CHAPTER VI
HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENLIGHTENED CAPITALISM:
AGENDA OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION

Jimmy Carter's election to the White House raised high hopes in the minds of many who desired a change from the two preceding administrations, particularly a different American policy towards South Africa. To a great extent this impression was created as a result of Carter's background and the message he had conveyed during the election campaign. He spoke of moralism, human rights and several things that the Republican administrations lacked. Carter was critical of the Nixon-Ford administrations which he believed had evolved a kind of secretive "Lone Ranger" foreign policy -- a one-man policy of international adventure which was not appropriate for the United States. On East-West relations, he wanted the competition to be peaceful and cooperation to increase, but was opposed to any accommodation which went against the interests of the United States and its allies. He saw the North-South conflict as part of a security problem and that insofar as American policy was selfish, cynical or
shortsighted there would inevitably be a day of reckoning. On social justice, human rights and the environment, Carter considered himself quite liberal while in the management of government, a conservative. Most of these sentiments echoed in his Inaugural Address on January 20, 1977 when he stated:

We are a strong nation and we will maintain strength so sufficient that it need not be proven in combat -- a quiet strength based not merely on the size of an arsenal but on the nobility of ideas .... Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for those societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights. We do not seek to intimidate, but it is clear that a world which others can dominate with impunity would be inhospitable to decency and a threat to the well-being of all people.[3]

This philosophy of Carter was reflected in his statements on South Africa and he was determined to put


increased pressure on that country. Senator Dick Clark said that nowhere would a change in the administration be more welcome and nowhere was it needed more, than with respect to the long term policy towards the continent of Africa. He wanted the new administration to start with a clean slate with none of the disastrous and duplicitous policies of the Nixon-Ford-Kissinger years. Carter's assumptions concerning South Africa reflected the views of the "New Politics" wing within the Democratic Party. "South Africa was Georgia writ large, and South Africa must be freed". If the Carter administration represented anything, it was change. One factor which contributed to Carter's electoral victory was that he emphasized the importance of moral values, which, translated for foreign policy purposes, meant human rights.

Carter also emphasized the need for improved relations with the Soviet Union. His tone implied the option of assessing Soviet aims in Africa as limited and negotiable but not requiring a major test of strength. An important concern was the administration's approach to


relations with African governments. The strong reaction of the previous administration to the happenings in Southern Africa posed a dramatic set of options for the Carter administration. It could regard Soviet intentions in Africa as a major test of relations between the two countries. If it decided so, then the softer approach towards the Soviet Union which had characterized part of the Nixon administration's dealings would have to be reversed.  

6 On assumption of office, the Carter administration had a free hand on Africa policy, apart from the fact that the programmes and decisions of the previous administration had influenced the agenda of the new one. American involvement had reached a high point and going back on it could have domestic repercussions. The Kissinger policy was that pressure was not to be applied on South Africa. The Carter administration could not disengage from the area but had to demonstrate its ability in handling the situation. Africa also provided the administration with the opportunity to demonstrate a new approach to policymaking. Moreover, while Kissinger had viewed the importance of American involvement in

Southern Africa in global terms, the Carter administration considered it in regional terms. The administration established an agenda of foreign policy goals in Africa that consisted only of the implementation of human rights and this was immediately interpreted as a slap at the White minority governments.  

In essence, two major principles governed the administration's initial approach to African affairs. Firstly, the administration attempted to disconnect its behaviour in Africa from competitiveness with the Soviet Union. Secondly, the treatment of African affairs was placed within the broader interest of the administration in promoting higher standards of human rights through American foreign policy decisions. While the emphasis on human rights was global in its design, it was particularly applicable to Africa where White minority governments still existed. 

Both of these principles proved difficult to apply, partly because a new administration could not automatically change the rest of the world. Furthermore, the inattentiveness of the American political elite was


8. Ibid., pp.155-156.
not suddenly transformed into attentiveness and the administration could not assume leadership in African affairs where it wished because it had to react to the initiatives of other powers and domestic politics.⁹

Carter, with regard to foreign policy in general and Africa policy in particular, made appointments in the State Department in a manner that would reflect his priorities. The new appointments largely represented the McGovernite minority within the Democratic Party. Vice President Walter Mondale played a special role in formulating general policy, Andrew Young became Ambassador to the United Nations and Anthony Lake took charge as Director of the Policy Planning Staff. Interestingly, Carter kept William Schaufele, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from the previous administration until the latter's resignation in 1977. He was then succeeded by Richard Moose. The views of all the new appointees corresponded with those of the President.¹⁰

Perhaps the most important and controversial of these men, particularly with regard to Carter's Africa policy was Andrew Young. He had behind him a career of leading

⁹. Ibid., p.156.

the civil rights movement in the United States. Being an adherent of the "New Politics", he viewed South Africa as a microcosm of the western world in its relations with the Third World. Young believed that in the past the United States had consistently sided with the world's tyrants. This evil had to be set right by applying the principles of the civil rights movement.\footnote{11} The preference of treating African issues through existing institutions especially the United Nations remained a strong one in the administration. As Ambassador to the United Nations, Young clearly had a leading role in developing policy towards Africa, and with his staff did much to execute it. He had in fact created obviously warm and trusty contacts with his African counterparts. "The issue (human rights), the spokesmen (Young and the President) and the target (South Africa) were all in position".\footnote{12}

The Carter administration realised that bringing the nationalist movements fighting the White Rhodesian regime to the bargaining table required the cooperation of the leaders of the neighbouring Black ruled states from whom they were receiving military and diplomatic support.

