CHAPTER V

PROMOTING CONTROLLED CHANGE:
THE PRIORITY OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION

The Ford Administration inherited a Southern Africa policy from the Nixon administration at a moment when events, having far reaching consequences for American foreign policy were taking place in the region. The major feature regarding foreign policy in the power transition in the United States was the continuation of Henry Kissinger as the Secretary of State. The subsequent history of the Ford administration indicates that he remained the dominant influence in the foreign policy establishment.1 In Kissinger's words, "one of the cruel torments of Nixon's Watergate purgatory" was his "emergence as the preeminent figure in foreign policy".2

Even during the Nixon administration Kissinger had shown a very evident tendency to view events in the Third World in a bipolar perspective and blame the Soviet Union for any development. After Watergate, Kissinger became

more neurotic about the Third World in such a manner that American interests in a particular region were identified almost completely in terms of Soviet involvement. Ford depended on Kissinger more than Nixon had done. This rise of Kissinger to eminence including his Secretaryship of State was in itself symptomatic of the transformation of American society and of the decline of those traditional reservoirs wherefrom public servants of the highest ranks had been customarily tapped. Continuity in foreign policy rather than any change was the foreign policy motive of the Ford administration particularly when Kissinger continued to play his old role. President Ford in an address to the joint session of Congress stated:

To the entire international community -- to the United Nations, to the World's non-aligned nations, and to all others -- I pledge continuity in our dedication to the humane goals which throughout our history have been so much of America's contribution to mankind.[5]


United States policy towards Southern Africa was based on Option 2 of National Security Study Memorandum 39. But it had already collapsed in 1974 with the events in the region following the Portuguese coup of that year. The Portuguese army's frustration over its Africa policy and the administration of colonies led to the new government's declaration that it would withdraw from its colonies. This acted as a catalyst for the events in Southern Africa culminating in the independence of Mozambique and the civil war in Angola. In Washington the effort to save Nixon's presidency in the wake of Watergate, deprived the policymakers of time and energy to concentrate on Southern African affairs. Moreover, the Portuguese situation was apparently peripheral to Washington's immediate concerns like detente and West Asia. 6 By the time Ford and Kissinger settled down, the realization dawned that the previous premises regarding Southern Africa were shattered. The Whites were no longer "here to stay". The choice that remained was to align with the pro-western factions in Angola which could form a pro-western government. 7 Under Kissinger's


7. The three groups involved in the Angolan Civil War were the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) backed by the Soviet Union, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) both backed by the West and its allies in Africa.
guidance the United States plunged into the unfathomable abyss of Angola. Instead of accepting the Angolan struggle as a war of independence, Kissinger defined it as a campaign of Soviet adventurism. Instead of assimilating the lessons of Vietnam the United States began supporting the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). 8 In mid 1975 the administration decided to send military supplies and cash amounting to about $30 million. Kissinger later stated that the covert activity was reported to eight congressional committees in more than twenty briefings in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974. 9

In the meantime South Africa commenced its own incursion into Angola. For several years it had collaborated with the Portuguese, in the military and intelligence fields and Angola had served as a base from which the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) camps were targeted. It also had interests in protecting the Cunene Dam. To protect these interests South Africa


invaded Angola with an armoured column in October 1975 in support of the FNLA and UNITA.10

It was widely believed that South Africa had intervened in Angola at the behest of the United States. But this was denied by Kissinger who pointed out that the United States had no particular stake in Angola and that American support to UNITA and FNLA was based on global considerations.11 In December 1975 Senator Dick Clark, Chairman of the Subcommittee on African Affairs introduced an amendment to a foreign aid authorization bill to prohibit all use of funds for covert activities in Angola. Senator John V. Tunney brought an amendment to the defence appropriation bill to eliminate $33 million which he estimated was for the Angolan adventure.12 Both the Clark and Tunney amendments were passed.13 Almost all members of Congress objected to the administration's policy of choosing the covert rather than the overt route. For them even if the American role in Angola was


12. The Defence Appropriation Bill contained the budget of the Central Intelligence Agency.

justified, the procedural impropriety warranted the cutoff. In Angola, the United States zigzagged between an executive policy of engagement and congressional policy of disengagement. 14

The South Africans had almost encircled Luanda by the end of 1975 when these developments took place. Undoubtedly they were furious at the American betrayal. 15 There are several accounts of the level of collusion between South Africa and the United States in the Angolan conflict. Kissinger disclaimed American collaboration with the South Africans at the Senate hearings on Angola in early 1976. 16 However, one of those who admitted collusion with the Americans was P.W. Botha, then South Africa’s Minister for Defence. He affirmed that South Africa had entered Angola with the knowledge and approval of the United States. 17

