front," while Barre proposed "...the linking up of the two countries together with Djibouti and independent Eritrea--but only after the Ogaden had joined Somalia..."¹⁰⁸

Castro's view of this federal idea was more in line with that of Mengitsu and furthermore he tried to emphasize that the issue of borders did not justify impediments to federalism "since there could be no fundamental differences between true Marxist-Leninists."¹⁰⁹ The combination of the

¹⁰⁷Legum and Lee, eds., *The Horn of Africa*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

Soviets' continued support to Ethiopia and the fact that Barre felt that Castro did not completely understand the complexity of the Ogaden conflict left him feeling betrayed. Thus, both Cuba and the Soviets were forced out of Somalia.

While Cubans were exiting Somalia, it was not the intent for the Cubans to join forces with the Dergue to fight in the Ogaden. The Cubans considered this an internal conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia and maintained that negotiated settlements were the only solution. However, within six months, the Somalis invaded the Ogaden desert, the Soviets' began supplying Ethiopia with equipment to fight the offensive, and Cuba was drawn in to a war in which it had no desire to be involved.

Unlike the conflict in Angola, "[T]he Ethiopian operation was the result of complete coordination with the Soviet Union and 12,000 Cuban troops."¹¹⁰ Additionally, whereas in Angola the Cubans were in control of the operation, in Ethiopia "...Cuba's Expeditionary Forces that spearheaded the successful offensive against Somalia in February-March 1978 were led by Division General Arnaldo Ochoa, [but] they were under the overall command of Lieutenant General Vasiliy Ivanovich Petrov of the USSR."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Robert A. Pastor, "Cuba and the Soviet Union," p. 300. Other sources use figures of 15,000 and 17,000 troops.

¹¹¹Edward Gonzalez, "Cuba, the Soviet Union, and Africa," *Communism in Africa*, ed., David E. Albright (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980): p. 155.

2. Eritrea

During the same period that Somalia invaded the Ogaden Desert, the Eritrean guerrillas began gaining ground in northern Ethiopia. This was possible because all of Mengitsu's forces were involved in the Ogaden conflict freeing up the Eritrean region. Confronted with a rapidly deteriorating military predicament, Mengitsu turned to solicit the Soviet Union and Cuba for an increase in aid and assistance. The Soviet Union's decision to support Mengitsu caused tensions to surface between Cuba and the Soviet Union once again.

Cuba's position on the Eritrean conflict was more adamant than the previous Somalian conflict. Cuba's position did not converge with that of the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Castro repeatedly refused to directly assist Mengitsu in his ambition to crush the rebellion militarily. Although Cuba's foreign policy clearly states that Cuba will not interfere in matters which are the internal affairs of that country, in reality Castro was using this as a crutch in refusing to provide the assistance Mengitsu wanted. Additionally, Cuba had been supporting the Eritreans for as long as it had been supporting the MPLA. This situation was more of a dilemma for the Cubans than the previous conflict.

Early in 1978, the Soviet Union publicly stated that it would support Mengitsu on the use of military force. On February 26, 1978, Cuban Vice-President Carlos Rafael

Rodriguez announced that "Cuban troops would not be deployed against the rebels on grounds that Cuban troops had helped the Eritreans in their fight for self-determination from Ethiopia [prior to Mengitsu's rule] and that a political solution now had to be pursued by means of talks between the two sides..."¹¹² The Soviet Union found itself confronted with not only Cuban opposition to a military solution but Arab opposition as well. Thus, realizing that without the Cubans' willingness to dispatch combat troops, the Soviets could not successfully pursue a military solution. In June 1978, Moscow began actively encouraging Mengitsu to seek for negotiated settlements with the Eritreans.

Although Cuba was able to maintain its position throughout the rest of the 1970's, events in the 1980's compelled Castro to increase Cuban assistance to Ethiopia. By mid-1986, some 5,000 troops supporting Mengitsu's regime over the Ogaden remained in Ethiopia. Consequently, "while these troops were not being used directly against the [EPLF insurgents], they did free up several thousand Ethiopian troops for duty in the northern provinces [emphasis added]." ¹¹³ Additionally, Cuban political and diplomatic support to the Mengitsu regime forced a more realistic

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Bark, ed., *The Red Orchestra*, p. 92.

assessment by the Eritreans. They now saw Cuba as part of the Mengitsu's regime attempt to crush them.