\footnote{11. See James Haskin, \textit{Andrew Young: Man With a Mission} (New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1979).}

Those leaders would cooperate only if they believed that the United States was not committed to perpetuating White supremacy in the region. Therefore the American bonafides lay in its ability to apply pressure on South Africa to dismantle apartheid. This was also necessary to reassure African leaders that cooperation was worth the risk. The administration reiterated its commitment to human rights in Africa. Carter and Young, at the same time believed in the use of economic leverage in the form of American business and finance as a constructive force for achieving racial justice.

For two months, until the end of March 1977 the policy towards South Africa was reviewed and debated. Schaufele, the inherited Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs advocated the continuation of the Kissinger policy of not putting pressure on South Africa. The counter-argument, articulated by Young and supported by Lake was that the Carter administration, to be true to what it stood for, had to take a resolute stand against


South Africa and to be seen publicly doing so. They wanted the Africa policy to be detached from East-West considerations and the rejection of Kissinger's concept of linkage.15

The administration's successor to National Security Study Memorandum 39 was Policy Review Memorandum 4, prepared under the supervision of Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Adviser. The authors of the PRM 4 were debating whether to maintain Kissinger's emphasis on pursuing settlements in Rhodesia and Namibia with South Africa's cooperation before directing attention on South Africa itself, or to confront South Africa immediately without waiting for solutions elsewhere. The liberals led by Young prevailed upon Carter to adopt the second view and in March 1977 the latter signed a confidential presidential directive to guide policy in Southern Africa. The directive emphasized that Southern African problems should be regarded as urgent, that the United States should remain committed to peaceful solutions since guerilla warfare could be exploited by the Soviet Union in its own interests, and that the United States should work cooperatively with European allies and African states to find solutions. With regard to South Africa, the

15. Garrick Uttley, n.12, p.4.
directive stressed the need for the United States to take a stronger stand against apartheid or imperil its relations with the Third World. Further, it would have to take steps to scale down its relations with South Africa if the minority there was refusing to consider sharing power with the Blacks. "Selective relaxation was out, selective hardening was in".  

The new premise was that it was in South Africa's own interest to help resolve the problems of Rhodesia and Namibia and that there was no need for the United States to seek an accommodation with Pretoria. This argument was considered important since the new goal of the overall Africa policy was to strengthen American standing among the Black African nations in order to assure them of United States support. The conclusion of the policy review led to the resignation of William Schaufele who was succeeded by Richard Moose. The administration repudiated the agreement concluded between Kissinger and Smith over Rhodesia and refused to accord recognition to a moderate and racially mixed government in Salisbury. Regarding South Africa, it dropped the Kissinger policy of limited  

17. Garrick Uttley, n.12, p.4.
quiet cooperation. It wanted to make clear its policy as different from the Nixon-Ford policy on Southern Africa.

South Africa remained cautious of the new administration. Even as early as the American presidential election day in November 1976, when asked if he was worried about Carter, the South African Prime Minister Vorster replied that it was more a question of wondering than worrying. It was anyway certain that he had to expect a different modus operandi.

The administration made it clear that it was serious about South Africa when Vice President Walter Mondale flew to Vienna in May 1977 for a meeting with Vorster. The development was a breakthrough in the long established policy towards apartheid. The Sunday Times commenting on the meeting wrote that Mondale would make clear that President Carter's whole outlook was governed by the prospects of Black majority rule throughout the region. It also pointed out that the new American policy was influenced not only by Carter's attitude to human rights


but also by the American experience with its own civil rights movement. 20

At Vienna, Mondale officially warned South Africa to move away from apartheid or suffer deterioration in its relations with the United States. On June 20, after his meeting with Vorster, he stated at a press conference:

Put most simply, the policy which the President wished me to convey was that there was need for progress on all three issues: majority rule for Rhodesia and Namibia and a progressive transformation of South African society to the same end. We believe it was particularly important to convey the depth of our convictions. [21]

Mondale stated that the United States could not accept, let alone defend the governments that rejected the basic principle of full human rights, economic opportunity and political participation for all its people regardless of race. He also stated:

On the issue of South African policies, it is our position that separateness and apartheid are inherently discriminatory and that that policy of apartheid cannot be acceptable to us.


We also are of the opinion strongly held that full political participation by all the citizens of South Africa -- equal participation in the elections of its national government and its political affairs -- is essential to a healthy, stable, and secure South Africa.[22]

At the press conference a journalist asked Mondale to go more into detail on the concept of full participation as opposed to "one man, one vote", and whether there was some kind of compromise. Mondale replied that every citizen should have the right to vote and every vote had to be equally weighted.23

Mondale's statement was exactly what White South Africa needed to justify adopting an uncompromising stand. To the Whites, one man, one vote meant their destruction. This would eventually lead to their intransigence.24 South African sources later said that Vorster was not prepared to yield on American demands for major changes in his government's racial segregation policies and that he was reconciled to inevitable

22. Ibid.


deterioration of relations with the United States and its allies. The International Herald Tribune wrote that full participation meant broadly that all Blacks would participate in the political system within a unitary South African state, not just within a Black homeland. It continued:

"One man, one vote", however, is a phrase open to the interpretation that Washington seeks to apply to South Africa's differing circumstances the fully democratic pattern in effect in the United States.[26]

The administration considered that the United States should align itself with progressive forces and coerce South Africa into joining the world of racial equality and integration and through gradual reform into accepting the American doctrine of one man, one vote. It was believed that it would require both persistence and patience to pursue the dialogue just started. The United States while pursuing its new human rights policy remorselessly, had to avoid being hasty in expecting results. There was always the tendency of the South


Africans withdrawing into isolation or to use their expression, to "laager up". Donald F. McHenry, Young's deputy at the United Nations wrote that Mondale’s task was to deliver the South Africans a twofold message. The first was that progress had to be made on each of the three issues of Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa. The second was related to South Africa itself, that unless there was an end to racial discrimination, and progress towards full political participation, the United States would have to review and change its policies towards South Africa.