The South African intrusion


16. Angola, n.11.

17. The Senate Intelligence Committee issued its year-long study in mid 1978 documenting American collusion with South Africa.
appeared to be in collusion with Washington's security councils which seriously miscalculated the consequences. 18

The implications of the Angolan fiasco had a profound impact on Kissinger's thinking. His diplomacy was essentially Metternichian and conceived in classical balance of power terms. The prevention of any unregulated change in the prevailing balance of power between the major powers was a basic principle. 19 To him, the Soviet role in Angola represented a direct violation of the rules. The Soviet success posed a great threat to the prevailing order and the western interests it secured. It was likely that the domino theory was going to prove true in the case of Southern Africa. 20 Southern Rhodesia could be the next domino followed by Namibia and finally South Africa. Kissinger perceived that wars of national liberation could turn nationalist organisations into ideologically radical bodies because of the military support they received from the Soviet Union and the spread


20. The domino theory is the doctrine that states that if some key nation or geographical region falls into communist control a string of other nations will subsequently topple like a row of dominoes.
of the latter's influence in Southern Africa. In the light of these events Kissinger sought to change the image if not the substance of policy.

Kissinger's fundamental aim was to ensure the security of South Africa, where the West had its greatest concentration of interests. To ensure this he had to promote controlled democratization of Rhodesia and Namibia by installing moderate African leadership. At the same time armed struggle had to be "short circuited" because it provided the Soviet Union a good chance for further intervention. This strategic assessment was shared by the South Africans too. Moreover a lobby in the Pentagon, actively supported by South Africa perceived the importance of the latter for the United States.

The political costs of the ambivalent policy of the United States to South Africa are beginning to necessitate a rather fundamental assessment of this posture. The dramatic political changes in Southern Africa present the near-term prospect that South Africa will be the only white-minority regime left. If the United States continues to hedge, it will create important credibility problems for itself in the rest of Africa.[23]


Kissinger, therefore, saw the need for a new approach to the problems of Southern Africa.

At the same time, at the United Nations in October 1974, the United States opposed the move of the majority to expel South Africa from the world body. In the Security Council, the United States joined Britain and France in vetoing the resolution. The American representative, on the occasion stated:

Our analysis is that expulsion would say to the most hardened racist elements in South Africa that their indifference to our words and resolutions had been justified .... History holds no example of a pariah state that reformed itself in exile.[24]

The Christian Science Monitor in an editorial wrote that it appreciated the negative votes cast by the United States, Britain and others because ostracizing a nation from the United Nations on account of its internal policies was counterproductive. The United States


warned that this first attempt to expel a member of the United Nations would have set a shattering precedent which would gravely damage the UN structure. The American ambassador to the United Nations, John Scali said that the ouster would be a major strategic mistake at a time when voices of reconciliation were being heard out of South Africa. 26

By the end of 1974 when the South African expulsion issue was in the fore, the NSSM 39 was leaking into the press and Kissinger's credibility was on the wane. The Department of State refused to discuss the implications of NSSM 39 and told reporters that it was "nonsense" to suggest that the United States at any time during the Nixon administration had decided to tilt in favour of White regimes. Privately, however, officials were well aware of the damage that the disclosure of the memorandum could do and they were engaged in an intense effort to show that whatever may have been recommended in early 1970, there had been in effect little change in American policy towards the region. 27


Within the Department of State, styles differed. Kissinger's lieutenants lacked his 'realpolitik' mould. Donald Easum, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs who was sworn into office one month before the Portuguese coup did not fit into Kissinger's club. To protect Kissinger's credibility, Easum scheduled a Southern African trip to follow his visits to New York during the first three weeks of the General Assembly session where the expulsion issue was being debated. Some credibility had to be put into the communication policy towards South Africa in order to explain the American veto. Kissinger however did not approve of certain statements Easum was making or positions he was taking. As early as 1973 Kissinger had promised the South African Foreign Minister, Hilgard Muller that he would stop the "missionary zeal" of the career foreign service towards South Africa. Kissinger also began regarding Easum too pro Black African, myopic and a dull witted bureaucrat.28

Several statements that Easum had made during his African trip provoked Kissinger. At Dar es Salaam on November 2, 1974, Easum stated that the United States was using its influence "to foster changes in South Africa --

not to preserve the status quo". On arriving at Lusaka the same day, Fasum indicated that the United States would keep open its options regarding the issue of South Africa's UN membership. He said that the expulsion issue would certainly arise in the General Assembly again in future. He felt that the degree to which South Africa had made meaningful changes would determine the stances that various countries would take on the issue on such occasions. On November 3, Easum responding to press enquiries stated that it was American policy to deny visas for high ranking South African military officials to visit the United States unless the visit was for purely private purposes. These statements were the last straw as far as Kissinger was concerned. This was no time to provoke the South African government.29

