CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

Through the years the United States has persistently emphasized the significance of certain ideals like equality, liberty and democracy. More than any other nation, it has constantly reiterated that its institutions and policies reflect these ideals and are directed to their promotion for the benefit of all mankind. It has regarded itself as destined to bring these blessings to the oppressed peoples of the world. However, the racial problems within the country reveal that the United States has not been able to provide these even to all of its own citizens.

In the sphere of foreign policy the United States faced a severe challenge in this regard from South Africa. The very nature of the apartheid system, based on inequality and servitude, made it totally irreconcilable and antithetical to American ideals. It has been generally accepted that apartheid was reprehensible, and in the United States itself this system of racial discrimination has been regarded as inconsistent with American morals, values and sensibilities.
However, an analysis of American policy reveals that the United States has not adhered to its self-proclaimed ideals with regard to South Africa. American opposition to apartheid and the White minority regime, could have been expressed through strong measures like nonrecognition, dissociation and the imposition of sanctions. But throughout the years it resorted only to verbal interventionism and half-hearted measures which proved ineffective in influencing the South African government to reform its inhuman system. In reality, American policies contradicted the professed belief of the United States in ideals like equality, liberty and democracy, thus questioning its claim to be the champion of freedom throughout the world. Even the half-hearted measures it took were only intended to maintain its standing in the international sphere, particularly within the Third World, while at the same time safeguarding American material interests.

The interests of the United States with regard to South Africa played a crucial role in shaping American policy. Its conflict with the Soviet Union also played no small role. South Africa, an anticommmunist state which believed in the maintenance of the status quo and was prepared to be a regional surrogate, was of crucial importance to the United States in this context.
In economic and strategic terms also, South Africa was of much significance to the United States. Although trade and investment with South Africa was only a small portion of its global trade and investment, even this amounted to billions of dollars. South Africa's mineral resources have also been important to the United States. Although the United States had enough supplies for current levels of production, the enormous and unprecedented growth and achievement of high levels of production increased the demand for minerals and raw materials which could not be met by the domestic economy. And when it came to certain metals, particularly those like chromium, United States domestic reserves were not sufficient and it had to rely on South Africa for its needs. Moreover, for most of the minerals the alternative suppliers were either the Soviet Union or its allies.

South Africa's geographic location and strategic importance also played a vital role. The growing importance of the Indian Ocean in the nineteen seventies strengthened these factors. The Cape sea route is one of the busiest sea lanes in the world and the main passage to the West for its oil tankers coming from West Asia. South African defence and intelligence facilities, its economic might and defence potential have played no less a role in shaping American policy towards it.
For South Africa also, relations with the United States were of great importance as American trade and investment formed a significant portion of its economy. Furthermore, the United States was the best customer for its minerals and raw materials. The strategic ties with the United States strengthened its position in Southern Africa thus protecting it to some extent from its neighbours and liberation movements, some of them with communist assistance, seeking to overthrow the White minority regime. Above all, United States diplomatic support at international forums including its use of the veto at the United Nations made it an indispensable ally.

The influence of the United States on South Africa was thus comparatively more than that of any other country. But American concerns were not over the violation of its ideals in South Africa but rather with safeguarding its material interests in that country. Regarding the desirability of the United States associating only with regimes that adhere to American ideals, the counterargument may be that most governments may have violated them in one way or the other and that a foreign policy based on this criterion would only bring it many enemies and few friends. But here lies the danger of equating South Africa with other countries which have violated these ideals. The South African example was
without parallel. The very character of the apartheid system defied the attempt to equate it with other oppressive systems, for in South Africa what was legally enshrined in the constitution was illegal by the standards of any other system.

This study reveals that the approaches of the three administrations under consideration differed only in style, not substance. The outcome of their policies amounted to the same and there was no effect on South Africa or any change in the overall situation in that country.