Almost at the time Mondale was in Vienna, Young was in Maputo attending a United Nations conference on Southern Africa where he assured Black Africa and leaders like Mugabe and Nujoma that the United States was on their side and that this time it really meant it. Addressing the conference Young said that at the heart of tensions in


Southern Africa was the smouldering racial crisis in South Africa itself. He pointed out:

The policies of the United States Government toward Southern Africa reflect the Carter Administration's commitment to human rights. The United States will, therefore, let the South African Government know that this Administration strongly believes that change in South Africa must begin now. [30]

Young's background as a noted civil rights leader gave him privileged access to Black leaders, but the policy he brought with him was nevertheless treated with "prudent scepticism." During his Southern African trip Young also wanted to visit South Africa. But the South African government said that it would not be convenient for them to receive him because he planned to meet Black leaders. Young had already entered their bad books because in April that year he had replied in the affirmative to an interviewer on being asked whether he thought South Africa's minority government illegitimate.


The South Africans had demanded a clarification, and Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance told Young that he had misstated American policy. Young replied that his usage "illegitimate" could be interpreted "morally, ethically or legally" and that he considered the South African government "unrepresentative" of its people, but still the agency in charge of the country.  

It looked as though Carter was leaving to the members of his administration to speak on South African affairs, until he made his famous speech at the commencement of the Notre Dame University on May 22, 1977. He made it clear that the United States commitment to majority rule applied to South Africa no less than to other countries in the region. The United States was committed to a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Southern Africa. He also reiterated:

The time has come for the principle of majority rule to be the basis for political order, recognizing that in a democratic system the rights of the minority must also be protected.[33]

In an interview with the Magazine Publishers Association, Carter said that the United States did not feel inclined to intrude into South Africa's internal policies but was committed to having equality of treatment of citizens. The United States was not trying to overthrow their government but felt that there ought to be some equality.  

In July 1977 Secretary of State Cyrus Vance addressed a meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People where he emphasized the administration's human rights policy as far as Southern Africa was concerned. American policies, he said, had to reflect American values. The deep belief in human rights meant making the best effort peacefully in promoting racial justice in Southern African nations. Vance also went on to say that the most effective policies towards Africa were affirmative policies which were not to be reactive to the deeds of other powers or to the crises as they arose. A negative, reactive American policy which  

only sought to oppose Soviet or Cuban involvement in Africa was both dangerous and futile.  

Vance emphasized the need to take an affirmative rather than reactive approach, minimize East-West competition so as not to allow it to distort regional events, recognize the importance to African states of economic development and indigenous nationalism, and affirm that economic cooperation and active diplomacy would constitute the main forms of interaction, with military ties and arms sales down played. Vance's speech was the administration's first full length exposition of its Africa policy, although criticism of apartheid had been made before.


George Ball, a former Under Secretary of State reacted critically to the whole series of speeches and statements made by members of the administration. Regarding Mondale's Vienna statement, he pointed out that it had created dismay in South Africa, confounding liberal opinion and strengthening the arguments of obscurantists. He saw Vance's speech as an effort to mitigate the damage already done and said that for the Americans to commit themselves, explicitly or implicitly to such a disruptive scenario could hardly serve American national interest. Ball pointed out that the inability of the political leaders to face the realities of the South African scene suggested an ethnocentricity derived more from inexperience than from presumption. The lessons of the American civil rights movement could not be applied there and the American ability to influence South African policies depended on the objectives they were seeking to achieve. In his words, "diplomacy like politics, is the art of the possible; and if we use our leverage toward an unachievable end, we will create a mess".  

Anti-Americanism had by this time become a powerful force in White South African politics. In an election

held some months after his showdown with Mondale, Vorster was able to add fifteen seats to his majority in the White parliament just by focusing the electorate's attention on alleged American meddling in the country's affairs. South Africa's actions and attitudes also reflected this anti-American feeling. Carter's promotion of a climate of distrust and his refusal to acknowledge and endorse South African dominance and role in the region may have contributed to the growing determination of the South African military to demonstrate the country's hegemony by destabilizing the governments and economies of neighbouring states. 39

The administration emphasized increasingly the distance between the United States and South Africa and in publicly employing symbolic deprivations. Much importance was given to the Rhodesian and Namibian negotiations. At the same time it demanded from South Africa progress on domestic racial matters as well. 40

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40. William J. Foltz, n.13, p.44.
The human rights theme of the Carter administration had an impact on interest groups and American multinational corporations. In March 1977, a delegation consisting of representatives of eleven major American companies met Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State. The delegation also included Reverend Leon Sullivan, an Afro American pastor and member of the Board of Directors of General Motors. The result of the meeting was the decision to issue guidelines for American business operations in South Africa. An expanded version of the original six principles was published by Rev. Sullivan and was thereafter known as the Sullivan Principles or Sullivan Code.