Kissinger believed that the drift of thought in the Bureau of African Affairs for the previous ten years had been towards support of the Black African view of South Africa, towards tolerance of African governments and taking a "blind eye" approach to the growing Soviet and Cuban involvement in Africa.30 He wanted these

29. Ibid.

positions reversed. Therefore Easum had to go. In his place was appointed Nathaniel Davis, who was the ambassador to Chile when Allende was overthrown. Kissinger thought that Davis would take an interventionist policy on Angola. Above all the appointment would reassure South Africa that the United States would not support any drastic change in South Africa. The sacking of Easum was followed by a report that the United States would provide South Africa with enriched uranium for its first big nuclear power plant.

While Kissinger was making plans to befriend South Africa, a verbal battle was taking place at the United Nations. The episode which lasted for a few months began in October 1975 when Clarence Mitchell of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and a member of the American delegation to the United Nations addressed the Special Committee of the Security Council.

31. Kissinger thought that Davis would apply a hardline policy because of his counterinsurgency record in Latin America. The Frank Church Committee on Intelligence investigated Davis' role in Chile and found out that he did not appear to have actively engaged in covert efforts. Evidence suggests that he opposed such efforts in Chile.

He declared that apartheid was an odious and abhorrent system to which the United States had stated its opposition in numerous debates in successive sessions of the General Assembly.\(^{33}\) In the General Assembly, he repeated his statement made in the Special Committee:

The United States government has pursued a policy of seeking to encourage in South Africa a peaceful change from the policies of apartheid to policies which will provide for the attainment of basic human rights by all South African citizens, regardless of race. To this end, we have adopted a policy of communication...\(^{34}\)

He also stated:

The United States deplores the detention of persons whose only act is outspoken opposition to the system of apartheid. The South African government is courting disaster when such repressive measures have the effect of closing all avenues for peaceful change.\(^{35}\)


\(^{35}\) Ibid.
The speech stirred a controversy in South Africa with Prime Minister B.J. Vorster objecting to the charge that people were being detained for their opposition to apartheid. By the end of November 1975 Mitchell had a six thousand word reply with a long list of persons in South African detention for opposing apartheid. Addressing the General Assembly he was critical of the legal system of South Africa where laws made political opposition criminal. Such a thing was not regarded criminal elsewhere in the world. What was legal in South Africa was illegal by the standards of a liberal society. 36 Daniel Patrick Moynihan who was then Ambassador to the United Nations writes:

We had introduced a wholly new method of argument to the General Assembly. The equivalent, I was contend, of the "Brandeis brief" in the American legal system.[37]

Moynihan was critical of those countries which blamed the United States for its position on South Africa and regretted that no one listened or cared when the United States spoke against apartheid. 38 The General Assembly

36. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, n.33, p.244.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
resolution of December 10, 1975 strongly condemned "the action of those states and foreign, economic and other interests which continue to collaborate with the racist regime of South Africa". It strongly urged the main trading partners of South Africa including the United States to cease collaboration with the racist regime. 39

Kissinger's grand strategy of launching a counterinsurgency in Angola for the purpose of bringing about Southern African events in the desired manner suffered a setback through the congressional initiatives that have already been mentioned. He was thus forced to seek solutions of a different nature. Something had to be done about Rhodesia and South Africa. What moved him to take South Africa seriously and to invest his personal prestige in the solution of Africa's troubles was what motivated most western nations into action, namely the fear of instability and its consequences. The American analysis was that Black insurgent movements would eventually win the war against the White government. 40


The American diplomatic offensive was motivated by the realisation that the crisis in Southern Africa seriously threatened the interests of western capital and offered the Russian bureaucracy major opportunities. The long held belief was that South Africa was virtually impregnable and able to withstand any combination of internal or external threats. This belief was beginning to erode and the White regimes were being threatened by mounting African discontent and political and military support for guerillas operating from Angola and Mozambique. Kissinger realized that if the South African collapse was to be prevented, its help was necessary to put pressure on Ian Smith's White minority government in Rhodesia.

The year 1976 witnessed Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy in Southern Africa. Kissinger wanted to bring about majority rule in Rhodesia, and South African assistance was required to persuade it. It seemed ironical that South Africa was to deliver to Rhodesia the virtues of majority rule when the South African minority itself did


not believe in the principle. Rhodesia had survived since the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 mainly because of South African and Portuguese help. Now only the former could control its fortunes.