If Cuba had its choice, it probably would not have become involved in the Ethiopian dilemma. However, as the Soviets continued to supply Ethiopia, Cuban forces increasingly were obliged to man the front lines and to operate the sophisticated Soviet weaponry. Thus, however it evolved, the Cubans transitioned from providing no assistance to the Eritrean conflict, to indirectly aiding the Mengitsu regime, to actually assisting the Mengitsu regime on the front lines.

F. CURRENT RESULTS OF CUBAN AND SOVIET ASSISTANCE

In the case of Ethiopia, although the Ethiopian army remained on the offensive until 1988, both of these conflicts remain unresolved. It is astonishing that since 1977 the Soviet Union has provided the Ethiopians with vast amounts of weaponry, thousands of military advisors, and has facilitated the transfer of still thousands of Cuban combat troops. More importantly, despite possessing one of Africa's largest armed forces, approximately 300,000 men, the Ethiopian regime has yet to defeat the opposition movements outright, or even substantially weaken them. Nor does it have the economic capacity or political legitimacy to undermine the popular

bases of rebel support in areas not firmly controlled by the government.¹¹⁴

Beginning in 1988, the Ethiopian army suffered a number of serious losses at the hands of the rebels. In February 1988, the EPLF defeated three Ethiopian divisions in Eritrea, capturing 20,000 troops and driving the remainder south to Asmara.¹¹⁵ One year later another Ethiopian force of 12,000 troops, including several high ranking officers, was defeated. This victory forced the withdrawal of all Ethiopian troops from Tigre. It was this incident that set the stage for a coup attempt to oust Mengitsu in May 1989.

As the conflicts reach their thirteenth year, the Soviet Union obviously could not meet its cold war objectives of stabilizing the regime or establishing political control. Furthermore, with Mikhail Gorbachev's implementation of *PERESTROIKA* and *GLASNOST*, the Soviets no longer have the same cold war objectives and have now begun pursuing a less supportive role in the region.

Consequently, the combination of military defeats, a worsening economy, and Soviet pressure has forced Mengitsu to make peace overtures. Peace talks were held between the Eritreans, Soviet representatives, and representatives from the central government of Ethiopia in September 1989. They

¹¹⁴Edmond J. Keller, "Revolution in State Power," *Current History*, 87, no. 529 (May 1988): p. 217.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 231.

were held in Atlanta, Georgia and mediated by former President Jimmy Carter. Unlike the Angolan negotiations, there were no Cuban representatives present. Instead, and coinciding with these peace talks, the Soviets began withdrawing Cuban troops and advisors from Ethiopia. This provided initial evidence of a Soviet desire to disengage from Ethiopia.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶Foreign Broadcast Information Service SOV-89-185, "Moves for Peace in the Horn of Africa Analyzed," (26 September 1989): pp. 20-21. See also Foreign Broadcast Information Service SOV-89-180, "Ethiopian Peace Talks Underway in Atlanta," (19 September 1989): pp. 25-28.

VII. CONCLUSION: COMPARISON OF CUBA'S ROLE IN AFRICA

William A. Pascoe believes that "too much academic time has been spent in irrelevant debate over whether Cuba acts on its own, pursuing its own interests in Africa, or whether it acts at the behest of its patrons in the Kremlin."¹¹⁷ I do not believe one can take this matter lightly. Cuba possesses a military which far exceeds its territorial defense limits and this military has proven to be efficient abroad (unlike any other Third World country). It was in the late 1960's and early 1970's that Castro realized that Cuba could probably never become a viable economic partner with the Soviet Union thus, "...for Cuba, political/military consideration have often proved to be more important in determining foreign policy than economic needs."¹¹⁸ Cuba's military plays a significant role in its foreign policy; it has been strengthened as a powerful Third World force, its mission abroad is unique and vital for Cuba, and its involvement in Africa allowed Cuba to emerge as an influential Third World power. Thus, the mere fact that such a Third World country is able to achieve this status makes it important to evaluate how

¹¹⁷Bark, ed., *The Red Orchestra*, p. 94.

