

France and the Soviet Union: Intervention in Africa Post-Colonialism

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**Introduction:**

Intervention is a core and long-standing topic in the study of international relations. Because intervention is often defined “in such diverse ways that it seems virtually indistinguishable from concepts like aggression, imperialism, or other non-co-operative features of international relations,”<sup>1</sup> it is a subject that constantly requires reassessment as, over time, different and new forms of intervention, and the justifications surrounding it, arise on the surface. Where intervention is present, so too are the opportunities and motives which drive it. Africa, a vast and rich continent embedded with culture and history has long been of interest to foreign powers because of the resources and advantages it houses.

During the time of colonialism, much of the African continent experienced oppression, manipulation, and complete domination aimed at dictating the livelihood and transforming the identity of its people for the benefit of their oppressors. As many African nations began to obtain independence from their colonizers in the late 1950s, the balance of power began to shift, and these new, independent African nations found themselves in need of assistance to establish their autonomy. As a result, many foreign powers, most notably France and the Soviet Union, found themselves racing to take advantage of the opportunity to assist (under the guise of personal gain) these African nations in building up their states. Both France and the Soviet Union viewed the situation in Africa as a way of establishing and spreading influence while simultaneously advancing their own national interests. Africa provided France and the Soviet Union significant advantages in the most profitable sectors on the continent; a number of African nations provided

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<sup>1</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 4.

these foreign powers an opportunity to increase their status as world leaders as well as to significantly strengthen their importance in the fields of the global economy and global politics.<sup>2</sup>

The motives of intervention are formed by a wide variety of interests. Both France and the Soviet Union aggressively pursued ambitious initiatives on the African continent in the post-colonial era, but the ideological motivations and origins of these ambitions contrasted one another. While both nations clearly benefited economically and politically from these initiatives, the rhetoric and presentation of each approach differed drastically between France and the Soviet Union due to one ideology lacking a revolutionary overtone and the other being completely defined by one. By analyzing the motivating reasons, policies, benefits, and limits of France's and the Soviet Union's interventions in Africa, this work seeks to provide a detailed comparison of two great nation's roles in the history of defining Africa in the post-colonialist world.

This work begins with an analysis of French involvement on the African continent exclusively during the years 1960 through 1990, and then is followed by an analysis of the same structure, focusing on Soviet involvement. The topics explored in each analysis, respectively, include: the reason each country gave for their involvement, the policies each country implemented (and their effectiveness), the advantages Africa brought each country, and finally, the extent to which each country was able to exert their influence. This work concludes with a detailed comparison of each of the characteristics of France's and the Soviet Union's involvement in Africa post-colonialism, drawing a unique conclusion in which neither country could foresee.

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<sup>2</sup> Бондаренко, Александр. "В Борьбе За Африку." [odnako.org](http://www.odnako.org). Однако. Accessed March 16, 2020. <http://www.odnako.org/magazine/material/v-borbe-za-afriku/>.

## *An Analysis of France's Intervention in Africa Post-Colonialism*

### Reasons for Intervention

France had been involved in Africa for over 350 years before granting her colonies independence in the 1950s. And, because of her long, deep-seated history of involvement with Africa, France was unwilling to simply abandon that history and was determined, rather, to perpetuate dependency by exercising her past as a colonial power to wield residual influence on the continent. France recognized all that Africa had to offer and knew that she had much to gain from being actively involved on the continent. Her goals, therefore, were to become as deeply involved as possible so that she could reap the benefits.

A notable reason given by the French government for its actions in Africa was “the need for rich countries of the world to extend a helping hand to the less fortunate ones... [creating the idea of] Third-World Solidarity.”<sup>3</sup> France was also dedicated to the upkeep and development of French language and culture throughout Africa; “education and culture, indeed, constitute a priority area of co-cooperation and technical assistance, thereby helping to reinforce the cultural, technical, and political influence of the former colonial power through the diffusion of her language, thought processes, and behavioral patterns.”<sup>4</sup> The former colonial power deployed a variety of people in diverse domains (teachers, technicians, volunteers, etc.) to spread French culture and values which “establish[ed] a daily presence for France in Africa, while the diffusion of the French language on a continental scale g[ave] particular meaning to an international

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<sup>3</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 36.

<sup>4</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 203.

culture associated with 'la Francophonie.'"<sup>5</sup> In this sharing of her culture, the role played by France in Africa was seen "in Paris as conferring upon France a special status in world affairs,"<sup>6</sup> contributing to her prestige and grandeur. In post-colonial Africa, France found an exclusive sphere of influence in which she based her claims of power and her claims of Third World leadership.

The main purpose of France's policy in Africa since the 1960s was to "secure power and influence not only in Africa but also through Africa on the wider international stage."<sup>7</sup> Africa provided France the ability to spread influence without being largely challenged by the superpowers (the Soviet Union and the United States). And, because of her influential and exclusive spheres of relations in Francophone Africa, France gained more international recognition of being a major world power. France's efforts to maintain influence in Africa "paid off in two superficially contradictory ways. First, they enabled France to present itself in old-fashioned geopolitical terms, as a power to be reckoned with. Second, they enabled France in a much more contemporary idiom, to pose as a champion of Third World countries."<sup>8</sup> France viewed Africa with great importance as many of her former colonies provided France the opportunity to appear powerful during difficult times (such as in World War II); in many ways, "Africa assured the very survival of France."<sup>9</sup> And, in turn, France sought to be "Africa's

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<sup>5</sup> Bourmaud, Daniel. "France in Africa: African Politics and French Foreign Policy." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 23, no. 2 (1995), 61.

<sup>6</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Utley, Rachel. "'Not to Do Less but to Do Better ...': French Military Policy in Africa." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 78, no. 1 (2002), 134.

<sup>8</sup> Staniland, Martin. "Francophone Africa: The Enduring French Connection." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 489 (1987), 57.

<sup>9</sup> Bourmaud, Daniel. "France in Africa: African Politics and French Foreign Policy." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 23, no. 2 (1995), 60.

mouthpiece in the developed world”<sup>10</sup> advocating for their interests and concerns, which would otherwise have been neglected by the rest of the global powers.

Much of the African continent brought many political advantages for France. Before independence, France had close ties with the rulers of their colonies; those leaders were well known by many French politicians as many of them participated in French politics. After gaining independence, nearly all of the former colonies continued to be led by these same African leaders<sup>11</sup> and, because of this, France was able to maintain relationships that were politically beneficial as they provided her support in the international community. One way that these African nations provided assistance to France was by supporting French politics at international forums; they would advocate on behalf of France, voting with her, and promoting other states to join in supporting her position.<sup>12</sup> A similar phenomenon, but much more difficult to document, was the fact that “the leaders of most countries of the *pré carré* [foreign policy] of Francophone Africa [made] important secret contributions to the coffers of the major French political parties at presidential elections.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, French firms and French expatriates in Africa exerted influence on the French government, policy, and the outcome of political parties and presidential elections. By keeping close ties with its former colonized countries, a number of French firms benefitted directly due to a favorable trade balance.<sup>14</sup> France wanted to demonstrate, in regard to her intervention in Africa, not that she was acting in her own national interest, but that she was acting in the best interest of her allies. France argued that her involvement was important for the security of France and Europe by preventing hostile rulers

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<sup>10</sup> Utley, Rachel. "Not to Do Less but to Do Better ...": French Military Policy in Africa." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 78, no. 1 (2002), 130.

<sup>11</sup> "France's New Role in Africa." *The World Today* 20, no. 9 (1964), 385.

<sup>12</sup> Pepy, M. Daniel. "France's Relations with Africa." *African Affairs* 69, no. 275 (1970), 155.

<sup>13</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 38.

<sup>14</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 36-37.

from dominating the country; such examples can be seen in France's intervention in Zaire in 1977 and 1978. France intervened in Zaire as a response to Cuban involvement in the Horn of Africa and Angola and also because she was approached by the President of Zaire asking for assistance to protect against foreign invaders.<sup>15</sup>

One of the most notable justifications that France gave for her involvement in Africa was to protect her former colonies. Africa had long been painted as "a perpetual minor, inherently incapable and dependent, permanently in need of a master."<sup>16</sup> Racism pervaded French and African relations since the beginning of their involvement; though relations had developed over time, latent prejudices still infused the minds of the French to think that the "Africans [were] incapable of ruling themselves;"<sup>17</sup> these themes were then perpetuated by the media to suggest the need for a dependency on France.<sup>18</sup> In a more political aspect, French military power in Africa was justified by stressing the need for France to aid in the development toward political maturity of the newly independent nation states. For French political leaders, the development of Africa was to be carefully cultivated. France did this by fashioning her sphere of influence on the African continent to demonstrate "the will to extricate herself from the East-West conflict and to capitalize on the mistrust of the two superpowers."<sup>19</sup> France worked to protect her sphere of influence from these superpowers (the USA and the Soviet Union) and committed herself to defending against any disruption from the them, maintaining that Africa needed the opportunity

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<sup>15</sup> Hollick, Julian Crandall. "French Intervention in Africa in 1978." *The World Today* 35, no. 2 (1979), 77.

<sup>16</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 192-193.

<sup>17</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 193.

<sup>18</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 193.

<sup>19</sup> Amuwo, Kunle. "FRANCE AND AFRICA IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA." *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi E Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per L'Africa E L'Oriente* 52, no. 2 (1997), 277.

to internally quell conflict without the interference from these superpowers.<sup>20</sup> For France, her role on the continent was justifiable in that she was working to maintain the relations with her former colonies. And, Africa for France was one of the only continents where she had a feasible capability of making a difference due to her extensive history and ties with many of the nations. However, France's interventions, no matter how seemingly justified, have always been to progress French interests with the minimum amount of effort.

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### **French Policies**

France's influence over its former colonies manifested itself through the policies that France established with African states. In order to protect her interests, "France opted to institutionalize its relationship with its former colonies by signing comprehensive bilateral economic, political, military and cultural accords with them."<sup>21</sup> France's foreign policies in Africa were established to solidify her position on the continent. France was motivated by national interest, instilling policies that would benefit her politically and economically, while carrying out strategic and cultural goals and, "although disguised under the label of 'co-operation,' France's African policy ... blatantly disregards African concerns and interests."<sup>22</sup> Four years before African nations gained independence, France implemented the Enabling Act of 1956 where France worked to break up the larger former colonial territories into smaller states,

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<sup>20</sup> Hollick, Julian Crandall. "French Intervention in Africa in 1978." *The World Today* 35, no. 2 (1979), 73.

<sup>21</sup> Harshe, Rajen. "FRENCH NEO-COLONIALISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA." *India Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1980), 159.

<sup>22</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 193.



to slow the process of independence. These smaller states were unable to advance independently, therefore stressing a need of dependency on France. In this way, French African policy was categorized by centralization, secrecy, and specialization.<sup>23</sup>

After the establishment of the Fifth Republic in France in 1958, French policy toward Africa shifted as it was largely influenced by Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle's desire for France was that it was recognized for its high stature. He wrote: "France is not really herself unless she is in first rank; that only vast enterprises are capable of counterbalancing the ferments of disintegration in her people. In short ... France cannot be France without grandeur."<sup>24</sup> De Gaulle worked to therefore build up France (in one way) by continuing to strengthen France's hold and influence over her former colonies in sub-Saharan and North Africa. Much of De Gaulle's work carried on into the proceeding years for "after De Gaulle's exit in 1968, his two successors, namely Georges Pompidou and Giscard D'Estaing, [did] not [bring] any structural change in French policy towards African countries."<sup>25</sup> Their approach was to further De Gaulle's policy by focusing on French interests and policy that would benefit France significantly. Giscard's African policy consisted of "upholding and extending the Francophone axis to partners likely to support and prolong France's foreign policy initiatives. Countries such as Gabon, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Togo, Zaire, and Morocco came to enjoy much prominence, and their leaders more so."<sup>26</sup> France exchanged security services for access to these countries' major commodities. In the case

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<sup>23</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 201.

<sup>24</sup> Harshe, Rajen. "FRENCH NEO-COLONIALISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA." *India Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1980), 166.