The Nixon administration's priorities lay with issues like detente and Vietnam. Consequently adequate attention or importance was not given to the issues of South Africa. The formulation of the National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM 39) gave a false impression that the administration was paying increasing attention to Southern Africa. But it was only one of the eighty five such reviews worldwide and was meant to reorganise American policy and tide over the differences within the administration over South Africa. The adoption of Option 2 of NSSM 39 was to prove unrealistic and revealed the shortsightedness of American policy. The administration's concern was with communism, not racism. Any concern
regarding the region was coloured by the American perspective on the Cold War. The administration assumed that White minority regimes would remain in power for a considerable period and that constructive change would come only through them. It also believed that the Blacks would not receive their political rights through violence but only as a concession from White regimes.

At the same time the administration did not want to give the impression that it was supporting apartheid. Statements emanating from the administration indicated that the United States was committed to certain ideals and that the dedication to them was the result of its history and a product of its search for basic answers to human aspirations.

However, the operational examples of the Nixon administration’s policy proved otherwise. It maintained that it was most important to keep open the lines of communication so that it could use its influence constructively to persuade South Africa. It diluted an existing arms embargo and began cooperating with South Africa in different spheres. Its attitude at the United Nations was only helpful to South Africa. It took a pro South African stand on issues regarding the Air Transport Agreement and the Sugar Quota issue and refused to regard
apartheid a crime against humanity. The administration failed to comprehend the danger of the explosive situation in South Africa and was concerned only with the maintenance of the status quo. It felt that if change was to occur at all, it had to be slow and evolutionary. Rewards instead of punishments were used to influence South Africa. Though international opinion was critical, the administration preferred to disregard it for the sake of its communication policy and its interests in South Africa. In short the policy showed a cynical lack of concern which was in sharp contrast to the public platitudes and pronouncements of its spokesmen.

The Ford administration was to a great extent a victim of the Southern Africa policy of its predecessor. It had to face the realities arising out of a situation where the assumptions based on Option 2 of NSSM 39 were shattered, and realised the need for a new approach. The administration, however, saw no reason to tamper with South African apartheid because the White minority regime in that country had protected American interests and appeared relatively stable. The purpose of the new approach was to ensure the security of South Africa where the United States had significant interests which were to be protected even at the cost of Namibia and the White minority regime of Rhodesia. Armed struggle had to be
short circuited in order to prevent the chances of intervention by outside powers including the Soviet Union.

Promoting controlled change in Southern Africa thus became the objective of the Ford administration. The new policy was described by itself as one of humanitarian concern for peaceful change. In an unprecedented move the administration confessed its neglect of the region in the past because of its responsibilities elsewhere in the world. It began making efforts to befriend South Africa in order to persuade Rhodesia to accede to majority rule. To South Africa, the United States signalled that it would give it time to enact a mild programme of economic and social reform, not political reform, in exchange for cooperation on Rhodesia. It was stated that American policy towards South Africa was based on the premise that within a reasonable time there would be a clear evolution towards equality of opportunity and basic human rights for all South Africans. The policy was regarded cynical by many observers because it was concerned only about White minority rule in Rhodesia but not in South Africa. This cynicism appeared reasonable considering South Africa's credentials to persuade Rhodesia to accede to majority rule.
The Ford administration had no programme to bring change in South Africa. Its strategy was to align more closely with the apartheid regime to secure settlements in Rhodesia and Namibia and also buy time for the South African government to reform its own system. Eventually the administration could not bring about any concrete settlement in Rhodesia and was subject to criticism of its policy by those who were unconvinced of its new found humanitarian approach.

When the Carter administration assumed office, it was widely believed that its policies would differ drastically from those of its predecessors. Carter seemed to place great emphasis on moral values and human rights which were an essential part of American ideals. The administration wanted to dissociate its behaviour in Africa with its competitiveness with the Soviet Union. It realised that the credibility of the United States would be enhanced particularly among the Black African states only if they believed that it was not committed to perpetuating White supremacy in Southern Africa. The American bonafides therefore lay in its ability to apply pressure on South Africa to dismantle apartheid.

The administration arrived at the conclusion 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 had to cooperate with others in finding solutions. With regard to South Africa it stressed the need for the United States to take a stronger stand against apartheid, or imperil its relations with the Third World. The administration made it clear to South Africa that change had to occur there without waiting for settlements elsewhere. Above all, the administration proclaimed that its human rights policies as far as South Africa was concerned had to reflect American ideals.