¹¹⁸Jasque Levesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution*, trans. Deanna Drendel Lebouef (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1978), p. 192.

it was accomplished and the role it plays in the international arena.

A. IS CUBA A SURROGATE OF THE SOVIET UNION?

It is difficult, after doing research on Cuba's foreign policy, to say in one sweeping statement that Cuba is or is not a surrogate of the Soviet Union. While there are other cases that could have been researched, these two case studies tend to best illustrate that Cuba has sought to act independently with respect to its foreign policy agenda. Gavriel D. Ra'anani discusses surrogates in his study, *The Evolution of the Soviet Use of Surrogates in Military Relations with the Third World, with Particular Emphasis On Cuban Participation in Africa*. Based on his study he defines Cuba as a surrogate of the Soviet Union. He states that it does not matter whether Castro acted on his own initiative but rather a country is a surrogate of the Soviet Union if "...surrogate forces deployed in the Third World are working in cooperation with the Soviet Union, enjoy Soviet logistical support, [if] their efforts are being subsidized by the Russians, and [if] many of the benefits of their campaigns accrue to the USSR."¹¹⁹ Furthermore, he adds that "...the key element is leverage, be it in the form of military

¹¹⁹Gavriel D. Ra'anani, *The Evolution of the Soviet Use of Surrogates in Military Relations with the Third World, with Particular Emphasis On Cuban Participation in Africa* (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, December 1979), p. 75.

occupation or reliance on military or economic aid (or any combination thereof), which the Soviet Union has over the states acting in its stead."¹²⁰ Consequently, by this definition, he lumps together Cuba, North Korea, North Vietnam, and non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces all as Soviet surrogates.

He treats the fact that much of Cuba's initiative in Africa came directly from Castro as insignificant when this is probably the one thing that makes Cuba stand out from all of the other countries aligned to the Soviet Union. This initiative went on to be a powerful force for Cuba in Latin America. Without experiencing the successes in implementing its own foreign policy in Africa, the Soviet Union probably would not have been as willing to support Cuba in its endeavors in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Castro's initiative is the one thing that allows one to ask the question of surrogacy or autonomy at all.

Jiri Valenta argues that as a result of Cuba's independent decisions in Africa "Cuba gained the status of a **privileged ally** and was able to insist on adjustments in Soviet/Cuban economic and political relations [emphasis added]."¹²¹ He places great value on Cuba's initiative to send combat troops into Africa as does David Ronfeldt who describes Cuba as a

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Jiri Valenta, "The Soviet-Cuban Alliance," p. 45.

superclient. Ronfeldt defines superclient as, "...far from being a weak dependent [it] manages to exploit mutual dependence and its own resources in order to magnify its international roles, gain reverse leverage with the superpower, and at times influence the latter's international roles....becoming a superclient, that is, a regional power closely tied to one superpower, depends largely on having strong leadership in a centralized regime (an internal determinant) that succeeds in exploiting the geopolitical interests of the patron superpower (an external determinant).¹²² Both of these descriptions are better suited to describe Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union with reference to Africa; better than either Ra'anan's definition or the definition provided in the introduction.

B. WAS CUBA A SURROGATE OF THE SOVIET UNION OR AUTONOMOUS IN AFRICA?

1. Angola

In the case of Angola, did Cuba act as a surrogate for the Soviet Union or did Cuba act autonomously? While there have been many occasions where the Cubans, without a doubt, acted as a surrogate to the Soviet Union (the Afghanistan

¹²²David Ronfeldt, *Superclients and Superpowers, Cuba:Soviet Union/Iran:United States* (Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, April 1978), p. 1.

situation stands out the most)¹²³ it does not appear to be so in the case of Angola. While the foreign policy objectives were different, there was a real convergence of interests between the Soviet Union and Cuba which made it easy for the two countries to cooperate with one another.