The Sullivan Principles in short called for fairer and more favourable treatment for the Blacks who worked for American owned firms in South Africa. They called for desegregation of all eating, comfort and work facilities; equal and fair employment practices, including support for the elimination of discrimination against the rights of Blacks to form or belong to government registered trade unions; equal pay for comparable work and equitable wages well above the appropriate local minimum economic living level; the development of training programmes; the advancement of Blacks into management positions; and the improvement of the quality of employees lives outside the
work environment, including housing, transportation, schooling, recreation and health facilities.

Many American businesses with operations in South Africa adopted the Sullivan Principles, suggesting that their managers were not particularly wedded to the conditions of work established by rigid apartheid. Those firms with large investments such as the automobile manufacturers who could be expected to have an interest in the expanding sales to Blacks were among the first to accept them.41

From the beginning, the administration gave strong support to the Principles, and in public and private statements urged American businesses in South Africa to adopt them as their own and to accept effective monitoring and reporting procedures. In the fullest public statement on United States economic policy, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Richard Moose observed that the Sullivan initiative sprang from the private corporate world and that it brought together American companies voluntarily to pursue a common objective and this could be expected to survive a change in administration.42

41. Leon Gordenker, n.6, p.161.

Opponents argued that the principles became a rationale for foreign related firms to continue their role in South Africa and that this only strengthened the White minority government. George Houser, Executive Director of the American Committee on Africa states:

The fact that the codes of conduct became an accepted approach by so many foreign companies ... to justify their continued operation there was further testimony to the centrality of the issue of investment in South Africa. [43]

The results were initially encouraging. A number of signatory companies tore down walls, removed signs and moved cabinets. Companies like Goodyear and Ford spent millions of dollars for replacement of existing separate facilities with desegregated ones. Union Carbide, IBM and Caterpillar Tractor initiated housing loan programmes for Blacks. In areas like training and job advancement, limited but measurable progress was made by some firms. Blacks made gains in the sphere of worker representation. Ford and Kellog recognised unregistered Black trade unions. [44]


A United Nations report of 1978 on the activities of transnational corporations in Southern Africa, referring to the Sullivan Principles stated that it was premature to judge the long term effect of "this corporate statement of social responsibility", especially since there were no specific criteria to make the Principles operational.45 Rev. Sullivan himself, in May 1980 while taking stock of the progress made, stated:

I must caution again though that we realize how much the principles can and cannot accomplish. The principles are a catalyst. They can help produce change, but they cannot end apartheid by themselves. The principles can be a part of the solution, but by no means the whole solution, for in order to totally eliminate apartheid, help must come from the churches, unions, educational institutions, governments and world-wide opinion.[46]

At the time of Rev. Sullivan's testimony only 135 out of about 350 American firms had endorsed the Principles.


As mentioned earlier, it was not easy to make an accurate assessment of the progress made. Disclosure policies varied and some companies neither filed reports with Rev. Sullivan's group nor preferred to make them publicly available. An observer stated that the negative aspect of the Sullivan Code was that it was being used as a Potemkin village to hide the ugly reality of a society built on White supremacy. He also said that on its own terms, the Code was of extremely limited scope. It was voluntary and even if made compulsory would apply to only less than 1% of the African workforce. These were also more or less the arguments of a public statement issued by some prominent scholars and public personalities.

South Africa's nuclear programme created problems for the United States in 1977 when it was revealed that a Soviet satellite had photographed installations in the


Kalahari desert, alleged to be a nuclear explosion test site. Carter ordered confirmation of the information.\textsuperscript{50} South Africa issued a series of categorical denials that any explosion was contemplated. There was a public display of indignation regarding the manner the United States was treating it.\textsuperscript{51} It also informed the United States that it did not intend developing nuclear explosive devices either for peaceful purposes or for a weapons programme. However, at a news conference Carter stated:

We are quite concerned about Prime Minister Vorster's statement this past week that they had not given us assurances against the testing of atomic weapons. In both a public statement that we've made and also in private dispatches through diplomatic channels and a private message directed to me from Vorster, they had unequivocally committed themselves not to design nor produce, nor to test any atomic explosions at all, either peaceful or weapons. So we have some concerns about South Africa.\textsuperscript{52}


\textsuperscript{51} South Africa: Time Running Out, n.42, p.358.

Carter declared that although he appreciated the South African commitment, the United States would continue to monitor the situation very closely and renew efforts to encourage South Africa to place all its nuclear power production capabilities under international safeguards, and to sign the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Even the apparent American confrontation with South Africa over the issue appeared to have served the latter's interests. Carter had welcomed South African assurances, despite information provided by American intelligence sources, that it did not intend to explode nuclear devices. It should also be noted that Vorster had denied that his statement was in reality a promise. Despite these developments the United States was refusing to end its nuclear collaboration with South Africa on grounds that it "must retain a nuclear relationship in order to have influence to urge South Africans to sign the NPT".

Proposals by the State Department Africanists to end all forms of cooperation with South Africa were vigorously opposed by the "liberals" in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and other regional bureaus.