<sup>25</sup> Harshe, Rajen. "FRENCH NEO-COLONIALISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA." *India Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1980), 166.

<sup>26</sup> Amuwo, Kunle. "FRANCE AND AFRICA IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA." *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi E Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per L'Africa E L'Oriente* 52, no. 2 (1997), 278.

of Gabon, a country along the Atlantic coast of Central Africa, when French interests were being threatened, France intervened:

French military intervention of February 1964 was decisive in destroying the possibility of a liberal or democratic political system. It made unlikely for the foreseeable future the probability of a regime embodying meaningful representation and protecting civil liberties. It fortified and helped to entrench an authoritarian regime directed by an elite that would not damage French interests.<sup>27</sup>

France's failure to put forth a stable, legalistic basis for its intervention in Gabon set a precedent for her relations with other African nations in the future, for in Gabon, the "carefully elaborated *Quai d'Orsay* doctrine that French policy distinguished between risings with genuine popular support, in which intervention was inadmissible, and purely military or even criminal troubles, in which 'police'-type action was justified, went completely overboard."<sup>28</sup> France's military intervention in Zaire was interesting in that it was the first French military intervention to take place outside of a former colony. After African states were granted their independence, France took an interest in Zaire, a former Belgian colony, because it was the largest Francophone country in the world, outside of France. French military intervention in Zaire occurred because Zaire "had asked [France] for help because its security was menaced 'by elements coming from the outside.'"<sup>29</sup> In the first intervention in 1977, France wanted to display support assisting her African allies to promote solidarity between Europe and Africa; in the second intervention in 1978, France intervened to defend French nationals whose lives were in danger.<sup>30</sup> With each

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<sup>27</sup> Gardinier, David E. "FRANCE IN GABON SINCE 1960." *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* 6/7 (1982), 73.

<sup>28</sup> "France's New Role in Africa." *The World Today* 20, no. 9 (1964), 383.

<sup>29</sup> Hull, Galen. "The French Connection in Africa: Zaire and South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 5, no. 2 (1979), 226.

<sup>30</sup> Hull, Galen. "The French Connection in Africa: Zaire and South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 5, no. 2 (1979), 227.

intervention, France's participation increased; President Giscard noted that France's military interventions served to "help stabilize the African continent, prove that France was capable of acting decisively and keeping her commitments, and provide a feeling of confidence among French technical assistants by measuring their security."<sup>31</sup>

In order to maintain an extensive network of relationships between twenty-nine different African countries, French African policy tended to remain conservative, as French authorities thought it best to stick with the status quo. And though France granted her former colonies independence and declared that she would "under no circumstances meddle in the internal affairs of African states and loudly promote[d] the slogan 'Africa for the Africans,'"<sup>32</sup> France proceeded to intervene militarily so she could continue to affirm her great power status in the international system. Additionally, post-colonial defense agreements gave France the supremacy in regard to the external defense of Francophone African states; France's armed forces, therefore, "were left to function largely as a local gendarmerie."<sup>33</sup> One of the most consistent features of France's presence in Africa is that of stability and consistency of policy:

Continuity of policy throughout the presidencies of de Gaulle, Pompidou, Giscard d'Estaing, and Mitterrand was underwritten by a complex interplay of factors. First, the bonds of language and the terms under which the transition to independence was made ensured a pro-French orientation in the emergent states. Secondly, structural arrangements- currency links, the deep penetration of French companies, Franco-African political and economic reforms, close personal links between French and African elites,

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<sup>31</sup> Hull, Galen. "The French Connection in Africa: Zaire and South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 5, no. 2 (1979), 227.

<sup>32</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 194.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 438.

and a dedicated French Ministry of Co-operation- served both to bind Francophone states to France and to preserve the *status quo*.<sup>34</sup>

France acted accordingly depending on her strategic, cultural, and economic interests. France worked to promote the status quo in African countries as long as they were not damaging French benefits. France accepted any type of leader, from the most moderate to the most extreme, so long as they worked with France to promote her interests. As long as the leaders accepted French influence, they knew that they would find favor with France.<sup>35</sup> France's policies were implemented with the intent to elevate France in her search for recognition as a global power and, more importantly, to maintain dominance over her former colonies. "Though no longer enshrined in the armor of constitutional or legislative institutions ... it nevertheless remains couched .... in the form of a highly-normalized set of binding documents ... underpinned by a number of multilateral agencies (Franc Zone, "Francophonie," OCAM, Franco-African summits, etc.)"<sup>36</sup> that France's most distinctive element in her relations with African nations had been its reliance on explicit legal instruments.

France's military presence in Africa was determined by a variety of factors including: "the size and degree of her economic interests and involvement; the number of French residents; and the nature of the links existing between France and the national ruling élites."<sup>37</sup> The countries that benefitted the most from these defense agreements were those that were central to France's economic interests "namely, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Gabon, the Ivory

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<sup>34</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 436.

<sup>35</sup> Bourmaud, Daniel. "France in Africa: African Politics and French Foreign Policy." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 23, no. 2 (1995), 61.

<sup>36</sup> Bustin, Edouard. *The Limits of French Intervention in Africa: a Study in Applied Neo-Colonialism*. Boston: African Studies Center, Boston University, 1982, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 206.

Coast, and Senegal.”<sup>38</sup> France’s military involvement in Africa can be broken up into four main categories. The first category entailed direct military intervention from France upon the request of the existing regime to uphold the status quo; the second category involved regimes initially supported by France, but after establishing independent policies, France was unable to control the regimes; the third category involved France attempting to gain allies with African countries that were not former colonies; and the fourth category involved France supporting its allies in subduing radical movements.<sup>39</sup> French military involvement in Africa consisted of two general types of agreements: defense and military cooperation. Defense agreements, mainly negotiated in 1960 and 1961, allowed African nations to request direct support from France’s military. Not all former colonies signed these defense agreements, and there were other countries such as Congo in 1972 and Mauritania and Madagascar in 1973 who withdrew from these agreements, but the main idea was for France to provide support when needed.<sup>40</sup> Military cooperation agreements then enabled France to educate African students about military equipment and to train Africans in the military so to better prepare them for any events that may occur.<sup>41</sup> Both of these agreements were designed “to retain both French influence and her freedom of action... the French strategy sought to ensure her supply of raw materials from these countries while at the same time reserving the right to obtain from the direct involvement of French troops if she chose.”<sup>42</sup> France’s desire to remain relevant on the continent prompted these military agreements, which “toyed with the fears and paranoia of weak and often un-representative

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<sup>38</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 206.

<sup>39</sup> Harshe, Rajen. "FRENCH NEO-COLONIALISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA." *India Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1980), 173-174.

<sup>40</sup> Luckham, Robin. "French Militarism in Africa." *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 24 (1982), 59.

<sup>41</sup> Baxter, Peter. *France in Centrafrique: from Bokassa and Operation Barracuda to the Days of EUFOR*. Warwick, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2019, 26.

<sup>42</sup> Baxter, Peter. *France in Centrafrique: from Bokassa and Operation Barracuda to the Days of EUFOR*. Warwick, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2019, 26.

leaders... establishing from the onset France's right of exclusive action in Francophone Africa."<sup>43</sup> The interventions provided more than just provisions to the African states; they provided France the opportunity to exert influence over the training of African states therefore shaping the balance of power in France's favor.

Between 1962 and 1995, France intervened militarily nineteen times in African states (not including its participation in UN operations in Angola and Somalia); these interventions included: "Senegal (1962), Gabon (1964 and 1990), Chad (1968-72, 1978, 1983 and 1986), Mauritania (1977), Zaire (1978 and 1991), Central African Republic (1979), Togo (1986), Comoros (1989 and 1995), Rwanda (1990-93, 1994), Djibouti (1991), Benin (1991), and Sierra Leone (1992)."<sup>44</sup> Most of these interventions by the French were to either protect French nationals, quell rebellions, or to support African rulers who were pro-French (regardless of their brutality). French military presence in Africa took on these different forms in an attempt to integrate Francophone states into NATO, to protect Western trade routes of oil and other raw materials, and to limit Soviet expansion and influence in Africa.<sup>45</sup> The size and location of France's external forces made it very easy for them to intervene in Africa. The important aspect of French military policy was that the French could always remain present. Even after Djibouti, a small country in the Horn of Africa gained their independence from France in 1977, ending 150 years of French colonial presence in Africa, "less than 12 months later, not only were there more French troops in Africa than at any time since 1960, but they were actively engaged in fighting in Chad, Mauritania, and Zaire."<sup>46</sup> French doctrine argued that their military interventions in Africa

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<sup>43</sup> Baxter, Peter. *France in Centrafrique: from Bokassa and Operation Barracuda to the Days of EUFOR*. Warwick, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2019, 27.

<sup>44</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 437.

<sup>45</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 207.

<sup>46</sup> Hollick, Julian Crandall. "French Intervention in Africa in 1978." *The World Today* 35, no. 2 (1979), 71.

were carried out under the request of the concerned government. Their military structure was set up in a way that made African nations want to reach out for assistance and, the majority of times that France did intervene militarily, it was because of those requests by African governments.

Military forces on the ground as well as a predisposed notion to intervene were the policies visible to the rest of the world and were the aspects of French military influence that were evident. France was intent on establishing her military so as not to obligate them to intervene in any threats that would appear, though many of her military agreements with African nations, “although are described as *defense pacts*, against would-be foreign aggressors, represent a form of insurance against possible *coups d'état*.”<sup>47</sup> The role of the French military in Africa was less active then one might think:

In 1985, approximately 6,800 French troops were stationed in Africa, mainly in Djibouti, Senegal, and the Central African Republics, with smaller contingents in Cameroon, Gabon, and the Ivory Coast. Such troops and the bases they occupy are not engaged in active conflicts, as are the forces dispatched at various times from France to Chad, Zaire, Mauritania, and a number of other Francophone states. Their role is that of a trip wire in case of internal or external threats to the security of the states in which they are located and in case of similar threats to others with which France has defense agreements.<sup>48</sup>

These agreements between France and African regimes did not require that France intervene upon request; France created these military agreements with her interests in mind and what would be best for France as a nation. It is important to make note that a number “of *coup d'états* have occurred in various francophone countries precisely when French economic, political, and

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<sup>47</sup> Wauthier, Claude. "France and Africa: "Long Live Neo-Colonialism"." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 2, no. 1 (1972), 23.

<sup>48</sup> Staniland, Martin. "Francophone Africa: The Enduring French Connection." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 489 (1987), 55.

strategic interests were being directly or indirectly threatened.”<sup>49</sup> France’s responsibility in these *coup d’états* have never formally been established, except for certain cases such as in the Central African Republic where France backed the coup. France was involved in a variety of operations that were established to protect French citizens including: “Operation *Barracuda* in CAR in September 1979 which ousted the eccentric Bokassa; operation *Manta* in Chad between August 1983 and September 1984 followed by operation *Epervier* in February 1986 to dislodge Libyan air intervention in Faya Largeau and also to prop up the Chad administration ... [and] operation *Requin* in Gabon in May 1990, ostensibly to protect French citizens.”<sup>50</sup> All of these, and many more, interventions in Africa were to promote France’s self-interest and to protect their citizens when required.

The French government sought to take measures preventing violent intervention. They advised African nations on how to run their countries in a non-confrontational way. France believed that “the best way to keep peace and order is to help the existing heads of state, not only through official channels, financial or economic aid, and diplomatic channels, but also through personal advice or political moves.”<sup>51</sup> In this way, France believed in establishing personal relationships with the heads of state and creating a bond in which they could come to trust one another. However, “the problem with a diplomacy dependent upon personal acquaintance is obviously that of blurring the line between personal and official obligations.”<sup>52</sup> Friendships, therefore, began to take precedence over important, political matters. This caused many problems for France, as certain relationships with her African partners became controversial.

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<sup>49</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 194.

<sup>50</sup> Amuwo, Kunle. "FRANCE AND AFRICA IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA." *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi E Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per L'Africa E L'Oriente* 52, no. 2 (1997), 282.

<sup>51</sup> Pepy, M. Daniel. "France's Relations with Africa." *African Affairs* 69, no. 275 (1970), 158.