Two underlying factors continue to place doubt regarding Cuba's autonomy in this situation. First, Soviet military coordination was evident after the first of the year (January 1976). Second, without Soviet transport support, the Cubans would not have been able to deploy as quickly and efficiently to Angola. However, had the Soviets not provided transportation the results would have probably eventually been the same but taken longer to accomplish. Herbert Mathews contends that Cuba did act independently and that the American administration failed to recognize this. He also emphasizes that the Cubans would not have terminated its support of the MPLA, even at the Soviets request.¹²⁴

As stated in the introduction, it usually benefits a Third World nation, aligned with a superpower, to support the superpower's foreign policy objectives. However, this does not mean that their objectives always have to be identical.

¹²³Even though Afghanistan was a member of the NAM, Cuba backed the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. What made this situation even more striking was that at the time of the invasion, Castro was the leader of the NAM.

¹²⁴Herbert Mathews, "Angola is Another Move in the Cuban Revolution," *The New York Times*, 4 March 1976, p. 31.

Jorge Dominguez states "Cuba has discretion within Soviet hegemony in the making of its foreign policy."¹²⁵ Consequently, as Valenta states, the success of any Soviet enterprise in Angola was dependent on "...the willingness of Fidel Castro and his colleagues to provide ground forces."¹²⁶

As a result of the Cubans' decision to deploy regular combat troops to Angola and successfully assist the MPLA to win and maintain the government, Cuba attained a **degree** of autonomy that most Third World nations are unable to match. They accomplished this in spite of the economic dependence they had on the Soviet Union.

Cuba's decision to commit combat troops to the Angolan situation was an independent decision. While the Soviets were probably aware of this decision there is no evidence that any direct or indirect Soviet pressure influenced Cuba's verdict. In a February 5, 1976 the *New York Times* cites a Soviet Union official as saying, "We did not twist their arms. The Cubans wanted to go....they are more radical than we are."¹²⁷ Thus, in the case of Angola, Cuba's foreign policy objectives in Angola were considered successful. It seems reasonable to

¹²⁵Jorge Dominguez, "Cuban Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, 57, no. 1 (Fall 1978): pp. 83-108.

¹²⁶Jiri Valenta, "The Soviet-Cuban Alliance," p. 45.

¹²⁷David Binder, "Kissinger Believes Cuba Exports Revolution," p. 15C.

conclude that Cuba acted autonomously, carrying through with its own foreign policy initiatives.

2. Ethiopia

Determining whether or not Cuba was a surrogate or autonomous in Ethiopia is more difficult. There was no real convergence of foreign policy objectives or interest between the Soviet Union and Cuba. Furthermore, the definition of surrogacy in this thesis emphasizes the concept of influence and control over another country's foreign policy. As presented in the case studies, the Soviet Union possessed much more influence over Cuba's foreign policy in Ethiopia than in Angola. It can be concluded that in Angola the Soviet Union assisted Cuba's foreign policy initiatives whereas in Ethiopia they virtually determined Cuba's foreign policy.

Additionally, the definition refers to a surrogate as being a substitute. One of the problems the Soviet Union encountered, both in Angola and in Ethiopia, was its failure to understand the strength of African nationalism. Cuba, on the other hand, fought for its independence for nationalistic ideals similar to those of the African nations. The Soviets recognized this after Cuba's decision to assist the MPLA, and realized the necessity of having Cuban combat troops in Ethiopia. Angola also proved that the U. S. reaction was less severe with Cuban troops than it would have been with the equivalent amount of Soviet combat troops. Consequently, the

Soviets rallied for Cuban support in Ethiopia because the Soviets knew Cuba's support would enhance the opportunity to gain a political and strategic foothold in the Horn.

The Soviets recognized the importance of Cuba's support. This provided Cuba the leverage of initially acting independently but also in cooperation with the Soviets. As described in the Ethiopian case study, the lack of consolidation of the Mengitsu regime, the many defeats at the hands of the rebels, and the Soviet promise to provide continuous aid eventually led Cuba to participate more fully in the conflicts until it found itself completely involved.