Thus in early 1976 Kissinger felt that Southern Africa needed his intervention. Moreover his reputation was strained over the collapse of his Vietnam agreement and he had failed to convince his countrymen about Angola. Time was running out on him. The principal purpose of the Kissinger initiative was to restore his image and ego. Where else could he go but Southern Africa which he thought was a little rural backwater which needed the Kissinger style. As an aide of the British Prime Minister Callaghan observed it could have worked even though he went in for the wrong reasons.43

Within Rhodesia, in 1976, the guerilla war had intensified. It spread beyond the borders, its strains on the economy were visible and had boosted emigration. But Smith was not prepared to surrender. Kissinger wanted to prevent the radicalization of the nationalist movement by making Smith concede to majority rule. Smith with his

narrow vision was not only expendable but had become a liability. Through his stubbornness he was inviting greater communist influence in the region. This threat had to be thwarted even at the expense of removing the Smith government. Developing a new policy involved three steps:

a) Making peace with Black Africans angry about American collusion with South Africa in Angola.

b) Getting the frontline states to accept some general term for a peaceful process in Rhodesia and Namibia.

c) Selling the terms to South Africa which would force a diplomatic settlement in Rhodesia and Namibia.[44]

Before embarking on his mission, Kissinger was careful to cover the tracks within the United States. Senator Charles Percy made a fact finding trip to Africa in April 1976 and prominent Democrats like Senator George McGovern were sufficiently informed to give public support to Kissinger's early moves. But while taking care of his left flank Kissinger ignored his right flank within the Republican party.45

After he had done all the groundwork before embarking on his historic African safari; Kissinger stated at a news

44. Richard E. Bissel, n.30, p.29.
45. Ibid.
conference on April 22, 1976 that he would clarify during his visit what the American position with respect to Southern Africa would be, and would also extend the strong support of the United States for majority rule in Southern Africa. Replying to a question whether he thought that majority rule in Rhodesia was possible in the next decade he replied in the affirmative. 46

Kissinger's major pronouncement during the trip was his speech in Lusaka on April 27, 1976. He began his address by stating that President Ford had sent him there with a message of commitment and cooperation. He announced that his journey was intended to give fresh impetus to American cooperation and usher in a new era in United States policy. There was nothing to be gained in a debate whether in the past America had neglected Africa or had been insufficiently committed to African goals. He said that the United States had many responsibilities in the world and given the burden it had carried in the postwar world, could not do everything simultaneously. Kissinger hailed the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969 and compared it to the American Declaration of Independence.

He then proceeded to unveil a ten point programme for a Rhodesian solution. The centrepiece of his speech was:

The United States will continue to encourage and work for peaceful change. Our policy toward South Africa is based upon the premise that within a reasonable time we shall see a clear evolution toward equality of opportunity and basic human rights for all South Africans.[48]

He also stated:

In the immediate future, the Republic of South Africa can show its dedication to Africa -- and its potential contribution to Africa -- by using its influence in Salisbury to promote a rapid negotiated settlement for majority rule in Rhodesia. This, we are sure, would be viewed positively by the community of nations as well as by the rest of Africa.[49]

The Times wrote that it was probably the most important statement of policy on Africa ever made by an American leader. Kissinger, it stated, had called for common action to achieve the great goals of national independence, economic development and racial justice, but


48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.
was less specific about American policy towards South Africa, except that his government would continue to encourage and work for peaceful change there. It also wrote that Kissinger's comparison of the Lusaka Manifesto to the Declaration of Independence was no doubt to establish the United States as another "revolutionary brother". The Guardian was of the opinion that Kissinger was not viewed as the man most likely to solve the problem of Southern Africa. It expressed the doubt whether the South African government would enforce sanctions against Rhodesia and risk the anger of the largely pro-Rhodesian White electorate.

The intended Black audience in Africa was listening, but many did not take Kissinger's rhetoric seriously. Setting foot on African soil after eight years, Kissinger represented his new policy as a humanitarian concern for peaceful change in the struggle. This humanitarianism was brushed off by Black leaders like Julius Nyerere who thought that racially oppressive situations had existed for long in almost all of Southern Africa and that there had been no convincing evidence of American concern in mitigating them. Others, however, thought that the

52. Henry Jackson, n.10, p.274.
presidents of the Frontline states showed favourable reaction to Kissinger's statement on Rhodesia and Namibia because the support for majority rule coming after years of tilt in the other direction was undoubtedly gratifying. Senator Dick Clark stated:

The South African situation is not a problem which does not need to be addressed until after the situations in Rhodesia and Namibia have been resolved. The South African situation poses by far the greatest threat of widespread racial violence and massive foreign intervention in Southern Africa.[54]

But the administration saw no reason to tamper with the South African apartheid regime which had protected American interests and appeared to be relatively stable. Kissinger's manifesto of commitment to majority rule was meant to abandon the Smith regime and support the Vorster regime. The speech which was hailed in the American press was, upon reflection, merely a recognition of changes in the status quo which preceded its delivery. The premise of Option 2 remained undisturbed. 55


The speech for all intents and purposes sought to forestall fundamental changes (i.e., revolutionary) by advocating gradualism at the expense of a very unpopular Smith regime in Rhodesia. Finally at no time did Kissinger extend the logic of the proposed positions contained in his speech to apply to South Africa. [56]

In essence, the speech signalled to the South African government that the United States would give it time to enact a mild programme of economic and social reform, not political reform, in exchange for cooperation on Rhodesia.