<sup>52</sup> Staniland, Martin. "Francophone Africa: The Enduring French Connection." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 489 (1987), 58.



One of the most notable examples was the situation in the Central African Republic in the 1970s between French President Giscard d'Estaing and Emperor Bokassa I of the Central African Republic (CAR) and President Mobutu of Zaire. Both leaders of the CAR and Zaire were known for notoriously being corrupt and ruthless, yet President Giscard d'Estaing established personal friendships with them. These relationships caused much controversy throughout the world because it showed France was collaborating with ruthless dictators. In this way, it became evident that France had "financed some national conferences and contributed financially and materially to the organization of some elections."<sup>53</sup> France was very interested in her own democratic agenda. It was important to her that she establish friendly relations with the leaders of African nations to gain favor with them so that she may continue to exert influence on them.

France's financial aid to African countries has been an important way she has been able to remain in a position of great power over African nations and their economies. Following the independence of her former colonies in the early 1960s, as mentioned above, a financial arrangement between France and her former colonies in West and Central Africa was established: the Franc Zone. The Franc Zone was a monetary zone that was linked with African countries who were members and provided them with an established currency that could be freely converted into French francs. In the Franc Zone, "France actually controls [the African nations'] issuance and circulation of currency, their monetary and financial regulations, their banking activities, their credit allocation and, ultimately, their budgetary and economic policies."<sup>54</sup> In this way, many African governments have fully entrusted France with their financial duties submitting them to the control of their former colonizer. France enormously

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<sup>53</sup> Amuwo, Kunle. "FRANCE AND AFRICA IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA." *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi E Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per L'Africa E L'Oriente* 52, no. 2 (1997), 283.

<sup>54</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 200.

contributed in economically assisting those who participate in the Franc Zone, but “the overall balance of payment figures [were] favorable to France by amounts averaging 3.5 billion francs annually during the ten-year period 1978-1987;”<sup>55</sup> however, since the Franc Zone did stabilize the currency of the African states, all members of the zone did, in fact, benefit as well. The Franc Zone had many benefits for all parties involved, but there was an added advantage for the French as:

The African members of the Franc Zone represent[ed] a small yet significant market for French products and a source of primary commodities that is all the more accessible because French imports from these countries do not require any outlay of foreign exchange. Similarly, the Franc Zone membership operates as a built-in incentive for the purchase of French goods by the African states.<sup>56</sup>

France was able to capitalize on utilizing the Franc Zone to exert additional influence and therefore benefit internally from her ability to produce and sell her goods in African nations. On the same note, due to the Franc Zone, France did not need to worry about foreign exchange as “all international transaction by Franc Zone countries must be carried through the intermediary of the Franc, and that foreign currency obtained from their exports is deposited with the French Treasury.”<sup>57</sup> This complicated and detailed cooperation agreement allowed France to preserve control over her former colonies, impeding on the process of decolonization.<sup>58</sup> France’s economic policy with her former African colonies, though apparently beneficial for all parties, was set up in a way that ultimately was most beneficial for France herself.

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<sup>55</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 40.

<sup>56</sup> Bustin, Edouard. *The Limits of French Intervention in Africa: a Study in Applied Neo-Colonialism*. Boston: African Studies Center, Boston University, 1982, 19.

<sup>57</sup> Harshe, Rajen. "FRENCH NEO-COLONIALISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA." *India Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1980), 168.

<sup>58</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 203.

### **Benefits for France**

France's investment in Africa was rooted in national interest. After granting her former colonies' independence, France remained connected with them because they provided many benefits for her. France's continued connection, however, was often perceived as being neocolonial; "the concept of neo-colonialism is essentially based on the idea that the termination of colonial rule has not necessarily put an end to the exploitation of the developing countries."<sup>59</sup> One way in which France used her neocolonialist ways to gain advantages was through the monopoly of the film industry. Film is an interesting aspect of involvement as it combines a variety of areas by which France can exert her influence; in film, France is able to exercise power by dominating the industry through economic and political means, but also by exerting dominance over art, culture, and history. France financed much of the film industry in Francophone countries and greatly benefitted from these arrangements. Funding for films was generally granted so long as the post-production work happened in France, that a French co-producer was involved in making the film, and/or that there were a certain number of French specialists working to create the film. Because of these stipulations, Francophone African directors were frequently required to change their visions to meet the desires of their Western financiers.<sup>60</sup> In this way, France retained control over what was being portrayed in Francophone film and regulated the perception of the masses by allowing certain details to be added or omitted. The French production of African film was "part of the structure of an unchanged

<sup>59</sup> Harshe, Rajen. "FRENCH NEO-COLONIALISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA." *India Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1980), 159.

<sup>60</sup> Thackway, Melissa. *Africa Shoots Back: Alternative Perspectives in Sub-Saharan Francophone African Film*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2007, 9.

economic, political, and cultural dependency of the African states on France;”<sup>61</sup> the aid given to produce African films made it manageable for French distributors to maintain a monopoly on the African market because they had complete control over all domains of film production. Additionally, “by monopolizing the domain of African film production (financing, technical equipment, technicians) ... the directors [must] conform their scripts to acceptable French cinematographic standards. It is in this sense that controversial and anti-colonialist scripts such as *La noire de...* are rejected.”<sup>62</sup> This was a significant benefit to France, as it allowed for control of the image the world and Africa had of France. By dominating the film industry, France was controlling the telling of history and therefore manipulating the masses to believe that France’s reasons given for their involvement in these African nations were legitimate. And, as there has been little effort “to train Africans as editors, camera operators, sound engineers, and electricians... [it is evident that France has the] intention to keep African film dependent on France.”<sup>63</sup> In her neocolonialist ways, France has reaped gain after gain but, interestingly enough, African nations with ties to France tend to seek more economic assistance and intervention than those countries who do not; and, those who do not have ties with France are even more eager to develop those ties with her.<sup>64</sup>

In Africa, France found many strategic resources including: “oil and uranium, and a ready market for French goods, French culture and French ideas.”<sup>65</sup> Trade was especially important to France as she (as well as the rest of Europe) depended on a variety of raw material resources that this vast continent had to offer. The resources which France became invested in

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<sup>61</sup> Diawara, Manthia. *African Cinema: Politics & Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 2001, 30.

<sup>62</sup> Diawara, Manthia. *African Cinema: Politics & Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 2001, 33.

<sup>63</sup> Diawara, Manthia. *African Cinema: Politics & Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 2001, 34.

<sup>64</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 39.

<sup>65</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 436.

Africa for were minerals such as: cobalt, uranium, phosphate, etc. "France's rate of dependency on these minerals from Africa is 100 per cent for cobalt, 87 to 100 per cent for uranium, 83 per cent for phosphates, 68 per cent for bauxite, 35 per cent for manganese, and 32 per cent for copper. France's rate of dependency from francophone Africa is 35 per cent for manganese (Gabon), 32 per cent for chromium, and 22 per cent for phosphates (Senegal and Togo)."<sup>66</sup> These resources were incredibly valuable to France and played a central role in forming France's African policy. These materials are classified as "'strategic raw materials' which, according to the defense agreements signed between France and certain francophone African states, must be made readily available to France – and restricted to third countries – 'for common defense purposes.'"<sup>67</sup> The economic relationship between France and her colonies has been largely focused on the import of these raw materials (as well as agricultural products) and the export of manufactured goods from France.<sup>68</sup> France was one of Africa's biggest trading partners and this relationship was beneficial for France as she maintained a considerable trade surplus. And though France traded extensively, she was known to have given preferential treatment to certain countries in regard to trade. Those countries who were privileged, namely "Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Niger, Senegal, and Togo, still today make up the foundational Franco-African community."<sup>69</sup> In 1978, the Ivory Coast, Gabon, and Cameroon alone "provided over two-thirds of French imports from former French dependencies in Africa and the same three took

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<sup>66</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 197.

<sup>67</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 197-198.

<sup>68</sup> Harshe, Rajen. "FRENCH NEO-COLONIALISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA." *India Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1980), 160.

<sup>69</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 198-199.

68 percent of the French exports to the Francophone group.”<sup>70</sup> Most advertising and trade occurring in France’s former colonies continue to be monopolized by old colonial trading companies, such as: “*La Compagnie française de l’ Afrique occidentale* and *La Société commerciale de l’ oust africain* – which have conveniently branched into import-export activities, and which operate within the vast protected market circumscribed by the franc zone,”<sup>71</sup> which has significantly satisfied the French treasury.

Along with valuable raw material benefits that France gained from her African relationships, strategically, too, Africa has been an incredibly advantageous asset to France. France has maintained friendly relationships with many African states. Embedded in the policy agreements France has with a number of African nations, was the strategic placement of French military bases. These bases were important for France as they spread across all of Francophone Africa. The region was therefore “divided into two strategic zones: the Indian Ocean, including Madagascar and Djibouti, and Central Africa, comprising all the ex-West and – Central African colonies.”<sup>72</sup> The bases that France established became exceptionally valuable in protecting her extensive marketable, armed, and tactical interests. One of the most strategic bases France established in Africa is its base in Djibouti. France’s largest overseas base merits mention as it is considered an uncharacteristic base for France. Djibouti is not located near the rest of Francophone Africa (predominately West and Central Africa), but rather located in the Horn of Africa, and is of critical importance because of its unique location. From Djibouti, France was able to protect its interests in three spheres: Africa, the Middle East, and territories in the Indian

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<sup>70</sup> Staniland, Martin. "Francophone Africa: The Enduring French Connection." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 489 (1987), 53.

<sup>71</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 198.

<sup>72</sup> Baxter, Peter. *France in Centrafrique: from Bokassa and Operation Barracuda to the Days of EUFOR*. Warwick, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2019, 27.

Ocean and beyond. Though France claims that its role in Djibouti is in terms of its defense against regional instability in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia, the base in Djibouti was of far more importance:

From Djibouti France has a role in the Horn of Africa (and in Africa more generally), the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, as well as influence in one of the world's key strategic waterways. Djibouti gives it an entrée to the Arab League and regional co-operative for a further influence in the OAU [Organization of African Unity] and an ally in the UN. In Djibouti France also finds itself at an intersection of revolutionary Islamic influence between Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, and Iran.<sup>73</sup>

The base in Djibouti has proven to be of great importance for France because of the opportunity of gaining access to more strategically important areas of the world. The location of Djibouti is at the axis point to a variety of high interest areas of the world, which provided valuable, coveted, and sought after resources. The connection to Djibouti and other strategic areas in Africa have provided France a number of advantages when competing with the superpowers, as France has a longstanding friendship with Africa allowing these agreements to take root.

Africa's importance to France was complex in that there were many layers which, all together, revealed the significance. One of the biggest benefits that France gained were economic benefits; all of the economies of French-speaking African states were dominated by France. "Economically, Africa has constituted a reasonable investment for France over the years, and accounts for approximately 5 per cent of France's external trade."<sup>74</sup> Africa played a vital, economic role in France providing access to raw materials, a steady market for manufactured

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<sup>73</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 444.

<sup>74</sup> Utey, Rachel. "'Not to Do Less but to Do Better ...': French Military Policy in Africa." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 78, no. 1 (2002), 130.

goods, and as a channel for her capital investment. Because of this, “France’s economic and social equilibrium depend[ed] on her control over Africa.”<sup>75</sup> In this way, the economic relations that were formed between France and her former colonies were developed in such a way to increase their dependency on France. All of France’s aid to her former colonies returns to France in the form of “contracts with French firms.”<sup>76</sup> France continued to follow the path of reaping the most amount of rewards for the least amount of effort; in the 70s, “an analysis conducted by the Institute de Recherche, Formation et Education pour le Developement shows that the real cost of French assistance amounts to less than 0.50 percent of France’s gross national product.”<sup>77</sup> Though France was investing little into her African allies, she continued to gain significantly more economic benefits from her agreements with her former colonies.