Thus, in the case of Ethiopia, Cuba's activity was heavily Soviet-directed. Politicians are adamant on Cuba's role as a Soviet surrogate whereas academics argue that Cuba, specifically in Angola, acted autonomously and that most politicians were so involved with U.S. troubles they failed to recognize Cuba's independent actions. In Ethiopia, Cuba was perceived to possess less autonomy as a result of Cuba's acquiescence in collaborating closely with the Soviet Union to preserve the Dergue, deserting both the Somalians and the Eritreans. However, what seems to prevail as the most sensible reason of Cuba's transition to a more dependent surrogate role in Ethiopia was the failure to resolve issues diplomatically which resulted in the unsuccessful rapprochement in the region. This, consequently, led Cuba to reassess the situation and support the Soviet Union and

Mengitsu's regime in a military solution to an internal conflict.

VIII. PROSPECTS FOR CUBA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Based on the conclusions of the previous section, what are the prospects for Cuba's foreign policy? Since independence, one of Cuba's primary foreign policy objectives has been to obtain international recognition. Its most successful attempt at this objective, prior to the Cuban revolution, was during World War II. Since World War II Cuba has sought to accomplish this goal by embracing the primary foreign policy objective of the Cuban revolution: supporting national liberation movements in other Third World nations (i.e. Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, El Salvador). However, Cuba's foreign policy gains throughout the 1970's and 1980's are facing inevitable change in the 1990's. The wave of democracy washing throughout Eastern Europe and *GLASNOST* and *PERESTROIKA* in the Soviet Union has placed Fidel Castro's thirty-one year old revolution in its worst position since 1959.

A. IMMEDIATE CONCERNS FACING CASTRO

The immediate concerns confronting Castro in preserving the revolution include: possible break in Cuban-Soviet relations, severe economic/trade problems, international isolationism, internal dissident problems, external dissident

problems, the emergence of the succession crisis, and the loss of important allies within Latin America.

1. Future Cuban-Soviet Relations

Soviet-Cuban relations have undergone a number of crises; however, the current crisis seems to be the most critical. While the Soviets maintain that relations between the two countries will continue, the Soviets face such grave domestic problems that providing Cuba with the same support of the past is impossible. Initially, "the Soviet Union ha[d] made it clear that it ha[d] no plans to end or greatly disrupt its heavily-subsidized trade [and alliance] with Cuba [amounting to \$5-\$7 billion dollars per year and \$13 million dollars per day],"¹²⁸ however, while the Soviets may have believed this in the beginning of the year, it has been evident that they are in worse shape than even the United States imagined. Consequently, beginning in January 1991, the Soviet Union will implement a new posture cutting approximately \$150 million in subsidies.¹²⁹

¹²⁸Howard W. French, "Write Off Castro? The Odds Change," *The New York Times*, 13 May 1990, p. 2E; Larry Rohter, "Castro Says He'll Resist Changes Like Those Sweeping Soviet Bloc," *The New York Times*, 9 December 1989, p. 9A; and Joseph B. Treaster, "Other Walls May Fall, But In Fortress Cuba Castro Stands Firm," *The New York Times*, 28 January 1990, p. 2E.

¹²⁹Lee Hockstader, "Cigars Are About the Only Things That Are Fat in Cuba These Days," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 13-19 August 1990, p. 18

Castro has managed to survive past problems when everyone else thought it to be impossible. Currently, he has proposed a new plan to renovate Cuba's political system from the grassroots organization all the way to the party Central Committee. Additionally, the Cuban Communist Party has proposed to streamline the national and provincial posts by cutting back fifty percent and reorganizing the Central Committee Secretariat.¹³⁰ According to the article published in *Granma*, "the reforms are aimed to reduce excessive paperwork and bureaucracy...making them more flexible and efficient and freeing individuals from time consuming party business so they could use their experience and skills in other tasks [specifically the internal problems facing Cuba]." ¹³¹

Although Castro's immediate concern is with the country's economic survival, he will continue to use the leverage he has established with the Soviet Union in order to maintain Cuba's ideology of socialism.

However, Castro has to be wary of the American threat to his alliance with the Soviet Union. Currently, the Bush administration has begun to place pressure on the Soviet Union, linking Soviet relations with Cuba to a healthy Soviet-American relationship. Secretary of State James Baker

¹³⁰"Cuba Aims to Slice Off Party's Fat," *The Miami Herald*, 6 October 1990, pp. 1A, 6A.