Nevertheless, one thing was certain. The statement signalled an important shift in American foreign policy. Kissinger did not send his message directly to the South African government but it was directed at them. Vorster had by then realized that continued support for Rhodesia was becoming dangerous. He was reluctantly prepared to pull back from his outer defences of Rhodesia and Namibia in return for Black African recognition of White rule in South Africa itself. Vorster preferred a moderate Black government to the Smith regime which would be a perpetual invitation to outside powers. Moreover, gold sales by the United States had driven down the price of gold to $126 an ounce with indications that it would go down to $80.

56. Ibid.
This was at a time when South Africa was searching for international credit to finance arms and petroleum purchases. Above all, a public meeting with Kissinger promised to confer unprecedented recognition on the South African government. Cooperating with the United States would increase the regime's legitimacy and stall any move for majority rule in South Africa. Moreover, like the United States, South Africa saw in the continuation of White rule in Rhodesia an invitation to greater communist involvement. Thus their interests converged on this issue. South Africa had been thoroughly integrated into the international economic system while Rhodesia had not been. The Rhodesian Whites had become a political liability and economically irrelevant. The Western attempt was to create a Black Rhodesian regime which would remain within a South African dominated common market.

Reacting to Kissinger's African trip, however, Vorster said that in view of the fact that he made pronouncements and prescribed solutions without consulting


Southern African countries including South Africa it was difficult to make an assessment of American policy. He stated:

I couldn't agree more and I would like to add that he is putting the United States on a no win course because he is now sitting down to sup with the devil and he should know that his spoon is not long enough to do that. The time is past for superficial platitudes. That's what the Lusaka speech was all about and, when he really comes to the point, I don't think he has satisfied anybody.[59]

Meanwhile, in the United States Kissinger's "new" African policy evoked response from several quarters. Addressing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 13, Kissinger said that President Ford planned to follow up actively on American pledges of moral, political and economic support for Black nationalist movements in South Africa. He also told the Committee that the United States had regained the initiative. The conservatives opposed the policy saying that the American pledges of support for Black nationalist movements were made without consulting Congress. Senator James B. Allen declared


that he took strong exception to Kissinger's African policy which would reward nations in Africa seeking to topple one (Rhodesia) of the two or three stable regimes in the entire continent of chaos. 61

In a statement Kissinger maintained that by offering a realistic alternative to violent change the possibilities had been enhanced for Blacks and Whites to work out for themselves the mode of their future existence and cooperation. South Africa, he said, was being offered the opportunity to turn away from its increasingly isolated position and positively engage in a moderate and hopeful process of peaceful change. 62 The Guardian wrote:

It makes a dramatic increase in open American involvement in the growing crisis in Southern Africa ... But it is an open secret that Dr. Kissinger views South Africa as the main lever available against the Smith regime .... South African cooperation in blocking economic or even military supplies to Mr Smith will certainly come up, but it is not certain what price Mr. Vorster will demand in terms of American support.[63]

By mid May 1976 Kissinger had also been negotiating with South Africa's Ambassador in Washington, Pik Botha. Pretoria was pleased by this opening of negotiations even though the trade-off was not entirely to its liking. Kissinger argued that primary responsibility for bringing Smith to a transfer of power in Rhodesia would be Vorster's. Kissinger had to maintain his credibility with the Black states already roped into the Kissinger deal. As preliminary talks went on between Kissinger and Botha in June, it was announced that the former would meet Vorster in Bavaria later that month.

At some point between his first African safari and the first meeting with Vorster in Bavaria in late June it seems Kissinger concluded it would require an American Secretary of State to discharge with honour Britain's last imperial responsibility in Africa. The most unfortunate thing for Kissinger was that this assignment was tactical, it did not call for the explication of principles or the elaboration of a new direction.[65]

As preparations for the meeting in Bavaria were going on, violence broke out in South Africa. Although there were several Black grievances, the immediate provocation was the government decision to make Afrikaans the medium of instruction, which they resented.