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### **Limits of Intervention**

Though France has been able to accomplish many of her sought-after goals in Africa, her presence on the continent has not always been without limits. France has struggled in many aspects with regard to her involvement in Africa and has faced many challenges that ultimately question the future of her involvement on the great continent. From the beginning, French intervention in Africa produced chaos and division. France’s relations with other superpowers greatly affected the policies she had within Africa. France worked tirelessly to prevent the Soviet

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<sup>75</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 196.

<sup>76</sup> Wauthier, Claude. "France and Africa: "Long Live Neo-Colonialism"." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 2, no. 1 (1972), 24.

<sup>77</sup> Wauthier, Claude. "France and Africa: "Long Live Neo-Colonialism"." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 2, no. 1 (1972), 24.



Union from entering her territory and, “had the French hand faltered in maintaining the stability and pro-Western orientation of Francophone Africa during the Cold War, it is unlikely that the exclusivity of French influence would have remained.”<sup>78</sup> France determined in the early 1990s to end the conscription of its armed forces in the roles of prevention and projection<sup>79</sup> and it has been noted by numerous scholars that, in reality, France did not have the necessary “resources to actually develop Francophone Africa, let alone the entire continent.”<sup>80</sup>

The projection of France not having the ability to advance Africa, did not stop her from attempting to exert influence across the continent. During this time period, the stereotype of Africa was that it was “simply a place of nature for which there [was] no need to waste much intellectual thought,”<sup>81</sup> yet France did not share this same view. Politically, France was determined to gain favor so to further influence African nations, but “France can only achieve its own objectives to the extent that its policies are perceived by African governments as beneficial to them.”<sup>82</sup> As the years went by, more and more problems arose which began to limit France’s influence:

The first problem with which France [was] confronted [was] the gradual disappearance of the first generation of leaders, those who won the battle of independence and created the new African states ... younger Africans are anxious to take the lead in their countries.

Though many of these have been educated and trained in France they have not been integrated in ... [the] political life or in ... [the] army as had their predecessors.

Moreover, they often have Left-wing connections. And this will make it more difficult to

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<sup>78</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 436.

<sup>79</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 435.

<sup>80</sup> Amuwo, Kunle. "FRANCE AND AFRICA IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA." *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi E Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per L'Africa E L'Oriente* 52, no. 2 (1997), 286.

<sup>81</sup> Bourmaud, Daniel. "France in Africa: African Politics and French Foreign Policy." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 23, no. 2 (1995), 61.

<sup>82</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 39.

maintain in the future the family character of relationships between France and French-speaking African states. It will be necessary to lay more stress on technical or economic co-operation, less on political co-operation; to be less individualistic in ... [their] views and more European.<sup>83</sup>

France's influence was beginning to fade as the original forerunners leading the drive for independence of African states began to be replaced by a younger generation. This generation had different ideas for what they needed and focused more on economic development over political development. The African nations wanted French actions to benefit Africa, which is contrary to what French involvement had been doing: serving the interests of the French. However, the French learned that "none of... [their] objectives [could] be achieved without African cooperation and the latter [could] only be obtained by providing African governments what they want above all else: economic development."<sup>84</sup> France and her African counterparts therefore began to move away from each other. Their expectations became increasingly different and as many African nations began to develop confidence and stability in their independence, their dependence on France began to fade. Though French assistance was still needed in some areas, many nationalist sentiments began to grow and there was a push to reduce what many Africans perceived to be overbearing French influence.<sup>85</sup>

It is also important to note that not every African nation with ties to France was treated equally. French relations with Francophone states tended to be on a "state to state" basis; and, examining these relationships closely "would expose just how depressingly normal the actual ingredients of French-African relations are- that is, just how much inequality, dependence, and

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<sup>83</sup> Pepy, M. Daniel. "France's Relations with Africa." *African Affairs* 69, no. 275 (1970), 161.

<sup>84</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 39.

<sup>85</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 44.

exploitation are hidden under the republican rhetoric of liberty, equality, and fraternity.”<sup>86</sup> This, in turn, limits what France was actually able to accomplish because people were beginning to recognize this injustice. In these ways, France perpetuated the idea of neocolonialism, which, served as a means of transforming that “unknown other” into a “familiar other-”<sup>87</sup> something that could be controlled. In this regard, the colonial construct was perpetuated and “French political and cultural domination over francophone Africa ... enable[d] her to exercise an indirect, but efficient, control over African bureaucracies and national élites.”<sup>88</sup> And, though French intervention had been limited in significant ways, it had, by no means, been terminated. France had set up a network of policies and relations that created a dependency and need for French presence in Africa. French assistance providing troops and military advisors, tactics and ideologies, and training and skills constituted as “a permanent intervention.”<sup>89</sup> Because of its deep history and ties with Africa, France’s presence may have seemed to fade in certain aspects, but it will never completely become defunct.

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<sup>86</sup> Staniland, Martin. "Francophone Africa: The Enduring French Connection." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 489 (1987), 53.

<sup>87</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 201.

<sup>88</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 201.

<sup>89</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 438.

## *An Analysis of the Soviet Union's Intervention in Africa Post-Colonialism*

### Reasons for Intervention

The Soviet Union's involvement in Africa during the 1960s through 1990s was prompted for a variety of reasons. The Soviet Union viewed Africa as a place to gain diplomatic allies, establish systems of government, and gain geo-strategic benefits.<sup>90</sup> Knowing that sub-Saharan Africa was an area where there would be little superpower competition, "the Soviet Union considered that, whatever happened, it had little to lose and much to gain from an active policy in Africa."<sup>91</sup> Their goals, therefore, appeared to be the "projection of power to open up future opportunities; access to resources and acquisitions of hard currency through trade or selling of weapons; lining up diplomatic support; making advances which prove that the 'correlation of forces' is changing in the Soviet's favor world-wide; and support for regimes that define themselves ideologically as Marxist-Leninist and/or as being in the Soviet camp."<sup>92</sup> These goals were in no way linear, and their order of importance shifted based on different circumstances in different countries.

One of the most commonly misinterpreted reasons for the Soviet Union's involvement in Africa was the notion of solely wanting to spread Communism. Though "[m]any believe that Africa offers a profitable, exploitable target for [spreading Communism abroad], and that the Soviet Union is pursuing its ideologically ordained quest,"<sup>93</sup> that was not the only reason for the USSR's interest in Africa. Socialism did, however, for many leaders of African nations, appeal

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<sup>90</sup> Desfosses, Helen. "The USSR and Africa." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 16, no. 1 (1987), 3.

<sup>91</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 162.

<sup>92</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 172.

<sup>93</sup> Brayton, Abbott A. "Soviet Involvement in Africa." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 17, no. 2 (1979), 253.

to them as it offered a logical way to combat division and promote unity among the people through one ideology and through participation in one party to create political and economic change.<sup>94</sup> The leaders of the Soviet Union acted in the common interest of the USSR by promoting an opposition to imperialism. The USSR hoped it would succeed in bringing about national movements where important western military bases were located, so they could then establish control. However, in using Stalinist tactics of propaganda, they were unsuccessful. Instead of working to understand the situation in Africa before getting involved, the Soviet Union simply tried to draw on the principles of Marxist-Leninist theory to bring about change, hoping it would be enough. However, they learned that the principles of Marxist-Leninist theory were not enough to bring about the kind of change they desired and they realized that they were lagging behind in their study of and understanding of the African continent.<sup>95</sup>

Being one of the major superpowers on the globe, the USSR was determined to assert their dominance and promote their national interests abroad; this was due largely in part to their successes with socialist revolutions as well as their desire to promote anti-capitalist movements.<sup>96</sup> Africa, during the 1960s-1990s, was one of the perfect places for the USSR to emphasize their power status and demonstrate their involvement. The Soviet Union saw Africa as an opportunity to “expand its power where it [could] in order to purchase a hold on the future.”<sup>97</sup> They pushed to disturb the political and economic systems that were put in place by the European powers in Africa in the past centuries so they could “gain influence in Africa as a counter-poise to American influence, or British or French; a determination to assert Moscow’s

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<sup>94</sup> Desfosses, Helen. "The USSR and Africa." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 16, no. 1 (1987), 6.

<sup>95</sup> “Документ о Политике СССР и Его Союзников в Африке, Подготовленный Государственным Департаментом США. Январь 1959 г.” <http://doc20vek.ru>. Главная, January 15, 1959. <http://doc20vek.ru/node/4176>.

<sup>96</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 399.

<sup>97</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 168.

voice in international developments on all continents.”<sup>98</sup> However, most African nations were fixed in their relationship with the West, and were hesitant to break this relationship for fear of “resistance from those social strata within their own countries who did well by it”<sup>99</sup> and also because they feared Western retaliation. With this in mind, the Soviet Union developed two strategies to follow to assist their African allies: firstly, “to accept and, at least publically, encourage the preference of these states for non-alignment and regional cooperation; and, secondly, to support them in their struggles against the imperialist powers of their surrogates, most particularly in regard to the liberation of territories still subject to colonial or white racial rule.”<sup>100</sup>

The most important motive for Soviet presence in Africa was to elevate their own power and influence and solidify their relationships with African nations, while simultaneously working to weaken the power, influence, and relationships that the West and People’s Republic of China had with Africa.<sup>101</sup> The USSR promoted diplomatic relations, provided economic assistance and cultural contacts, and established trade with African nations so as to convince them that they were their powerful, sympathetic friend.<sup>102</sup> And, by the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union had established relations with 40 countries in the sub-Saharan region, nearly covering the entirety of that region. Africa, for the Soviet Union, was another ground for superpower competition; the Soviet Union, along with the other superpower was fixed on establishing a presence in all of the

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<sup>98</sup> McLane, Charles B. "Soviet Doctrine and the Military Coups in Africa." *International Journal* 21, no. 3 (1966), 299.

<sup>99</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 401.

<sup>100</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 400.

<sup>101</sup> David, Steven R. "Africa: Moscow's Dubious Investment." *The National Interest*, no. 12 (1988), 131.

<sup>102</sup> “Документ о Политике СССР и Его Союзников в Африке, Подготовленный Государственным Департаментом США. Январь 1959 г.” <http://doc20vek.ru>. Главная, January 15, 1959. <http://doc20vek.ru/node/4176>.

major regions of the world.<sup>103</sup> One of the main ways the USSR attempted to assert their influence was through the sharing of their language and culture in African states.

The film *Наша Африка* (Our Africa) creates the history of “Soviet Africa” through the “eyes of Soviet documentaries from 1960, when 17 African countries became independent from the European metropolises, until the collapse of the USSR in 1991.”<sup>104</sup> This film depicts the more than thirty years of the Soviet Union expanding their influence in Africa. All of the documentation taken by Soviet filmmakers during this time was used as propaganda. In this film, one witnesses “Soviet geologists teaching Africans to search for minerals... Soviet doctors conducting the first vaccinations among the local population ... and Soviet teachers teaching the Russian language.”<sup>105</sup> When the Soviets arrive in Africa, they are depicted sharing food, cigarettes, laughs, and dance with the Africans. The Soviets bring in donations of trucks, farming equipment, and cars and are shown teaching the African people how to work the machinery. The documentary mocks the West as “Soviet announcers sneer at the confidence of Western governments that they ‘granted’ independence to the former African colonies, that is, that they completely regarded Africa exclusively as an object of application of their own power.”<sup>106</sup> Those featured in the film are: “Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Mikhail Gorbachev; African presidents and prime ministers: Gamal Abdel Nasser (UAR), Sekou Toure (Guinea), Patrice Lumumba (DRC), Modibo Keita (Mali), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Haile Selassie (Ethiopia) and many other politicians, as well as Soviet citizens who worked in

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<sup>103</sup> David, Steven R. "Africa: Moscow's Dubious Investment." *The National Interest*, no. 12 (1988), 131.

<sup>104</sup> Марков, Александр. “Наша Африка.” Artdoc.Media. Accessed February 1, 2020. [https://artdoc.media/ru/movie/nasha\\_afrika\\_2018\\_45/](https://artdoc.media/ru/movie/nasha_afrika_2018_45/).

<sup>105</sup> “Советско-Африканский Роман Что Фильм ‘Наша Африка’ Может Рассказать о Будущем ‘Нашего Крыма.’” Meduza.io. Meduza, October 6, 2018. <https://meduza.io/feature/2018/10/06/sovetsko-afrikanskiy-roman>.