They insisted that this action risked inciting a South African nuclear explosion and would undermine their nuclear non-proliferation efforts. The incident also provoked international concern about South Africa's nuclear programme. In a departure from the previous policy of requiring comprehensive safeguards as a condition for nuclear exports, Carter stated that South Africa would have to sign the NPT in return for enriched uranium. Ambassador Gerard Smith, Carter's Special Representative for Non-proliferation Matters was sent to Pretoria in 1978 to persuade South Africa to sign the NPT. South Africa's conditions for signature were revealed to be substantial. It not only wanted enriched uranium and components for its enrichment plant but also wanted American help in getting reinstated in the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors. South Africa must have known that the United States could not deliver this last demand in particular. It seemed determined to defy the United States and prevent international controls on its nuclear programme. Andrew Young pointed out that the United States was not about to end its longstanding policy of cooperation with South Africa in the development of its peaceful nuclear technology. He said that to cut things at that stage in reference to American export of

55. William J. Foltz, n.13, p.36.
56. J.D.L. Moore, n.50, p.115.
nuclear materials for peaceful purposes would only encourage separate development of South Africa's own nuclear potential.\textsuperscript{57}

Thus, despite the administration's initial euphoria it realized that things would not change as fast as expected. This was somewhat evident in Mondale's interview in October 1977 with the Rand Daily Mail, a major South African newspaper. He stated that the United States wanted a good relationship with South Africa and that it had never proposed a plan for change in the apartheid country because Washington never had one. The New York Times wrote that Mondale contradicted himself when he said that the central suggestion he had made at Vienna was that the leaders of the South African government meet with the legitimate nonwhite leaders of South Africa and develop with them the reforms which made sense to all.\textsuperscript{58} In the context of South Africa's apartheid system, Mondale had become keenly aware as had been Kissinger before him, that any official change would be dictated by the Afrikaner elite in the pursuit of their exclusive self-interests.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} International Herald Tribune (Paris) November 2, 1977.

\textsuperscript{58} New York Times, October 18, 1977.

\textsuperscript{59} Henry Jackson, n.19, p.279.
South Africa promptly provided new ammunition for its critics with the death of the Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko in police custody on September 12, and the November 12 crackdown on Black leadership. South African officials were dismayed when the American representative Donald McHenry broke off participation in negotiations in Pretoria over Namibia to attend Biko's funeral. 60

Commenting on American policy, Vorster said it was fast reaching the stage where South Africa felt that the United States wanted to prescribe to them how they should run their country internally, and that was unacceptable. 61 The American National Security Adviser, Brzezinski remarked that the United States was not asking for an instant change. It knew that this was a South African problem, but felt that unless there was domestic accommodation, internal conflicts and tensions would grow. 62

60. South Africa: Time Running Out, n.42, pp.358-359. McHenry was leading the five Western nation "Contact Group" to negotiate terms for Namibia's independence on the basis of free nationwide elections under United Nations supervision.


The Carter administration had led the international chorus of outrage following the death of Steve Biko and for a time it seemed as if it had helped end death in detention in South Africa. The Congressional Black Caucus resolution of concern, supported by Assistant Secretary Richard Moose was passed overwhelmingly in the House of Representatives. On October 31, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution condemning apartheid in South Africa.

In November 1977 the United States joined the United Nations in voting mandatory sanctions against arms transfers to South Africa. However this step had little immediate effect, for the main sellers of arms to South

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64. South Africa: Time Running Out, n.42, p.359.
Africa had already shut off or greatly restricted the flow. At a news conference Secretary of State Vance stated:

We have supported a mandatory arms embargo to reflect the international consensus that the supply of arms threatens the peace. Consistent with this, we will prohibit all exports of items for police and military in South Africa.[67]

Vance went on to assure that there would be no more exports of spares and maintenance shipments for items whose export would be prohibited. In addition the United States was withdrawing its naval attache in Pretoria and recalling the commercial officer in Johannesburg, the latter being done in connection with the review of American economic relations with South Africa.68

However, the United States vetoed economic sanctions against South Africa in the United Nations. Previously, at United Nations gatherings both in Maputo and Lagos,


68. Ibid.
Ambassador Young had defended a posture against any form of substantive economic disengagement. This time the United States and its allies vetoed relatively moderate African resolutions for economic sanctions. The arms embargo had in fact come after this resolution was vetoed. The very fact that such a shift, however slight, was taking place in American policy vis-a-vis South Africa could hardly be ignored. The support for the arms embargo was an attempt by the United States to be seen to be putting pressure on South Africa without resorting to more drastic measures such as trade and investment boycotts. On the one hand the administration was morally outraged by apartheid and on the other it sounded deeply committed to finding substitutes for the use of force and economic sanctions.

As critics charged, the arms embargo was never totally effective and on several occasions some American corporations and their overseas affiliates had been among those evading restrictions. Andrew Young perhaps summed up the likely effects of a mandatory embargo.

He recognized the fact that South Africa had considerable self-sufficiency in arms and could get more or less what it wanted on the black market. In this sense, he said, a mandatory embargo was irrelevant though for psychological reasons it was found necessary.  