64. Richard E. Bissel, n.30, pp.29-30.

The protests culminated in violence and in the Soweto township several people were killed in police firing. 66

The events had a great impact in the United States especially when the talks were about to begin. For Afro Americans what they saw on the television screens or heard on their radios was terrible and that too in the land of their ancestors. American policymakers were forced to draw conclusions from Soweto, that such incidents could rebound on American national interests, intensifying racial antagonisms at home while catalysing Black dissent if not outright mutiny in the United States armed forces. 67

Moreover, the Soweto uprising marked a watershed in American strategic thinking about South Africa. No longer could American policy be narrowly focused on corporate and strategic interests as far as South Africa was concerned. Political and military decisions could engulf the United States in a Cold War confrontation, and the effects of racial strife could enter American society. The NSSM 39 had foreseen such a situation where the Soviets and the


Chinese would become the main beneficiaries of the conflict because of their support to the Black majority.\textsuperscript{68} The Guardian wrote that the riots had made Kissinger's meeting with Vorster even more delicate than before. On the eve of his departure Kissinger said that he regretted the events and went out of his way to assure Congressmen that he would bring up human rights issues in the talks. The Guardian also wrote that Kissinger's African policy was not merely to give South Africa the option of gaining time. Vaguely and without formal promises Kissinger was suggesting that South Africa could win friends and influence people by getting on the right side by abandoning Rhodesia and Namibia.\textsuperscript{69}

The Kissinger thesis was that the United States could not try to force South Africa change its internal policy. But at the same time he expected South African help in Rhodesia and Namibia which had become immediate problems of the day. In essence, the Kissinger policy was "linkage".\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p.247.
  \item \textsuperscript{69} The Guardian (London) June 18, 1976.
  \item \textsuperscript{70} Linkage is the process of connecting separate elements or actions to each other. According to the linkage theory, the development of economic, political and strategic ties between two countries, equally rewarding to both, would bind the two in a common fate, thereby removing the incentives for conflict and war. In Kissinger's view the linkage strategy was based on a balance between the carrot and the stick.
\end{itemize}
As scheduled, Kissinger and Vorster met in Bavaria in June 1976. It was the first time that such a high level American official had met a South African Prime Minister since 1948. Not only was it an acknowledgement by the United States of South Africa's key role in Africa, but it showed that Kissinger's aim in Rhodesia coincided with South Africa's interests, that it was preferable to have a moderate Black government in Rhodesia rather than a radical one. Both were able to establish common interests. Vorster could offer to put pressure on Rhodesia and Kissinger could offer the assurance that the United States would exert only minimal pressure on South Africa. At the same time both men believed that the time was ripe for a Rhodesian initiative. 71

Kissinger revealed that their discussions started from the assumption that South Africa was willing to help in working towards a peaceful solution. 72 No details regarding their discussions were given. The Standard wrote that the meeting could "produce a conditional alignment of the United States with a thesis dear to Pretoria in the joint defence of western strategic interests against Soviet imperialism in Africa".


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It also added that the fact that Kissinger did not recoil at the prospect of sitting at the same table as Vorster when the racial situation was bad was not explained solely by an objective analysis of the circumstances surrounding the Black explosion in Soweto.73

Kissinger justified his policy. In his report to Congress he stated that the prospect for negotiated settlements in Rhodesia and Namibia were enhanced. He said that time was running out, and formidable barriers remained. But if continued responsible efforts were made by all sides, the questions of South Africa could still be solved without great loss of life, suffering and bitterness and by giving each community an opportunity for a dignified life.74 The Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Africa, Dick Clark stated:

If the United States is serious about its new policy in encouraging peaceful change in Southern Africa, it will have to address the South African policy squarely, using every possible political, diplomatic and economic means to avert confrontation.[75]


In an address to the National Urban League, Kissinger appealed to South Africa to recognise that the wind of change was blowing through Africa. He said that apartheid was a mockery of any definition of human equality and promised that the United States would use all its influence to bring about change in South Africa. In another address Kissinger said that the American policy was finding widespread support around the world and that this was the best chance for peaceful solutions and for a secure and just future for Africa, free from outside intervention.

Following the Bavaria meeting, South Africa began to slowly put pressure on the Smith government. Between September 4 and 6, 1976, Kissinger and Vorster met again in Zurich. At the end of the talks Vorster announced publicly his acceptance of the principle of majority rule in Rhodesia. What promises he received in return were not revealed, but it looked certain that they included financial assurances (direct or indirect) and a promise of a more sympathetic American attitude towards South Africa.