<sup>106</sup> “Советско-Африканский Роман Что Фильм ‘Наша Африка’ Может Рассказать о Будущем ‘Нашего Крыма.’” Meduza.io. Meduza, October 6, 2018. <https://meduza.io/feature/2018/10/06/sovetsko-afrikanskiy-roman>.

Africa, and African students who studied at universities in the USSR.<sup>107</sup> An important aspect of Soviet involvement in Africa was focused on gaining the support of students and intellectuals. Many universities in countries promoting Soviet values offered scholarships and even free tuition for African students, to exert more Soviet influence among young intellectuals.<sup>108</sup> The Soviet Union worked to promote and popularize the study of Russian language and culture throughout Africa as well as to propagandize the relationship between the USSR and her many African relations.

The Soviet Union sought to promote the image of working to liberate African nations from their colonial oppressors. The Soviet Union capitalized on offering a completely different reality for African nations and their willingness to assist African states was said to have corresponded with the “unhelpfulness” of the West.<sup>109</sup> The Soviet Union took advantage of situations in which the neo-colonial influence of the Western powers was caught up in tension and conflict with the African states. East-West tension was therefore highly present in the situation in Africa during this time, as the USSR worked to liberate the African nations from their colonizers; and, as “[c]olonialism and capitalism were seen to be two sides of the same coin ... [t]he fight against one was considered necessarily a fight against the other.”<sup>110</sup> African nations too, who were interested in finding favor with the Soviet Union, went about gaining support from the USSR by backing the Soviet Union in opposing their rivals. The Soviet Union promoted their intention to fight colonialism while protecting their African allies; in many ways,

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<sup>107</sup> Марков, Александр. “Наша Африка.” Artdoc.Media. Accessed February 1, 2020. [https://artdoc.media/ru/movie/nasha\\_afrika\\_2018\\_45/](https://artdoc.media/ru/movie/nasha_afrika_2018_45/).

<sup>108</sup> “Документ о Политике СССР и Его Союзников в Африке, Подготовленный Государственным Департаментом США. Январь 1959 г.” <http://doc20vek.ru/node/4176>.

<sup>109</sup> Grey, Robert D. “The Soviet Presence in Africa: An Analysis of Goals.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, no. 3 (1984), 525.

<sup>110</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 171.



the USSR became a sort of defender to the African nations. And, their ability to send troops and supplies throughout Africa was able to greatly solidify them as a global power.

Soviet involvement in Africa was based on the simple notion that many African nations were interested in forming relationships with them in an attempt to solidify their independence from the West. Many regimes coming to power (such as Somalia and Angola) were in specific need of Soviet assistance, and the Soviet Union capitalized on this to justify their intervention on the continent.<sup>111</sup> “Yet Africans [could] no more dictate the terms on which they live[d] in the world of politics than anyone else. The more desperately they need[ed] external assistance... the less able they [were] to dictate the terms on which they accept[ed] Soviet or any other military aid.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, by providing these African nations with assistance, the Soviet Union was able to work to promote their own interests on the continent.

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## **Policies**

The Soviet Union established their dominance on the continent of Africa by implementing many policies which would keep African nations tied to them. The most influential motivator propelling the Soviet Union to establish foreign policy in Africa was the Cold War. Soviet involvement in Africa was dominated by this conflicting struggle between the East and the West. Soviet policy, therefore, was aimed at “supporting anticolonial movements,

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<sup>111</sup> Pope, Ronald R. "Introduction Soviet Views on Black Africa." *International Journal of Politics* 6, no. 4 (1976), 4.

<sup>112</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 413.

typically those with some elements of social radicalism.”<sup>113</sup> Because of this, the Soviets fought against colonialism in the Third World as “‘scavengers of modernization’ proposing techniques of political centralization and dictatorial control as the basis for rapid economic progress.”<sup>114</sup> Soviet leaders viewed their policy in Africa simply: to take advantage of whatever the West lost. Therefore, the Soviet Union aimed strategically to implement important political and military policies in places such as Mozambique, Somalia, and Ethiopia. As these are all countries that face the coast (facing toward the Indian Ocean and important trade routes near the Persian Gulf), the USSR’s interest in these states strengthened the idea that their policies in Africa were aimed at threatening the West.<sup>115</sup> The USSR’s enthusiasm for becoming invested in sub-Saharan Africa was also in part due to finding allies that had resisted foreign domination. With these allies, the USSR attempted to assert political control to promote their own national interest. They then worked to preserve these relations through “the sphere of foreign policy by reference to *national* geopolitical and economic interests and not to any class interest.”<sup>116</sup> However, because of the Soviet Union’s notorious desire to spread socialism and communism, many of their policies were perceived to have been influenced by this phenomenon.

Attempts to exert influence on foreign policy during the time of Nikita Khrushchev was motivated by the desire to build socialism and communism on the African continent. The Soviet Union’s foreign policy was directed toward establishing stable international ties seeking to “strengthen the unity and cohesion, the friendship and fraternity of the socialist countries... The USSR pledged its support for the national liberation movements and to maintain all-around co-

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<sup>113</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "Soviet Involvement in Southern Africa." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 481 (1985), 140.

<sup>114</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 170.

<sup>115</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 167.

<sup>116</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 398.

operation with the young, developing countries” and it even made it a priority to maintain friendships with states that did not embrace socialism, so as to “firmly repel the aggressive forces of imperialism, and deliver mankind from the threat of a new world war.”<sup>117</sup> Supporting national liberation movements was an important factor to the USSR’s policies in Africa. Soviet ideology played a significant role not only to advance Soviet state interest, but also to stimulate global connectedness. The USSR believed that “once the leadership of any African state ... opted to follow the non-capitalist pattern of development, the national liberation movement would break out of the framework of bourgeois democratic revolution and begin the transition to socialist revolution.”<sup>118</sup> The Soviet Union therefore believed that those national liberation movements were an essential element in the push for a world socialist revolution.

During Nikita Khrushchev’s time in power in the Soviet Union, he focused on policies of political considerations “in a bold attempt to change the political orientations of the African regimes.”<sup>119</sup> Soviet ideology, however, was not the only motivator of the USSR’s foreign policy. After Khrushchev, Soviet policy toward Africa evolved to be more realistic. Soviet policy under Leonid Brezhnev “emerged with two main priorities: the pursuit of strategic parity with the United States and activism in the Third World. The former was the number one priority and, it was argued, necessary to achieve success in the latter.”<sup>120</sup> The Brezhnev administration went about achieving these goals by modifying the policy that was already in place; they de-emphasized the push of African nationalism and altered their intentions to spread ideology within African states. The emphasis in sub-Saharan Africa then shifted to “the distribution of

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<sup>117</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 59.

<sup>118</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 300.

<sup>119</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 298.

<sup>120</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 163.

arms to states proclaiming a revolutionary commitment, as well as the construction of political relations between ruling Marxist-Leninist or vanguard parties and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.”<sup>121</sup> The Brezhnev administration stressed that military assistance and political support were the most important factors in expanding the USSR’s influence.<sup>122</sup> It was clear that the Soviet Union was willing to promote their political influence in whatever way they could; all measures the Soviet Union took were implemented to ensure that the new African states would be closely connected with them.

In terms of economic aid, the Soviet Union viewed their assistance as a way to deepen cooperation with developing countries. The USSR assisted these developing countries “in the construction of industrial and power projects, the development of transport, agricultural mechanization and land irrigation, geological prospecting for mineral and fuel reserves, personal training and other fields.”<sup>123</sup> The Soviet Union modeled its aid program based on three different criteria; they focused mainly on the strategic importance of the individual African state, the potentiality for that African state to provide them with raw materials, or to be a good market for the Soviet Union to export their goods, and the significance of influence from the West in the region.<sup>124</sup> Soviet aid was intended to:

disrupt the traditional economic and political ties of [Soviet] aid clients with the West; to promote the state sector to the detriment of private enterprise, and to encourage existing socialist predispositions in many of these countries toward more Soviet-oriented forms of economic and social organization; and more generally, to help create the social and

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<sup>121</sup> Webber, Mark. "Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Final Phase." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1992), 16.

<sup>122</sup> Lawson, Colin W. "Soviet Economic Aid to Africa." *African Affairs* 87, no. 349 (1988), 502.

<sup>123</sup> Lawson, Colin W. "Soviet Economic Aid to Africa." *African Affairs* 87, no. 349 (1988), 502-503.

<sup>124</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 299.

material conditions and the cadres deemed essential prerequisites for the transition of developing countries to a 'noncapitalist' path of economic development and, ultimately, to socialism.<sup>125</sup>

Soviet economic aid, therefore, was more focused on finding allies that were ideologically compatible with them, and those who would be susceptible to Soviet influence. The emphasis was not so much to economically advance, but rather to politically advance. The USSR did not assist the African states to finance their social transformations, but rather, their cooperation was aimed at promoting "principles of equality and respect for mutual interests ... acquiring character of stable distribution of labour, contrary to the system of imperialist exploitation in the sphere of international economic relations."<sup>126</sup> Soviet aid was rarely in the form of grants, as they wanted to control where their money was going, so instead, much of their economic aid was through supplying arms. The Soviet Union's aid to African states was narrowly focused based on whether they were supporting an ally or whether they were assisting in a trade deal.<sup>127</sup> The Soviet Union realized that instead of investing large amounts of aid into Africa to spread influence, that there was a greater chance to effectively advance their national interests if they narrowed the scope of their support. "In the period of 1954 to 1965, USSR's aid ... was extended to 14 states and totaled \$271 million. By 1966, aid went to only three states and the overall figure dropped sharply to \$32 million. In the following year, the number of countries had been narrowed down to only two and the aid figure went further down to \$9 million."<sup>128</sup> By the 1970s, Soviet aid decreased again making it the lowest it had been in a decade. The USSR's aid

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<sup>125</sup> Pfaff Françoise. *Focus on African Films*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, 224.

<sup>126</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 78.

<sup>127</sup> Lawson, Colin W. "Soviet Economic Aid to Africa." *African Affairs* 87, no. 349 (1988), 507.

<sup>128</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 314.

was not strictly money and weapons; their aid included things such as “military hardware, training facilities for the liberation soldiers, and the availability of Soviet ‘advisors’ that aided in the planning of logistics and the overall strategy of guerrilla warfare.”<sup>129</sup> The Soviet Union also provided the training of national personnel. With the Soviet Union’s assistance, “about 500 thousand specialists and skilled African workers were trained, including 170 thousand directly during the construction and operation of facilities, when Soviet engineers, technicians and workers transferred their experience and knowledge to local citizens working side by side with them.”<sup>130</sup> Soviet aid was always based on the idea of supplying the means necessary for the African nations to fend for themselves. Though the USSR struggled in their economic endeavors, they never gave up in their belief that economic aid paired with political influence was necessary to encourage African nations to set off on a new path toward socialism.<sup>131</sup> They also believed that this economic aid would help dramatically win them favor in the political and diplomatic realms with their allied African states.

The most effective instrument of power employed by the USSR in Africa was military assistance. The Soviet Union’s ability to supply large amounts of aid while helping African groups to seize and maintain power made them superior to any other country providing aid to the African continent. The Soviet Union was “Black Africa’s premier supplier of conventional arms, and [was] able to deliver them in a sustained, massive, and coordinated fashion”<sup>132</sup> for years. The Soviet Union did not, however, supply arms to every African nation, nor did they supply weapons equally. The distribution of arms was determined “not by economic, but rather by

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<sup>129</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 303.

<sup>130</sup> Бондаренко, Александр. “В Борьбе За Африку.” *odnako.org*. Однако. Accessed March 16, 2020. <http://www.odnako.org/magazine/material/v-borbe-za-afriku/>.

<sup>131</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 314.