¹³¹*Ibid.*

emphasized that "Soviet behavior toward Cuba and Central America remains the biggest obstacle to a full, across the board improvement in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union."¹³² During 1989, the United States policy of linking U.S.-Soviet relations with Soviet-Cuban relations had very little effect on the Soviet's policy towards Cuba. "Instead a new one-year Soviet-Cuban trade agreement, signed in April 1990, reportedly increase[d] trade and technical assistance by 8.7 percent over 1989. Military aid decreased from 1988 to 1989, but only to \$1.2 billion from \$1.5 billion. [Additionally,] Moscow delivered six new MiG-29s to Havana in 1989 to replace Cuba's aging MiG-23s."¹³³ However, this aid is a result of a 1986-1990 Soviet Five-Year Plan. Although there has not been a significant decrease in Soviet aid thus far, the reduction of \$150 million in subsidies in 1991 illustrates that change is apparent in the coming years. For successful economic isolation of Cuba the United States will have to continue placing these sort of pressures on the Soviet Union.

¹³²Jacqueline Tillman, "Cuba: The Next Domino to Fall?," *The Washington Post*, 31 December 1989, p. 2C. James Baker made this statement in November to the Organization of American States (OAS). Note that the word **biggest** is the word chosen by Baker, not one of the biggest. This places an even greater emphasis on the concern the U.S. has with Soviet involvement with Cuba and the rest of Central America.

¹³³Susan Kaufman Purcell, "Cuba's Cloudy Future," *Foreign Affairs*, 69, no. 3 (Summer 1990): p. 117.

As a result of the desire to continue improving relations with the United States, Mikhail Gorbachev personally stated that Cuban assistance should cease both to Nicaragua and El Salvador and that Soviet support for these two insurgent groups would cease.

2. Economic/Trade Problems and Isolationism

Castro is fully aware that the current changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union will probably result in a negative economic impact on the Cuba. In a speech made to factory workers in November 1989 he stated, "We do not know what consequences these phenomena in many socialist countries will have....if the socialist states do not resolve their problems we could have very serious [economic] difficulties...in the months ahead."¹³⁴ Since that speech, Cuba has shifted to more of a wartime economy. There has been a freeze on social programs and construction of schools, hospitals, day-care centers, and homes has come to almost a complete halt. Everyday foodstuffs such as fruits, vegetables, and bread have also become very difficult to obtain.

Additionally, Castro faces the growing threat of economic isolationism. Over the past year the economy has slowed from a 2.2 percent rate of growth to barely a 1 percent

¹³⁴Reuter, "Castro Laments Very Sad Things in Bloc," *The Washington Post*, 9 November 1989, p. 65A.

rate of growth, and prospects for 1991 are worse still.¹³⁵ Whereas in the past Cuba relied heavily on barter trade and preferential agreements with the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc, new terms of trade are emerging. Both the Soviet Union and the Eastern European nations are relying more and more on market prices and hard currency for trade, something Cuba seriously lacks.

In order to curb the impact that Cuba has already begun to experience with this problem, Castro has been compelled to explore alternative trading partners. Already Cuba has turned to Latin America, China, and East Germany for increased economic and trade assistance. Recently, Cuba has found a market for its medical exports in countries like Brazil and Mexico. The problem with Latin America as a beneficial trading partner is that Latin American countries lack credit and will end up limiting Cuba's ability to expand its exports. Instead China is the most likely to give Cuba the potential for successful export expansion. In December 1989, China and Cuba signed a new agreement, increasing their previous economic assistance by eleven per cent, totaling \$500 million.¹³⁶

¹³⁵Lee Hockstader, "Cigars Are About the Only Things," p. 18.

¹³⁶Jose Luis Llovio Menendez, "Will Freedom Gain From Cuba's Stormy Foreign Relations?," *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 January 1990, p. 7A.