76. Times of India (New Delhi) August 4, 1976.
in the United Nations. 78 At a news conference in Zurich on September 6, Kissinger stated that the United States was making a serious effort in order to see whether they could achieve "majority rule and minority rights", a peaceful end to disagreements, and negotiations to enable communities to live in peace. 79 On an earlier occasion Kissinger declared:

The United States must be true to its own beliefs. We urge South Africa to take account of the conscience of humanity. We will continue to use all our influence to bring about peaceful change... Our policy is based upon the premise that within a reasonable period of time we will see a clear evolution toward just internal arrangements.[80]

Although he had prepared the way with two meetings with Vorster, the critical factor in Kissinger's strategy remained the South African regime. Only Vorster could deliver the military and economic power necessary to force

78. Two months later the United States voted in opposition to a United Nations 'programme of action against apartheid'.


Rhodesia into line. Similarly it was Vorster who had to be persuaded to negotiate with the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), which he was reluctant to do. 81

In mid September Kissinger set out again for Africa on what was to prove his most historic mission, for talks on the political future of Whites in Southern Africa. On September 17 he travelled to South Africa and had two days of discussions with Vorster and he also met Black Africans. Later Kissinger met Smith to persuade him. His message was reinforced separately by Vorster. American-South African cooperation seemed to work. 82 The Kissinger mission showed the delicacy, complexity and immensity of the job involved. Black African leaders expressed the fear that the United States was acting out of self-interest to contain Soviet influence rather than out of a sincere commitment to the concept of majority rule. 83

On September 24, Smith announced that he had accepted Kissinger's terms which appeared to concede to a handover to a Black African government within two years.

81. Alex Callinicos and John Rogers, n.41, p.183.
On the same day President Ford welcomed the announcement and promised full support to all parties involved. The world was surprised by what seemed to be a complete "about turn" by Smith. The formidable combination of carrot and stick prescribed by Kissinger and Vorster seemed to prove effective where the efforts of Harold Wilson and his negotiators failed. It was a concession stemming most directly from the threats and inducements brought to bear by Kissinger, but his effort was most materially aided by the Vorster government which showed itself prepared for the first time to impede the flow of exports and imports through South Africa.

Kissinger had achieved success in his venture and wanted to utilise it in the United States Presidential elections just a few weeks away. The Geneva negotiations on Rhodesia commenced by the end of October and at the time of the American elections, were still continuing.


86. D.J. Goldsworthy, n.15, p.221.

87. Kissinger gave the impression to both sides and the Frontline states that the other side had agreed to their conditions. His scheme was eventually exposed as an ambiguous venture which fell short of agreement.
One of the most detailed statements on Southern Africa emanating from the administration was made in October 1976 by William D. Rogers, Under Secretary for Economic Affairs. He told Congress that the American concentration on Rhodesia and Namibia did not mean that the administration would ignore or compromise American interests in the problem of South Africa itself. At the same time the United States did not believe that an effort regarding the former would dilute the American capacity to influence favourably developments in South Africa. To the contrary, if it somehow avoided war in those neighbouring areas and shifted from violence to negotiations as the way to resolve racial conflict, the United States would have a profoundly positive effect on the circumstances within South Africa itself and its own prospects for peaceful evolution.  

US representatives have frequently described those elements of our policy toward South Africa which are designed to communicate our strong views on apartheid to the South African government and people ....

We believe it is important, for example, for American business to continue to reflect the principles of the United States in their operations in South Africa, and we believe that this can be done despite the existence of institutionalized black discrimination.[89]

In the Presidential elections of November 1976 Ford was defeated by the Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter. Soon after this the Geneva negotiations collapsed because Black Africans thought that they would get a better deal from the new Carter administration. Kissinger attributed the failure of the negotiations to the Black Africans. South Africa also withdrew support for the deal because of its own reasons.

The experience of the abortive 1976 negotiations highlighted the need for a more sophisticated approach to South Africa, but at a time when South Africa badly wounded politically by the Soweto riots, turned inward, less interested in responding to initiatives from the outside world. Even though Kissinger had negotiated a package deal of responsible satisfaction to the South Africans, the departure of the Ford administration and the internal problems of South Africa ensured the cancellation of that deal.[90]

89. Ibid., pp.535-536.
One South African issue that the Ford administration had to deal with during its last days was regarding Transkei, the homeland created by South Africa within its territory and granted independence. Before South Africa declared Transkei independent, the US House of Representatives, on September 21, rejected a resolution calling upon the administration to recognise the new state, by 245 to 156 votes. The supporters of the resolution like Philip M. Crane said that the rejection of Transkei would be a rejection of a Black nation which had sought independence through diplomatic negotiations and peaceful means. Larry P. McDonald, another Representative charged that it was the height of hypocrisy not to extend recognition to Transkei because of South Africa's social policies when the United States was recognising nations like the Soviet Union and Communist China. The opponents of the resolutions like Stephen. J. Solarz, on the other hand, argued that the United States should reject the independence move because it was an essential element of the policy of apartheid. Solarz thought that the rejection of the resolution would deter Kissinger from recognizing Transkei in return for South African assistance on Rhodesia. 91