<sup>132</sup> Desfosses, Helen. "The USSR and Africa." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 16, no. 1 (1987), 4.

ideological considerations” as most of the weapons were received by countries that proclaimed the “so-called ‘socialist orientation.’”<sup>133</sup> The USSR distributed military assistance at various levels throughout Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen, Mozambique, Namibia, Algeria, Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mali, Ghana, Madagascar, Libya, Chad, Uganda, Nigeria, and Zambia.<sup>134</sup> Soviet military aid was said to be distinguished by “‘its revolutionary character.’ Freed of colonial inclinations.”<sup>135</sup> Soviet military aid advocated for the modernization of African countries by offering assistance focused on organization and discipline. Though the Soviets supplied large quantities of arms to Africa, Soviet assistance was not solely material as African nations received training and education from Soviet military experts.

In the mid-late 1960s, hundreds of Somali officers traveled to the Soviet Union for military training and teaching in Marxism-Leninism. Though the Soviet Union knew that this would not ensure that when persons returned to their country they would remain pro-Soviet, it did ensure that they were more willing to accept Soviet influence.<sup>136</sup> The Soviet Union worked to expand its influence by utilizing their military to exploit opportunities and maximize its power by “acquir[ing] access to military-related facilities in Africa’s littoral states in order to support the operations of its ocean-going surface navy and maritime aerial reconnaissance.”<sup>137</sup> These policies then justified “the use of armed forces in furtherance of state interests in the Third World [and] gave an added motive to the utilization of such refueling stops or points of entry; notably so that merchant ships and air-lift transporters could supply arms to Soviet clients involved in

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<sup>133</sup> Desfosses, Helen. "The USSR and Africa." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 16, no. 1 (1987), 4.

<sup>134</sup> Бондаренко, Александр. “В Борьбе За Африку.” *odnako.org*. Однако. Accessed March 16, 2020. <http://www.odnako.org/magazine/material/v-borbe-za-afriku/>.

<sup>135</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 76

<sup>136</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 96.

<sup>137</sup> Webber, Mark. "Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Final Phase." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1992), 19.

regional conflicts.”<sup>138</sup> The Soviet Union stressed the importance of maintaining positive relationships with African nations so as to build up allies and to ensure its position on the continent.

During the 1970s, the Soviet Union made a significant attempt to infiltrate Africa and, “after a decade of relative indifference to African developments, Soviet arms and advisers, in support of Cuban troops, poured into Angola and Ethiopia”<sup>139</sup> as well as Mozambique. Involvement in these countries emphasized the USSR’s interests in Africa because they began to stream many of their resources into the conflict occurring within these countries. Because there were many South African threats against Soviet-supported groups, many Africans supported and thus encouraged Soviet involvement in these areas, which then legitimized the USSR’s involvement.<sup>140</sup> The Soviet Union’s new approach toward dealing with conflict was re-evaluated and highlighted a need for more flexibility when dealing with internal friction. “In the case of Ethiopia, the country ... had to contend with two threats: one, by the Eritreans who want[ed] to secede, and the other, by the Somalis who want[ed] to join their fellow brothers in Somalia.”<sup>141</sup> The conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia began after Somalia was granted independence in 1960. Since the beginning of Somalia’s independence, they did not accept the borders that were drawn out and therefore began a border dispute fight. The Soviet Union had a longstanding relationship with Ethiopia and, according to the USSR, their relations were “a graphic example of the Leninist policy of peaceful co-existence: ‘Ethiopia [was] a monarchy. The Soviet Union [was] a socialist country. They [were] far from one another, but friendly ties inspired by mutual

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<sup>138</sup> Webber, Mark. "Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Final Phase." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1992), 19.

<sup>139</sup> Grey, Robert D. "The Soviet Presence in Africa: An Analysis of Goals." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, no. 3 (1984), 511.

<sup>140</sup> David, Steven R. "Africa: Moscow's Dubious Investment." *The National Interest*, no. 12 (1988), 133.

<sup>141</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 310.



respect and trust [were] established and [grew] stronger between the Ethiopian and Soviet peoples.”<sup>142</sup> The USSR’s relations with Ethiopia appeared solid and the Soviet Union was instrumental in providing them with all of their requests including the “supply of about \$1 billion worth of weapons, 225 planes that carried out the air-lift of heavy armour and soldiers to Ethiopia, the launching of a control satellite, and the strengthening of the Ethiopian forces by up to 1,500 Soviet advisers and 10,000 Cubans.”<sup>143</sup> Because of this, the Soviet Union played a vital role in helping Ethiopia defend her borders and maintain her territory.

After Somalia was granted independence, they turned to the West for aid, but were rejected. Somalia then turned to the USSR, and the Soviet Union, “confident that its economic assistance would have a political effect,”<sup>144</sup> chose to assist Somalia by supplying them with aid, even though they still had deals with Ethiopia. The USSR attempted to balance relations with both Ethiopia and Somalia as the Soviet Union wanted remain in good relations with both countries; the Soviet Union was not concerned with the local disputes between the two countries, but rather was concerned with obtaining military facilities in these strategic areas.<sup>145</sup> The Soviet Union took on “long-term financing and the provision of technical assistance in the form of loans. This assistance was aimed at the construction of large facilities in the base sectors of African economies”<sup>146</sup> such as Somalia. The Soviet Union’s deal with Somalia:

assured Somalia of its full support in overcoming the ‘colonial legacy. ‘... in September 1960, the USSR and Somalia established full diplomatic relations... Under the terms of

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<sup>142</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 45.

<sup>143</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 310.

<sup>144</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 49.

<sup>145</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 51.

<sup>146</sup> Бондаренко, Александр. “В Борьбе За Африку.” *odnako.org*. Однако. Accessed March 16, 2020. <http://www.odnako.org/magazine/material/v-borbe-za-afriku/>.

their agreement, Moscow granted Somalia a long-term credit of 40 million rubles at 2 1/2% per cent interest for the development of industry and agriculture, including specific projects to be built with Soviet assistance, and a short-term loan of 7 million rubles for trading purposes. The USSR also gave free assistance to the Somali government in a number of other areas.<sup>147</sup>

This deal that the Soviet Union established with Somalia was modest in Soviet standards, but it was an agreement that would provide a large amount of support internally for Somalia. In this agreement, the Somali army vastly expanded and they were provided with arms, training centers for their soldiers, and the training of national personnel. The Soviet Union's relations with Ethiopia deteriorated, even though the USSR desperately tried to remain connected with the two countries. By 1963, relations with Ethiopia stagnated as an arms deal was created between the Soviet Union and Somalia, displaying to Ethiopia that the Soviet Union was no longer in favor of them; in the context of the Ethiopian-Somali dispute, "Soviet policy evolved from detached neutrality to what might be termed permissive neutrality [combining] a formal acceptance of the principle upholding the inviolability of territorial borders at independence with a willingness to supply arms to a state dedicated to undermining that very principle."<sup>148</sup> Ethiopia became angry and therefore broke all relations with the Soviet Union; Soviet military policy proved greater in Somalia as their efforts were more concentrated there and they perceived Somalia to be the more relevant of the two countries that would bring them advancement. However, in the late 1970s, when Somalia invaded Ethiopia, the Soviet Union, disapproving of the invasion, "dramatically shifted massive support from Somalia to Ethiopia and then played a key part in the military

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<sup>147</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 48.

<sup>148</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 55.

defeat of its former ally in the Ogaden conflict of 1977-78.”<sup>149</sup> The Soviet Union knew that it had to change alliances so as to protect their best interests and found Ethiopia to be a great ally as the DERG (the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia) had overthrown the Ethiopian monarchy in 1974, and embraced communism.

In southern Africa, the Soviet Union became involved with Angola because it viewed relations with the African nation as a way to revolt against the West. The USSR had, of course, strategic, economic, and political objectives in Angola, and much of “its success in achieving them was undoubtedly helpful by the limitations on Washington’s ability to act in the wake of the Vietnam war and the Watergate affair. But Angola was also one more stage where the will for the emancipation of indigenous peoples went up against and eventually prevailed over colonialism.”<sup>150</sup> The Soviet Union was able to extend their influence in Angola without disapproval from the rest of the African continent because there was no successor to Portuguese rule.<sup>151</sup> The Soviet Union took advantage of this fact and set out to yield military influence by involving themselves in Angola’s civil war. The situation in Angola, from the Soviet Union’s perspective, “transformed itself from being ‘whom to support’ in a protracted and indefinite anti-colonial war to an opportunity to help establish a friendly regime in an independent Angola.”<sup>152</sup> The Soviet Union was able to gain many naval bases along the west coast of Africa by sending massive amounts of arms and Cuban troops to support the MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola).<sup>153</sup> By 1975, the MPLA was receiving major shiploads of weapons and,

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<sup>149</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, xi.

<sup>150</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 161.

<sup>151</sup> David, Steven R. "Africa: Moscow's Dubious Investment." *The National Interest*, no. 12 (1988), 133.

<sup>152</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 99.

<sup>153</sup> Pearson, Roger. *Sino-Soviet Intervention in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Council on American Affairs, 1977, 55.

“according to official US estimates, between April and October 1975, 27 shiploads arrived and 30 to 40 air missions were flown to deliver war equipment.”<sup>154</sup> This military aid allowed the MPLA to fight and gain influence in the country. Before the Portuguese fell from power in Angola, Soviet policy in Angola was exclusively based on supporting the MPLA, which “consisted of some financial and military assistance, complimented with diplomatic support, particularly in the socialist and Third World international fora.”<sup>155</sup> However, after the fall of the Portuguese empire in 1974, the Soviet Union increased its support in Angola which allowed the MPLA to make significant advances in their push for independence. The Soviet Union’s investment in the MPLA was not simply out of kindness; there were factors that played an important part in outlining the role and strategy of the Soviet Union in Angola:

A socialist outlook was also linked to the MPLA’s conception of an Angolan nation. The movement’s ideologues often referred to the inherent dangers in tribalism and racialism, claiming that their fight was not against whites but against the ‘unjust colonial system’. The ethnically diverse and urban leadership of the MPLA may have found in Marxism the ideal prism with which to establish their political and social objectives.<sup>156</sup>

The Soviet Union capitalized on this notion and was therefore persuaded to assist Angola. Portugal’s intent on decolonizing played a large, contributing factor to Soviet escalation of its support for the MPLA. Also, in the height of the Cold War, the Soviet Union gained positive world recognition because they opposed the two countries who were backing UNITA (The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola): the US and South Africa. The US was

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<sup>154</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 102.

<sup>155</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 161.

<sup>156</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 171.

immensely criticized for working with the most hated country on the continent, South Africa, which ultimately made the Soviet Union look like a hero in the midst of this conflict. The Soviets played a vital role in Angola by providing equipment to Angolan and Cuban forces throughout the country. Because Angolan forces depended on the Soviet Union for weapons and support, the USSR held “a *primus inter pares* position,”<sup>157</sup> meaning that the USSR had the final say in what happened in Angola.

Soviet military involvement in Africa was incredibly impactful as the Soviet Union was able to spread a great deal of influence through their supply of military equipment. The USSR, through their military support, supplied aid in an attempt to secure the dependence of the African countries they were assisting. The USSR viewed dependency as “a consequence more of internal weakness and external enemies than of a regime’s particular ideological orientation”<sup>158</sup> and because of this viewpoint, they were able to capitalize on the weaknesses of the nations who were struggling and in need of assistance. Studies of Soviet relations with the Third World “and with national liberation movements have shown that Moscow’s policy was essentially pragmatic, led mostly by whatever immediate or mid-term advantage it could gain *vis-à-vis* the West, and more particularly, the United States.”<sup>159</sup> The efforts of the Soviet Union in places such as Angola and Ethiopia that proved to be so successful have not, for the most part, been attempted anywhere else. The Soviet Union’s involvement in Africa in regard to their military support had both positive and negative features. In one sense, many regimes were highly dependent on the USSR and “thus reluctant to antagonize it on a range of foreign policy issues. At the same time,

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<sup>157</sup> FONTANELLAZ, ADRIEN. *WAR OF INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA: Volume 2: Angolan and Cuban Forces 1976-1983*. Place of publication not identified: HELION & CO LTD, 2019, 12.

<sup>158</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 171.