Commenting on the performance of the Carter administration, the President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere said in August 1977:

> The demand for Human Rights no longer appears to us to be just a stick with which to attack Communist states; it seems to be a genuine effort to support justice in other states as well .... (A)ll these things have given to Africa renewed hope, and possibility of renewed faith in America. [73]

A different view was expressed by critics. They maintained that the domestic priorities of the Carter administration so far did not reflect the demands of even those Blacks who had picked Carter. Furthermore, the veto of even the modest economic disengagement from South Africa contradicted the advocacy of boycotts by South Africa's Blacks. If the administration was aware of

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these contradictions, it was showing few signs of candour and determination. On the contrary its spokesmen seemed indifferent, insensitive or unwilling to confront the depth and reality of African determination to use militant methods. These power tactics and the veto on economic sanctions were a reminder of the United States determination to defend its tangible interests when "push comes to shove". 74

Several observers saw South Africa as an acid test of the administration. There was a continuation of old policies, mildly reprimanding South Africa about apartheid in international forums while opposing almost all concrete actions against it. This was seen as an indication that the administration's promise to embark on new directions in foreign policy amounted to nothing but rhetoric. Its position on human rights was to be dismissed as mere propaganda and any claim that it was guided by moral principles in its conduct of foreign policy to be a matter of ridicule. 75

What Carter ultimately did was to take steps that would not harm American economic interests. It had been

74. Edgar Lockwood, n.54, p.15.
faced with several major decisions on what attitude to take towards American investments as well as on American bank loans to South Africa. A refusal to take any position on the subject of American investment in itself was widely interpreted as a continuation of past policies. With proper guidance it was believed that Western investment in South Africa could help raise living standards of Blacks and gradually force the political system to begin responding to Black aspirations. But any withdrawal of Western capital was rejected on the grounds that the people who would be hurt most by such a move would be the very people the West was supposedly concerned about helping, namely South Africa's Black labourers. The argument was that without western investment, the ongoing economic crisis would be transformed into a major depression, resulting in massive lay offs of Black unskilled and semiskilled workers.

Young, on his visit to South Africa, had upheld the supremacy of the free market system and advised a group of mostly White South African business leaders that they had the key to the change he considered necessary to prevent

76. Ibid., p.199.
77. Ibid., pp.202-203.
the country's economic deterioration. He encouraged them to believe in their own power to overthrow apartheid. In Johannesburg, Young urged Black South Africans to secure their rights through American style civil rights boycotts. Young's advocacy of capitalism was based on the belief that it was extremely fundamental, irreversible, pervasive and powerful that it amounted to a law of nature whose inevitability was also conveniently beneficial.

The Carter administration's attitude towards business in South Africa did not change from that of the previous administration -- "the United States neither encourages nor discourages investment in South Africa". The ambivalence of that statement summed up the contradiction inherent in American policy towards South Africa. The administration believed in the effectiveness of the Sullivan Principles and nothing more. Disengagement and sanctions, it argued were not the means to produce internal changes in South Africa. Reform was more likely to result from internal socio-economic change like the spread of the market, the growth of a Black middle class, Black consumerism and assisted by periodic non-violent boycotts. But all these sounded unrealistic because the

78. Henry Jackson, n.19, p.278.
79. Edgar Lockwood, n.54, p.12.
80. Garrick Utley, n.12, p.5.
"market solution" could not begin to work effectively until after formal apartheid was dismantled. It looked like putting the cart before the horse. Unlike the United States, in South Africa there were legal impediments to the growth of a substantial Black middle class.\textsuperscript{81} American domestic considerations played a significant role in the administration's attitude. American firms with a stake in South Africa had influenced the administration to keep their interests in mind. They were content with signing the government sponsored Sullivan Principles. At the same time they had to oppose punitive measures which would harm their business interests.

One thing was clear. It was an administration unwilling to commit real political or economic power to secure changes in South Africa which it claimed to seek. The administration took up a "pragmatic version of Tar Baby". For a country like the United States, conscious of its economic well-being, South Africa with its strength and stability was found to be the prime guarantor of profits for American entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{81} D.J. Goldsworthy, n.16, pp.232-233.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., p.233.

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Carter believed in the promotion of capitalism and nonviolent more than revolution and socialism, and the use of carrots instead of sticks to pursue a Southern Africa policy.

A number of measures directed at restricting foreign investment in South Africa were introduced in the United States Congress in 1978. But none of these bills were approved. Even representatives of the Departments of State, Treasury and Commerce argued against any legislative restrictions on the grounds that they would limit the administration's flexibility to respond to the situation in South Africa. 83

The Nigerian factor in American policy towards South Africa came to the fore in 1978. Nigeria was spearheading a major antiapartheid movement and assuming the role of an important economic power in Africa. Nigeria was also supplying the United States with a sizeable amount of oil and the volume of United States-Nigerian trade had become something like double the volume of American trade with South Africa. Simultaneously, Nigeria impressed upon the

United States that it was not interested in improved bilateral relations as long as the latter continued its support for status quo in Southern Africa. The United States became keenly aware of Nigerian pressure on Namibian decolonization, its dependence on Nigerian oil as well as the militancy of the Shagari government on Southern African affairs. To acknowledge Nigeria's importance Carter paid a visit to that country in April 1978 where he declared:

You have been among the leaders of international efforts to bring the principles of majority rule and individual rights into reality in Southern Africa .... In the name of justice, we also believe that South African society should and can be transformed progressively and peacefully with assured respect for the rights of all.