3. Internal Dissident Problems

Castro has begun to crack down heavily on opposition groups and individual dissidents. The first incident was the banning of two Soviet publications, *Moscow News* and *Sputnik*. In trying to explain to the Cuban public why they had been banned, an editorial published in the Cuban newspaper, *Granma*, accused the two publications of "justifying bourgeois democracy as the highest form of popular participation...[and showing a] fascination with the American way of life."¹³⁷ The second incident was the arrest of three Cuban human rights monitors. Each of them was the leader of an unofficial group seeking leeway for peaceful dissent.¹³⁸ These two events have led to increased vocal dissatisfaction among Cubans, primarily the student population.

4. External Dissident Problems

It appears that the Cuban exiles (mostly located in Miami) may also become a problem for Cuba internally. The concern for Castro is that these two groups will link up to form a more cohesive opposition. Cuba's Vice President, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, has opened up a dialogue with these exiles. According to Rodriguez, the exiles proposed that

¹³⁷"The God that Failed Fidel," *The New York Times*, 7 September 1989, p. 26A.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

Fidel Castro step aside and allow a peaceful transition to democracy to take place in Cuba. As a representative stated:

We all agreed that the era of Castro's Communism has reached its end, and that we must look for a Czechoslovakian solution before intransigence imposes a Romanian solution on us.¹³⁹

If history is any indication of the future, Castro will not allow these internal and external problems to continue and will increase his repression in order to maintain some control over both external and internal dissidents.

5. The Succession Crisis

Fidel's brother, Raul, has always been considered to be Castro's natural successor, but, with the current events in the Soviet Union this seems doubtful. Castro tried to place an immediate end to this problem in July 1989 with the trumped up charges against General Arnaldo Ochoa and three other senior military officers. Castro had viewed Ochoa as a possible threat to his brother and publicly placed these four men on trial, convicted them and executed them.

However, Castro continues to face problems of succession and is not completely confident of the Soviet Union's ability to secure Raul's position. With the advent of all the current changes taking place, Pamela Falk, a Columbia

¹³⁹"Cuban Government, Exiles Talk About Replacing Castro," *The Orlando Sentinel*, 27 October 1990, p. 8A.

University professor, believes "the stage is set for almost total change when Castro leaves."¹⁴⁰

6. The Loss of Important Allies Within Latin America

Two of Castro's oldest Latin American allies who provided support to Castro's revolutionary cause have disappeared. The U. S. invasion in December 1989 resulted in the loss of a very valuable ally, Manuel Noriega. Noriega and Castro had developed a partnership of convenience. Panama served as a base for Cuban front companies set up to "skirt the U.S. trade embargo,"¹⁴¹ and provide drug laundering facilities. This partnership provided an access for Panamanian drug trafficking and the ability for Cuba to obtain hard currency which it so desperately needs. The new Panamanian government is not likely to continue this partnership.

Additionally, the defeat of Daniel Ortega and the Sandinista revolution places Castro's foreign policy objectives of promoting revolution in a precarious position. However, Castro has successfully explained this Sandinista fall from power both internally, to the Cuban population and externally to other leftist movements: "The Nicaraguan

¹⁴⁰Mimi Whitefield, "Signs Emerge of Succession Crisis in Castro's Cuba, Experts Report," *The Miami Herald*, 24 February 1990, p. 24A.

¹⁴¹Mimi Whitefield, "Recent Setbacks Leave Castro the Odd Man Out," *The Miami Herald*, 28 February 1990, p. 9A.

revolution has passed through a tough test and is entering a new stage of struggle....There is no doubt that it is a great setback but it doesn't mean political bankruptcy or demise for the Sandinista revolution."¹⁴²

B. CUBA AND THE FUTURE

Will Cuba be able to meet its foreign policy goals in the 1990's and what will be the implications for future bilateral Soviet-Cuban relations as a result of current global changes? While Castro's concerns with isolation, economic and trade difficulties, internal and external dissident problems, loss of important Latin American allies, and succession problems are his top priorities, he has still been able to continue some semblance of an activist foreign policy. A sign of Cuba's continued activist foreign policy is continuing Cuban military aid to El Salvadoran rebels. In the recent rebel offensive Castro claimed that the offensive was necessary in order to convince the El Salvadoran government to "negotiate seriously,"¹⁴³ and he publicly praised the rebels' ability to continue their fight. Consequently, Castro has been able to maintain a degree of control over his established foreign policy objectives while attempting to solve the immediate concerns facing his country.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

¹⁴³Gillian Gunn, "Time to Test Cuba," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 29 December 1989, p. 18.