<sup>159</sup> Guimarães Fernando Andresen. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: PALGRAVE, 2002, 164.

there [were] high costs of continued Soviet military support and escalating demands for economic assistance.”<sup>160</sup> However, whatever the Soviet Union implemented, they did so steadily and with care. The USSR sought to display their military capabilities as well as their concern with revolutionary change and national liberation.<sup>161</sup> Through all of the support that the USSR provided to many African nations, they rarely were in direct involvement militarily. They provided the resources for African regimes to fight, but the Soviet Union maintained the view that African states had the responsibility of solving their own problems.<sup>162</sup> The Soviet Union was willing to promote progress in the background, but not on the frontlines.

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### **Benefits for USSR**

The USSR’s involvement on the continent of Africa brought many important assets that motivated the drive to establish increased influence on the continent. Soviet policies were formed as an indispensable way to advance their global strategy. The Soviet Union thus capitalized on Africa’s position because it viewed it “in terms of the ‘maximum-minimum principle:’ Africa offers maximum gains for winning world influence with minimum risk to the Soviet Union.”<sup>163</sup> The control of Africa for the Soviet Union was instrumental and of great value “because of the raw materials which it could provide, but also because if Africa [fell] to the Soviets, Europe

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<sup>160</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 158.

<sup>161</sup> Desfosses, Helen. "The USSR and Africa." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 16, no. 1 (1987), 3.

<sup>162</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 301.

<sup>163</sup> Brayton, Abbott A. "Soviet Involvement in Africa." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 17, no. 2 (1979), 253.

could easily be suffocated into submission by economic pressures.”<sup>164</sup> Therefore, the USSR was heavily invested in working to spread their influence in order to guarantee immense profit.

One of the main advantages that Africa provided to the Soviet Union was access to strategically important areas of the world. After their expulsion from Egypt in the 1970s, the Soviet Union shifted its focus to the Horn of Africa. Their involvement in the Horn of Africa was consequential because of its strategic significance. The Horn of Africa provided access to the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea; it served as an area that connected the predominately Muslim and predominantly non-Muslim territories, and most significantly, was a strategically important area as it served as a connection point between Africa and Asia. The Horn of Africa was considered by many to be “a metaphor rather than a political entity.”<sup>165</sup> The Horn had no precise boundaries, but was often thought to comprise Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti. These territories compelled the Soviets to establish military influence in the region so as to establish their dominance in world affairs, for “the Horn flanks the oil states of Arabia, controls the Bab el Mandeb Straits which are busy international shipping lanes, dominates part of the Gulf of Aden through which oil tankers pass, and overlooks the passages where the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean converge.”<sup>166</sup> Having access to this region of the world would provide countless opportunities for the Soviet Union to participate in major events or to exert pressure on other global powers. Considering the Soviet Union’s interest in Egypt, the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, the Horn provided a strategic way for the USSR to exercise pressure should it so choose: “pressure on Egypt and the Sudan might be exerted from Ethiopia with its control over

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<sup>164</sup> Pearson, Roger. *Sino-Soviet Intervention in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Council on American Affairs, 1977, 10.

<sup>165</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 25.

<sup>166</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 25.

important Nile waters, and pressures on Saudi Arabia and Iran might be exerted from the Red Sea and Indian Ocean States.”<sup>167</sup> Following Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, many believe that Soviet involvement in Angola and Ethiopia was only relevant to the USSR’s attempt to globally extend its power.<sup>168</sup> This argument is concerned with Soviet interest in gaining access to resources, not in Africa, but rather in the territories of the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. It was the Soviet Union’s interest in these opportunities that propelled them to become so involved in Ethiopia and Somalia; it explains why the Soviet Union was so desperate to keep good relations with both countries.

To gain additional access in world affairs, the Soviet Union worked to expand their naval power in the region of the Horn of Africa. They set up military bases in the Horn to “service ships deployed in the Indian Ocean, potentially provide facilities for intelligence work, and conceivably provide a springboard from which Soviet military power could be projected into the continent.”<sup>169</sup> The expansion of Soviet naval power was more aptly described as being a significant part of the arms competition between them and their Western rivals (most notably, the United States) in their race to gain access to different naval bases at both nuclear and non-nuclear levels.<sup>170</sup> The Soviets considered their entry into the Indian Ocean justifiable because of their political and geo-strategic interests, as “politically, a naval presence was seen by Moscow as a valuable instrument for consolidating ties with the littoral states.”<sup>171</sup> And, though African states expressed their disagreement of the militarization of the Indian Ocean, they had little care about

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<sup>167</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 167-168

<sup>168</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 324.

<sup>169</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 411.

<sup>170</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 411.

<sup>171</sup> Patman, Robert G. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 82.



the Soviet Union's naval involvement in the area. The Soviet Union also was sure to keep good relations with the African countries in the Horn so they could continue their pursuit of gaining access to more material resources as well as working to undermine the previously held ties between African states and the West.

The Soviet Union used Africa to further their economic development via their relations with African states through trade. They depended on Africa for the necessary raw materials for “production, to alleviate chronic shortages at home, and to export USSR’s manufactured items to the continent.”<sup>172</sup> Trade was a beneficial element for the Soviet Union; they bought raw materials from African states and, in return, exported manufactured goods. Or, the Soviet Union would benefit by being paid for their assistance (in places like Angola and Mozambique) through exports, the ability to fish in African state territories, or through the export of materials such as coffee.<sup>173</sup> The Soviet Union, though it was believed to have been well stocked with natural resources, was “covetous of access to Africa’s mineral wealth because, like the West, it [was] likely to run short of certain crucial stocks.”<sup>174</sup> The Soviet Union knew that, to be a superpower, one must take advantage of opportunities and resources, and build up as many activities in various areas so to derive as much economic benefit as possible. The Soviet Union’s cooperation with African countries in regard to trade benefitted the Soviet Union immensely. As time elapsed, the volume of money that the Soviet Union accumulated increased dramatically; the “foreign trade turnover of the USSR with African countries increased from 270 million rubles in 1960 to 3.5 billion rubles in 1984.”<sup>175</sup> By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union had made agreements

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<sup>172</sup> Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Soviet Policies in Africa." *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980), 322.

<sup>173</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 164.

<sup>174</sup> Grey, Robert D. "The Soviet Presence in Africa: An Analysis of Goals." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, no. 3 (1984), 514.

<sup>175</sup> Бондаренко, Александр. “В Борьбе За Африку.” *odnako.org*. Однако. Accessed March 16, 2020. <http://www.odnako.org/magazine/material/v-borbe-za-afriku/>.

with numerous African nations regarding economic and technical cooperation. The Soviet Union assisted in the construction of “600 facilities in the states of the region... including more than 120 industrial enterprises, 24 electric power facilities, 15 ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, as well as mining, 8 oil and gas industry facilities, 26 for metalworking and equipment repair, 14 for food industry, etc.”<sup>176</sup>

Along with building up trade in raw material resources, the USSR also benefitted immensely from their supply of arms to African states. Whether countries were searching for arms to deal with internal or external threats, many turned to the Soviet Union for assistance; both Africans and Soviets were content with this simple arrangement as the Soviet Union and many African governments “shared common interests in maintaining the convention of African non-alignment.”<sup>177</sup> In the 1960s, countries such as Somalia and Nigeria turned to the Soviet Union instead of the West for arms because many Western countries were not motivated to supply arms as quickly and easily as the Soviet Union.<sup>178</sup> With each request for arms, the Soviet Union was given an opportunity to “cultivate the confidence and goodwill of the recipient state.”<sup>179</sup> The USSR did not urge places such as Somalia to participate in or enact wars or any other type of conflict, but rather, followed the necessary guidelines and provided what was requested of them. The Soviet Union then benefitted from places like Somalia by forming friendly relations and gaining access to strategic naval facilities. What was important to the

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<sup>176</sup> Бондаренко, Александр. “В Борьбе За Африку.” *odnako.org*. Однако. Accessed March 16, 2020. <http://www.odnako.org/magazine/material/v-borbe-za-afriku/>.

<sup>177</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 401.

<sup>178</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 404.

<sup>179</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 404.

Soviet Union was that their relationships (whether political, economic, or military) allowed them the possibility of gaining access to resources not only for the time being, but in the future as well.

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### **Limits of Intervention**

Though the Soviet Union had many opportunities to exert influence on the African continent and benefitted in a variety of ways, there were also limits to what the Soviet Union was able to accomplish. When the Soviets first became interested and involved in Africa, they were met with certain advantages and disadvantages. Firstly, “each party was ignorant of the other. To most Africans, Russia was a country which had pulled itself up by its bootstraps after the Revolution, had fought a heroic war against fascism and had no overseas colonial record; most Africans were ignorant of the nature of the Soviet regime and of its relations with its East European neighbors.”<sup>180</sup> And, to Soviets, Africa was uncharted territory; they saw Africa as a place of opportunity to advance their global position as a world power. Because of this, the USSR was ignorant of African needs and therefore, the assistance that they could provide would prove to be limited. Instead of exhibiting a desire to assist the newly independent African countries in building up their liberal governments, the Soviet Union acted in self-interest and worked to establish programs that were more beneficial to the USSR.

The interests of the USSR in relation to African countries in terms of foreign policy was evident in places such as Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, and other countries on the continent. In varying levels, the Soviet Union provided these nations with military and economic assistance,

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<sup>180</sup> Brind, Harry. "Soviet Policy in the Horn of Africa." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 60, no. 1 (1983), 75.

but “in the end, the whole thing came down to the fact that with the fall of the Soviet empire (and sometimes even before) the African communist puppet regimes collapsed. The domestic political situation in the rebellious countries of Africa changed regardless of the readiness of the Soviet ‘elder brothers’ to defend them.”<sup>181</sup> The Soviets therefore learned that it was nearly impossible to gain political influence through their military and economic assistance. “Internal strife in Angola and Ethiopia and their external enemies’ pressures carr[ied] real costs for the Soviets, who [bore] the costs of internal reconstruction *and* military efforts. Thus, another paradox exists. Soviet power is most secure in a country when the regime is highly insecure; but this is a costly situation.”<sup>182</sup> The Soviets also learned that no matter how much African states embraced socialism, these countries should not be underestimated. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviets defended third-world regimes that were in favor of socialism, but their defense of these regimes have been considered as “contributing to the worsening of regional disputes, the exacerbation of East-West rivalries, and the neglect of diplomatic co-operation with the United States in search of political solutions to local conflicts.”<sup>183</sup> However, the USSR did not focus entirely on promoting socialism; Ghana, Guinea, and Mali were the first African states to have established close relations with the USSR; in these countries, the Soviet Union did not impose Soviet international policies, nor did they emphasize the promotion of socialism.<sup>184</sup> In fact, there were very few sincere efforts to impose socialism in any of the African nations by the Soviet Union.

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<sup>181</sup> “Кому и Как в Африке Помогал СССР.” rambler.ru. Рамблер/новости, January 21, 2018. <https://news.rambler.ru/other/38940954-komu-i-kak-v-afrike-pomogal-sssr/?updated>.

<sup>182</sup> Desfosses, Helen. “The USSR and Africa.” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 16, no. 1 (1987), 5.

Bienen, Henry. “Soviet Political Relations with Africa.” *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 171.

<sup>183</sup> Webber, Mark. “Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Final Phase.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1992), 15.

<sup>184</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. “African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy.” *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 404.

The USSR recognized that some African states needed instead to advance economically through capitalism first.

The USSR took on a large encumbrance economically over the course of their involvement with Africa. In an attempt to expand influence, they distributed enormous amounts of aid throughout the years, specifically in regard to supplying weapons and military aid. "The economic cost of providing third-world regimes with mounting military assistance in pursuit of apparently unwinnable wars came to be regarded as an increasingly onerous burden on the Soviet economy"<sup>185</sup> and, while some of this aid proved helpful in gaining favor with some of the African nations, ultimately, it was never effective in gaining the type of influence that the Soviet Union desired. Instead, weapons given to the African countries heightened the amount of conflict in these nations; the USSR learned those economic interests were a non-effective way of establishing influence in the continent. Even in countries where the Soviets had strong political and military holds, they had "relatively weak economic positions in trade, project assistance, and investment in Africa as a whole."<sup>186</sup> The failures of the Soviet Union in Africa are a reflection of their unstable policy and lack of ingenuity:

The Soviet Union did not create famine in Ethiopia or terrible economic conditions in Mozambique and Angola, but its role in these countries, including the urging of centralized economic planning and state controlled agriculture, has made a bad situation many times worse. The removal of the Soviet presence and influence is a necessary condition for real improvement.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Webber, Mark. "Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Final Phase." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1992), 4.