Later that year when the United Nations General Assembly had voted to ignore Transkei, the United States abstained. Justifying the American position at a news conference in Hartford, Connecticut, Kissinger stated:

The difficulty with the new resolution was that, on the one hand, they refused to recognise -- called on members not to recognize the Transkei, and that part we agreed with, on the other, they called on all members not to have any dealings with anybody in Transkei, which had the consequence almost of recognizing it. And the United States, precisely because it will continue to deal with Transkei as if it were a part of South Africa, cannot accept the proposition that we cannot deal with the people that live in Transkei just because South Africa has declared it an independent state .... So our objection was a technical one, and if the United Nations had separated that one part from the rest of it, we would have voted for it.[92]

Writing long before this, John Marcum, a specialist on African affairs advised that the United States had to be guided by the collective judgement of African states as expressed through the Organization of African Unity (OAU). He believed that American credibility being a scarce but vital resource should be carefully used so that it would

not undermine the creative potential of American policy.\textsuperscript{93} Colin Legum, another expert wrote that the recognition of homelands could once again place the United States on the side of the status quo and against those seeking change and justice.\textsuperscript{94}

Kissinger's main contribution in Southern Africa appeared to have been in the realm of technique rather than principle. Critics of the Kissinger era of American foreign policy would find little in Africa to stop their criticism. Much depended on whether Kissinger's fast moving diplomacy somehow preempted policy based on principle and that may have been the price he had to pay Vorster for making the Kissinger agreement an immediate reality.\textsuperscript{95}

Never did Kissinger's approach divert from the realpolitik interests or the concrete strategic and ideological stake of the United States namely the rise of Africa as a critical factor in the Cold War.


\textsuperscript{94.} Colin Legum, n.53, p.762.

\textsuperscript{95.} Daniel I. Fine, n.65, p.22.
With Soviet bloc penetration into Angola and Mozambique, South Africa's economic and strategic importance to the United States became an issue of top priority.\textsuperscript{96} George Ball, a former American Under Secretary of State, called the whole thing an episode in which the United States tried to gloss over inherently unstable situations in order to show immediate results. To convert Smith speedily, Kissinger elevated Vorster and also may have made such commitments as in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{97}

Kissinger had no programme to bring change in South Africa. In fact his strategy was to align more closely with the Vorster regime to secure settlements in Rhodesia and then Namibia and also gain time for the South African government to reform its own system.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{96} Henry Jackson, n.10, p.276.


Julius Nyerere, the President of Tanzania found nothing humanitarian in the mission. He stated:

The "Kissinger initiative" did force Ian Smith to shift his ground, but it did not succeed in its declared objective. Neither did it remove Africa's uncertainty about the depth and geographical limitations of America's new commitments to change in southern Africa. For decades of history cannot be wiped out by one speech and a few months of highly individualistic one-man diplomacy.[99]

Kissinger left to his successor inescapably hard choices of both principle and strategy. There was hence far less opportunity for trouble shooting and technique. The most important question was whether the United States had committed itself to majority rule in Africa as a universal principle, or as a solution just for Rhodesia. Kissinger carefully avoided the subject of majority rule in South Africa itself, and although there was considerable suspicion among Africans, this was the price that Vorster extracted for his part in "converting Smith". On the other hand, the moral position of majority rule in Black Africa was viewed by Africans as absolute.100


100. Daniel I. Fine, n.65, p.23.
On the question why the United States got involved in Southern Africa, the most common answer would be the Soviet Union. For years the United States had ignored the region and its interest skyrocketed only when Soviet backed left wing regimes took over in Angola and Mozambique. Fearing that racial war in Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa would bring the entire region under Soviet domination and strengthen the polarization of the world into opposing camps, in 1976 the United States plunged into Southern Africa to defuse the South African powder key. Moreover, Washington was also worried that a racial war in Africa would reopen the wounds of racial confrontation in the United States itself, where they were just beginning to heal. 101

The Ford administration had intended to continue the policy of the previous one with regard to Southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular. What had guided American policy was Option 2 of NSSM 39. But the unexpected developments in Southern Africa shattered all assumptions of the United States.

It was then convinced that the existing approach was not sufficient to handle a situation which had the potential to develop into a serious crisis, with grave implications for domestic and foreign policy. But the administration's initiative came too late. By the time it felt that it had to involve itself in the affairs of Southern Africa, the situation was already beyond control.