1. Possible Scenarios for Cuba's Future

The probability of Cuba's foreign policy of the past carrying over into the 1990's is very low and relies heavily on whether or not Castro is able to maintain his leadership position in Cuba. Since the revolution, Castro relied on ongoing Soviet assistance, which was critical to papering over Cuban domestic economic failures, and thus to maintaining the legitimacy of his rule. However, with Soviet "new thinking" in foreign policy and the collapse of the Soviet economy, the days are numbered for large-scale Soviet subsidies of Havana. Castro must tackle pressing economic issues at home in order to build a domestic base for resuming an activist foreign policy.

Four scenarios that could emerge in Cuba are: 1) Castro begins making economic reforms similar to those of the Soviet Union and opens up talks with the United States; 2) Castro steps down from the presidency of his own free will, allowing Cuba to seek a peaceful transition to democracy; 3) Castro stands firm with his socialist style government and a coup occurs either forcing him out of power or killing him; and 4) Castro stands firm with his socialist style government and no coup deposes him.

2. Probable Outcome of Proposed Scenarios

Seven U.S. Presidents have attempted to topple or influence Castro's Cuban revolution. President Dwight

Eisenhower began with CIA assassination attempts, followed by John Kennedy's Bay of Pigs invasion. Lyndon Johnson tried without success to force Cuba out of the inter-American system. Next, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford covertly attempted to oust Castro. Jimmy Carter waged his human rights campaign against Cuba and was subsequently taught a lesson with the Mariel boat lift incident. Finally, Ronald Reagan's administration made veiled threats that were never carried out. Sal Landau has suggested that "...Bush's staff ought to review the record. Castro excels under adverse conditions."¹⁴⁴

Of the four scenarios, the most likely scenario is that Castro will stand firm with his socialist style government and subsequently be toppled in a military coup. Castro will probably never voluntarily step down from his position and he has made it quite clear that he does not have any intention of joining the Soviet Union and his former allies in Eastern Europe in embracing multiparty politics or a free-market economy. A big difference that exists between what happened in Eastern Europe and Cuba is that "socialism was not imposed from the outside in Cuba. Its arrival with Mr Castro's home-grown revolution was not an act of submission to

¹⁴⁴Saul Landau, "Cuba: Socialism on one Island," *The Progressive*, 54, no. 6 (June 1990): p. 20.

a powerful neighbor, but rather a form of defiance of the United States."¹⁴⁵

However, given the growing strains within Cuba, without Castro's willingness to democratize Cuba and enact necessary economic reforms, Castro may face a violent counter revolution led by a fierce military uprising, somewhat similar to Romania. The U.S. should recognize that Cuban exiles may join with (if not incite) dissident military officers in Cuba. However, the United States should also recognize that even if there is a successful coup, a Cuba without Castro is unlikely to be like "Batista Cuba."

While this is the most likely of the four scenarios, Castro should not be underestimated. Many analysts believed that he would be gone by December 1989, yet he continues to hold on. Nevertheless several significant events are to occur in January 1991. In relation to Cuba, the Soviets will sell oil to at world market prices, demand hard currency in trade, and require payment of debts. In relation to the Third World, the Soviets will reduce assistance by 75 percent. Thus, if Castro can manage to survive the first six to eight months of 1991, his chances of maintaining control of the country will be increased.

¹⁴⁵Joseph B. Treaster, "Other Walls May Fall, " p. 4A.

If Castro is able to somehow successfully deal with the current economic crisis, then the world may witness Cuba gradually achieving its ultimate objective, a foreign policy which is self-reliant, autonomous, and independent. Such a scenario, however, is unlikely. Instead, as one observer has pointed out, "The whole sense is that for the first time, they're not on the crest of the wave; they're about to be swamped by it."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶Lee Hockstader, "Cigars Are About the Only Things," p. 18.

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