<sup>186</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 165.

<sup>187</sup> David, Steven R. "Africa: Moscow's Dubious Investment." *The National Interest*, no. 12 (1988), 137.

The failures in Africa in connection with the Soviet Union were not all due in part to the USSR getting involved on the continent. The struggle for the Soviet Union was that of the foundations of the African political and economic systems established before the USSR's intervention. The problem was less of Soviet Union not knowing how to implement their policies, but rather, the resistance of the Africans due to the lingering influence from their former colonial powers.<sup>188</sup> The Soviet Union's influence, technology, and power, therefore, was limited by their Western rivals who had already instilled on the continent a sense of superiority in all areas of involvement. The Soviet Union, over the course of the 30 years of their involvement, sent hundreds of Soviet advisors, soldiers, officers, etc. to assist African nations. However, because of the changing political situations in African countries, Soviet troops left the region while simultaneously losing influence as well.<sup>189</sup>

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## **Conclusion**

Africa, for a significant portion of the last century, has been of great interest to many global superpowers. After France granted independence to her former colonies, and as the Soviet Union became more deeply invested in foreign affairs, both nations sought to either claim or reinforce territory and relations on this great continent. France, in her conquest of the African world, was a nation that was immensely successful in obtaining power and spreading influence throughout the continent. By examining the relationship between France and African nations, it

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<sup>188</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "African Interests and Soviet Power: The Local Context of Soviet Policy." *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (1982), 404.

<sup>189</sup> "Кому и Как в Африке Помогал СССР." rambler.ru. Рамблер/новости, January 21, 2018. <https://news.rambler.ru/other/38940954-komu-i-kak-v-afrike-pomogal-sssr/?updated>.

was evident that “the key to French succession [to gaining influence] lie[d] not in its diplomatic skill, but in the breadth of relationships.”<sup>190</sup> France was linked to her former colonies by the cultural and economic influence that she exerted on them; these influences allowed France to wield power, helping her gain advantages in many other fields. The Soviet Union, contrastingly, did not have the advantage of already having relations with African nations and therefore had to go about grabbing their attention in a different manner. They focused on the power and influence that they could provide to African states. “Soviet power [was] more visible and less subtly exerted than that of France, which [was] based on technical assistance, economic trade and investments, and cultural relationships as well as military assistance and interventions.”<sup>191</sup> Both France’s and the Soviet Union’s intervention in Africa post-colonialism was accomplished in very different ways, but interesting enough, for very similar reasons.

The reasons that France gave for her intervention in Africa was that she believed there was a need for privileged countries to assist less fortunate countries. France crafted her appearance to be that of a powerful country reaching out to advance the less powerful countries so that they could build them up and be more level in the field of international politics and relations. France attempted to justify her intervention as a way to protect her former colonies; France “always portrayed [herself] as a staunch and dedicated defender of human rights and of racial equality. Yet the historical reality hardly conform[ed] to this widely-held belief”<sup>192</sup> as her anterior motives were not in line with what France was attempting to demonstrate. France’s main motive for her intervention in Africa was for African nations to be dependent on her. Having had

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<sup>190</sup> Staniland, Martin. "Francophone Africa: The Enduring French Connection." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 489 (1987), 61.

<sup>191</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 163.

<sup>192</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 190.

a long history with the African continent, after independence, France was not ready to let her accomplishments fade away. By continuing to flood African states with French culture, language, and traditions, it was impossible for African nations to believe they could be independent without some form of assistance from France. France created an image that Africa was unable to develop on its own and that for Africa's success, France must be a part of that story. For France, Africa was a place where she could gain more recognition in the international world and, with the support of African nations, France could advance politically as well. In comparison with France, the Soviet Union released significantly less information about their specific involvement in Africa. However, their main argument was that they were working to protect African nations by countering western aggression. While France utilized her history to gain influence on the continent, the Soviet Union took advantage of France's and the West's history of colonialism against them by advocating for independence and liberation from their colonial oppressors therefore gaining influence on the continent. In this way, the Soviet Union worked to create a dependency in which the African states believed that they needed the Soviet Union for success. Just as Africa was to France, the Soviet Union saw Africa as a place where she could expand her power in world affairs as well as a place where culture and language could be spread to gain influence. However, because France had historical ties with her African counterparts, her cultural influence was more effective and lasting.

The results of the policies that France and the Soviet Union implemented in Africa were drastically different. France focused mainly on expanding influence in her former colonies. The policies that were implemented by France were mainly to protect her interests and to solidify her position on the continent. France's policies were implemented to maintain the status quo on the continent; she was accepting of African leaders and governments so long as they were willing to



work with France and for France. France militarily intervened on the African continent many times during the span of those thirty years, but many of those interventions were to protect French interests. France's defense doctrines noted that France was not required to intervene should the African nations need assistance. By evaluating France's actual involvements on the continent, one can see that her involvement was out of protecting her national interests. Though France invested a great deal of money into Africa, most of the economic programs that were implemented were significantly beneficial to France. The policies that the Soviet Union implemented were mainly focused on taking advantage of whatever the West lost. The Soviet Union fixated on expanding influence in strategically located places so as to give them access to additional resources. Their attempts to exert influence on foreign policy was motivated by the desire to build and spread communism and socialism. Soviet ideology was a main motivating factor for Soviet policy until they realized that their military assistance was superior to that of the West and that they could utilize those strengths instead. Whereas France helped African nations directly in fighting, the Soviet Union stood more in the background providing African nations the means necessary for fighting. The USSR provided African nations an ample supply of arms and military training assistance (or, in the case of Angola, sent Cuban troops to intervene for them) and utilized this method to gain political influence. Their assistance to various countries depended entirely on how much the USSR could benefit. The USSR economically provided a substantial amount of aid as well to the African states, but their most effective instrument of power was the war materials they provided.

Both France and the Soviet Union greatly benefitted from their involvement in Africa. As both countries were seeking to advance their national interests, they sought places and resources that would advance them as a nation. In Africa, France found many strategic resources such as

oil and uranium as well as a market to sell French goods. Trade became a vital asset for France, which led to her becoming one of the continent's biggest trading partners. With the strategic placement of French military bases, France too gained access to important areas that connected them with important global affairs. The Soviet Union also placed a significant emphasis on strategic locations. The Soviet Union benefitted dramatically from their involvement in strategically located countries because it gave them access to waters and trade routes that were heavily used for world trade. Having access to those regions of the world boosted the Soviet Union's influence as a global power. The Soviet Union also directly benefitted from the raw materials that the African continent had to offer. Trade was very important for the Soviet Union; they traded manufactured goods for Africa's raw materials. The USSR benefitted immensely from their dealings of weapons on the African continent, as many African nations actively sought them out for assistance in providing them war materials.

Though both France and the Soviet Union succeeded in many of their goals, neither country was able to exert full control over African states. French intervention in Africa post-colonialism brought about much confusion and chaos for France. France was perceived as being neo-colonial and was criticized for its inability to have the resources to actually help the African continent. As time went on, the historical ties that bound France and Africa together began to fade as a new generation of Africans were coming to power with new ideas and new perspectives, making French involvement less attractive. The Soviet Union faced different problems. Because the Soviet Union lacked historical ties with Africa, they had a difficult time establishing and solidifying those connections. And, because the USSR was so focused on internally benefitting, they made many mistakes in their decisions and due to their unstableness, many of the foreign relations that they had established began to deteriorate as well.

France and the Soviet Union played a large role in Africa's history during the 1960s-1990s. French presence in Africa was constant and unyielding. During the 1960s-1990s, France "exercised a 'virtual empire' in sub-Saharan Africa, premised on the cultural, economic, linguistic and personal ties forged during the colonial period and, somewhat less plausibly, on 'geographic proximity.'"<sup>193</sup> France exploited its colonies under colonialism, controlling them politically, economically, and militarily, and transitioned much of this into their post-colonial years. France's desire to "assimilate" African citizens into the French lifestyle was one of the major factors that allowed her stand out against other superpowers as this notion influenced Africans to want to "become French citizens, to participate in metropolitan politics, to imbibe French habits, etc."<sup>194</sup> France's neo-colonial strategy was implemented to "preserve a *status quo* that [was] clearly favorable to the conservative interests of the western world in general, and to France in particular."<sup>195</sup> This neo-colonial strategy that was designed to maintain that Africa remain dependent on France only heightened the "carefully-nurtured inferiority complex [that] has become progressively ingrained in the minds of many Africans and constitutes fertile ground for the development of new types of domination after political independence"<sup>196</sup> perpetuating the racist stereotype that Africans are incapable of running their own societies without the guidance of white men. Though France's involvement in Africa drastically declined, it was unlikely that France would abandon their hold in Africa any time soon, for they shared a significant historical tie: "without Africa, there [would] be no history of France in the twenty-first century."<sup>197</sup> France

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<sup>193</sup> Gregory, Shaun. "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000), 435-436.

<sup>194</sup> Harshe, Rajen. "FRENCH NEO-COLONIALISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA." *India Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1980), 175.

<sup>195</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 189.

<sup>196</sup> Martin, Guy. "The Historical, Economic, and Political Bases of France's African Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1985), 190.

<sup>197</sup> McKesson, John A. "France and Africa: Today and Tomorrow." *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990), 46.

could only be expected to continue to make attempted advancements on the continent, despite the difficulties she might face. But, France was not concerned that there would be any person to replace her in the long run. Unlike France struggling to justify her involvement in Africa, the USSR had few problems justifying their involvement to other African states, despite the weight of their interventions.<sup>198</sup> For the Soviet Union, many of their advancements were accomplished out of luck and “has not been, nor is likely to be, repeated.”<sup>199</sup> The Soviet Union, at the time, had the means necessary to project force on a significant number of African states. The balance of “advantages in the economic, ideological, political, and military spheres at any particular time-determine[d] the ways in which the Soviet Union integrate[d] its international expectations and assumed obligations in particular cases.”<sup>200</sup> The Soviet Union’s objective was to advance their national interests in whatever way possible. But the Soviet Union soon realized that their goals and policies could conflict “because African states [were] active participants in relationships with outsiders that [were] constantly in a process of adjusting and responding to them.”<sup>201</sup> Soviet strategies were difficult to maintain because the Soviet Union did not publicize its activities in Africa; “the inevitable differences of opinion among the Soviet leaders are not openly articulated in the Russian media, important documents are not leaked to the press, and few revealing memoirs are published by those who have retired.”<sup>202</sup> Overall, in regard to Soviet activity on the African continent, their motives can only be speculated. Ultimately, significant impact or change in Africa would take time; “ethnic patterns persist; classes remain weak and underdeveloped;

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<sup>198</sup> David, Steven R. "Africa: Moscow's Dubious Investment." *The National Interest*, no. 12 (1988), 133.

<sup>199</sup> David, Steven R. "Africa: Moscow's Dubious Investment." *The National Interest*, no. 12 (1988), 133.

<sup>200</sup> Nolutshungu, Sam C. "Soviet Involvement in Southern Africa." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 481 (1985), 142.

<sup>201</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 172.

<sup>202</sup> Grey, Robert D. "The Soviet Presence in Africa: An Analysis of Goals." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, no. 3 (1984), 516.

elites remain fragmented.”<sup>203</sup> Both France and the Soviet Union discovered that over time, their influence faded, and they were no longer needed in the way they once hoped. Though drastically different in their methods, France and the Soviet Union’s intervention in Africa post-colonialism share the same fundamental element: to advance their national interests and to extend their influence as a global power.

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<sup>203</sup> Bienen, Henry. "Soviet Political Relations with Africa." *International Security* 6, no. 4 (1982), 156-157.

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