But the American collaboration with Nigeria while raising expectations of the Black people in Southern Africa only made the South African government recalcitrant. South African Whites came to regard Carter their greatest enemy because he was trying to humiliate or destroy them. \(^{87}\) Vorster attacked Carter's policies in Africa and on the human rights campaign said that it was a very selective morality if there were any moral principles involved. \(^{88}\) South Africa ultimately withdrew from its role of cooperating with the United States to secure the end of White rule in Rhodesia. Donald McHenry makes the American position clear:

> The South Africans were informed that failure to achieve progress on each of the three [Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa] would result in a policy review and a change in the relations between the United States and South Africa.\(^{89}\)

In the opinion of Anthony Lake, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, there were two different approaches to the question of South Africa. On the one hand was communication and persuasion and on the other was pressure and isolation. Advocates of the first approach said that

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87. Sanford J. Ungar and Peter Vale, n.39, p.258.


89. Donald F. McHenry, n.29, p.35.
through closer ties, particularly economic, the United States could help the Whites find a way to liberalise South African society. The defenders of the second approach rejected this view on the ground that three decades of economic growth had not produced fundamental change and that foreign investment had only helped strengthen the repressive system. Lake maintained that the primary charge levelled against the second approach was that by cutting off economic and other ties with South Africa, change could not be forced, because South Africa could survive such measures. Moreover, it would drive South Africa into isolation and damage American economic interests.  

Carter and Vance highlighted the need for affirmative policies. Vance, while addressing the United States Jaycees said that the United States had no wish to see South African Whites driven out of the home of their forebears but hoped that they would live in peace and justice with their fellow citizens.  


Annapolis speech Carter said that the United States wanted to see an Africa, free of dominance of outside powers, of racial injustice, of conflict and the burden of poverty, hunger and disease. He continued:

We are convinced that the best way to work toward these objectives is through affirmative policies that recognize African realities and that recognize aspirations.[92]

The United States Congressional elections in 1978 strengthened the conservatives both in the Republican and Democratic parties. By this time it was realized that South African cooperation was necessary for a Namibian settlement. Carter's rhetoric on the South African issues had subsided.93 This was attributed to the fact that the practitioners of realpolitik had gained the upper hand in the administration. Those who were waiting to see economic sanctions against South Africa were disappointed. It remained unclear whether any of the administration's previous Southern Africa policies and strategies remained operative. Vance told a group of Afro-American leaders that the administration acknowledged that change in South


93. L.H. Gann and Peter Duighan, n.10, p.277.
Africa was a long and difficult process and that the United States had put forward neither a blueprint nor a time-table for change which was for the people of South Africa to decide together. In a speech delivered to the African-American Conference in Khartoum, Dick Clark said that the United States was at a crossroads of decision in its policy towards Africa. It could not decide whether to slip back into anticommunist preoccupations or advance into new frontiers and was therefore faced with indecision.

The hanging of Black nationalist Solomon Mahalangu and the expulsion of American military attaches from South Africa were two incidents in 1979 which were irritants in the relations between the two countries. President Carter's plea for clemency for Solomon Mahalangu was not heeded by the South African government, and a State Department spokesman said that the consequences were most likely to be seen in South Africa itself. Shortly after this, in April 1979 three military attaches serving at the


96. Times of India (New Delhi) April 8, 1979.
United States Embassy in Pretoria were expelled for taking photographs of the Validaba plant from the American ambassador's plane. In response the United States expelled all but one of the South African military attaches from Washington. In May 1979 South Africa attempted to take its seat in the United Nations General Assembly when the question of Namibia was being discussed. The move was resisted by the majority. Andrew Young criticised this decision and said that the forum was also meant to hear those with whom one disagreed and those representatives though not selected by its citizens, represented the governments of those states.

It was being pointed out that in the last two years of the Carter administration there were signs that Washington was losing its taste for involvement, creative or otherwise, in the political affairs of sub Saharan Africa. One development connected with this was the resignation of Andrew Young as Ambassador to the United Nations. His resignation symbolised the decline of

97. J.D.L. Moore, n.50, p.115.
99. Young had to resign over a controversy regarding his meeting with a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization.
American activism in Southern Africa. In an interview to *Worldview* shortly after his resignation, Young said that national security and human rights were the primary objectives of American foreign policy. He also said:

> We are always accused of having our foreign policy to protect our economic interest, but now that our economic interests have shifted -- mainly to Africa and the Third World, especially with this kind of new-found power in the oil producing nations -- we have not readjusted our foreign policy to protect our economic interest.[101]

During Carter's last year in office, events in Iran and Afghanistan distracted attention from South Africa. In Southern Africa itself all attention was on Rhodesia. For the Americans it was moreover a stock taking year than that of activity on South Africa. Assistant Secretary Moose's statements were a far cry from the ones issued four years back. He said that the United States had


interests like preserving national consensus on foreign policy goals relating to human rights, assuring long term access to minerals and foreclosing opportunities for expanded Soviet influence. These interests, he maintained, could not be pursued selectively. Without political change American humanitarian objectives could not be fulfilled, the risk of violent conflict grew and the possibilities for Soviet meddling increased.\textsuperscript{103} Moose also highlighted several points on American policy towards South Africa. He stated that there was no question of retreat from its commitment on change in Southern Africa, that the main thrust of American policy was encouraging peaceful but rapid change, acceptance of the fact that the United States had limited influence and that it would work with other European countries in encouraging South Africa to avoid the tragedy of self-destruction.\textsuperscript{104}

Writing in Foreign Affairs, Andrew Young pointed out that only the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and an