The Carter administration wanted to distance itself from South Africa and convince the world that it was serious about its tougher policy towards that country. It gave strong support to the Sullivan Principles and created a furore over South Africa's nuclear programme. It joined the United Nations in voting for a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa and condemned government repression and judicial murders there. The sale of equipment which could be used for military purposes was prohibited and several personnel from its mission in South Africa were recalled. Furthermore, it unleashed a verbal tirade against South Africa.
Despite the administration's initial euphoria it soon realised that changes in South Africa would not occur as fast as expected. South African intransigence increased in response to the administration's policy. The former began giving the impression that it could withstand any kind of external pressure. Furthermore, the United States felt that South African support was essential in order to reach settlements on Rhodesia and Namibia. It therefore felt the need to cooperate with South Africa in this regard at the diplomatic level. The Sullivan Principles evoked limited response. The administration vetoed economic sanctions against South Africa at the United Nations and refused any kind of economic disengagement with it. It believed that American capitalism could play a positive role through its operations in South Africa. Reform, it maintained, was to occur as a result of socio-economic change like the spread of the market, growth of a Black middle class, Black consumerism and by periodic non-violent boycotts. In other words, it advocated an American style civil rights movement for South Africa. In essence, it took only those steps which would not harm American economic interests, claiming that economic measures would only harm the Black majority in South Africa.
Towards the second half of its term, the Carter administration lost its zeal for involvement in the affairs of South Africa. Moreover, within the administration the practitioners of realpolitik gained an upper hand. Members of the administration had to admit that change in South Africa was a long and difficult process, that the United States had no blueprint for change and that it was for the people of South Africa to draw a timetable for change. The Carter administration realised the failure of its human rights approach as well as that of the trickle down theory. Ultimately it alienated South Africa. The administration simultaneously disappointed its adherents who had expected far reaching changes both in American policy and the South African system.

Thus an analysis of the policies of the aforesaid period makes it evident that United States administrations have not been successful in upholding American ideals in the context of South Africa. The observance of these ideals could have formed the cornerstone of United States foreign policy. Although it had the capability to utilise its leverage with South Africa, it failed miserably through the lack of realistic policies. Nonintervention on behalf of the oppressed in South Africa in effect meant intervention on the side of the White minority regime.
The American attitude lacked farsightedness despite the fact that it was a generally accepted conclusion that in the long run the struggle against apartheid would prevail and that a Black majority government would come to power in South Africa. In such circumstances the United States would have to reckon with the new realities and pay the price for its past policies. American policymakers opted for short term solutions for problems with long term implications.

In essence there existed a clear hiatus between the proclamations of the United States and the policies that it actually adopted. Despite the incessant proclamations glorifying these ideals it failed miserably in observing them. Inaction coupled with rhetoric therefore questioned the very basis of United States policy towards South Africa.

Successive American administrations also followed policies that did not adversely affect the material interests of the United States. The Reagan administration's policy of "constructive engagement" was designed to quietly persuade South Africa to reform its system without severing the economic ties between the two countries. However, by 1984 increased pressure from antiapartheid organisations in the United States compelled
Congress to enact economic sanctions against South Africa. Such a move was obviously not prompted by any adherence to its proclaimed ideals, but was determined by hard facts. The burgeoning crisis in South Africa and the minority regime's acknowledgement that apartheid was becoming outdated and unacceptable indicated the inevitability of the collapse of apartheid. For the United States the message was clear -- only a substantial change in policy would guarantee its stakes in a postapartheid South Africa. Moreover, with the developments in the Soviet Union and East Europe, the much projected threat from the former no longer existed, thus questioning the rationale for continued American ties with the White minority government of South Africa.

Evidently it was not ideals which guided United States policy towards South Africa but rather its economic and strategic interests in that country. Although apartheid was in total contradiction to American ideals, the United States pursued a policy that was devoid of humanitarian values and one which abandoned the oppressed people of South Africa to the inhuman system of apartheid.