\textsuperscript{104} Statement by Richard Moose, Assistant Secretary before the Subcommittee on Africa, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, April 30, 1980, \textit{United States Policy Toward South Africa}, n.46, pp.4-7.
antidraft protest had undercut the South African issue in 1980. Pointing to the strong moral cause for divestiture that was gaining strong ground, he admitted that corporate America had eventually to choose between 4 million White South Africans and 400 million Blacks of the entire continent. He warned against a return to the period four years back when American influence was at its lowest. Young stressed the need for the United States to foster conflict resolution. He however wanted the United States to capitalise on the mutual interest in profitable economic relations with Africa. 105

Carter's policies were subject to criticism from several quarters. Chester Crocker who was later to become Reagan's Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs was one of the critics. In an article written for Foreign Affairs in 1980 he argued that the Carter administration had tilted too far towards Black Africa with little to show for it. He insisted that reform in South Africa and a settlement in Namibia were unlikely to be achieved by further alienating the Botha government. 106


He described the Carter policy as an ambitious regional policy, one which saw an identity of American and African interests and pretending that the very existence of the West's private sector could serve as a surrogate for a coherent strategy. Crocker criticised both globalists and regionalists in the administration for misreading African reality. 107 At the Congressional hearings in 1980 he stated:

Politically it is in our interest that there be a steady and relatively orderly movement toward a non racial South Africa with which it is possible to pursue a full and normal relationship .... We also favour such change because it is consistent with US principles and commitments to human rights and human decency and it is the only way to avoid a major human tragedy in South Africa.... (O)ther American interests will inevitably suffer if such change fails to occur. [108]


The Carter policy was launched with massive public relations pressure on South Africa to accede to majority rule. It was expected that a victorious coalition within South Africa would be powerful enough to force the government into submission. But the White regime responded with force.\textsuperscript{109} The Carter administration's support to antiapartheid groups was restricted only to verbal support and there was no commitment beyond this. An observer stated that the United States had negligible influence with the South African government at that moment and would almost certainly have failed in any effort to establish a productive ongoing bilateral relationship whose intention was to secure continued constructive change. He maintained that despite this, corporations, banks, private organizations and even academicians could make substantial contributions to strengthen the prospects for continuing policy change.\textsuperscript{110} Another observer held that the United States had too often acted in ways that supported the apartheid status quo. He stated that

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\textsuperscript{110} Statement of John Seiler before the Subcommittee on Africa, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, May 6, 1980, \textit{United States Policy Toward South Africa}, n.46, p.56.
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restrictions on new investments and future bank loans were the least the United States could do to show its seriousness in supporting full human rights for all in South Africa.111

American corporations were operating in South Africa on the basis of the "trickle down theory". History had exposed the weakness of the corporate argument and the theory had not worked. While South African Gross Domestic Product had increased by more than 2000% since the end of World War II, very little of that increase had benefitted South Africa's Black majority. Most of Blacks continued to subsist below the poverty line. Just as economic growth, the projected increase in social and political rights had failed to materialize. In fact, economic abundance had been accompanied by an intensification of political repression.112


One statement before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs highlighted the thesis that corporations could more vigorously implement change than the past record showed. It said that the penalty for failure had to be disinvestment. Those who favoured the peaceful demise of apartheid often appealed to prudence. "Prudence is meaningless in South Africa. It stifles creative undermining of apartheid", it said.113

The Carter administration was as concerned with the Cold War as its Republican predecessors. While the administration constantly insisted that it was interested in problems of underdevelopment more than the rivalry with the Soviet Union, this was only a "specious distinction". The United States was concerned with the increasing diplomatic and economic clout of Third World countries like Nigeria because their support was needed to prosecute the Cold War. Young and McHenry were just as anti-Soviet and just as committed to the aims of international capitalism and the pursuance of Washington's great power realpolitik as their predecessors. Only the style was

different, its tone was more vociferous and self-righteous. 114 Some critics went one step forward in criticising Young. They described him as the final compromise between Black petty bourgeoisie and the White ruling class. They said that the pseudo liberals of the White ruling class used people like Young to take advantage of international sympathy for Afro-Americans and promote the Afro-American success image in order to entice Africa and the Third World into a trap of highly controlled imperialism. 115

Despite its good intentions and head start on Southern Africa, by the end of 1980 the Carter policy was facing difficulties. The policy had been found wanting in the toughest tests and was inconclusive at other times. In Congress there was substantial opposition to greater involvement in Africa, and the public supporting the new approaches in the continent lost its spokesmen when Dick Clark failed to get reelected and Charles Diggs had to give up his committee chairmanship for other reasons.


There was substantial opposition in Congress and among the public over the approaches. In the last months of the administration there was a general confusion about human rights as an issue in international politics and how such issues could be handled.116

While it would serve no purpose here to speculate whether Carter's policy would ever have had any success in changing South Africa itself, it is clear that from the start his policy was never as radical as it sounded.[117]

In 1980, the election year, Carter's biggest challenge and criticism regarding his South Africa policy came from the Republican platform. It highlighted the Soviet gains in Southern Africa resulting from Carter's policy. Senator Robert Dole, a leading contender for the Republican ticket blamed the administration for alienating the South African leadership and expressed the fear that the Soviet Union appeared to have selected Africa as a "staging ground for a strategic showdown, to test the will of the United States".118


The Carter administration had given much hope to those who believed that the United States could use its power and influence to secure change in South Africa. But it could not fulfil its objectives. Eventually, the Carter administration faced the harsh criticism not only from its opponents but also from its supporters. The latter were disillusioned at being let down by an administration in which they had placed much faith. The intentions were good but in the absence of broad commitments, nothing could be accomplished.