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ARTICLE



## The Limits of Covert Action in an Election Year: The CIA, Angola, and the 1976 US Presidential Election

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### ABSTRACT

This article focuses upon the decision by President Ford in 1975 to begin a covert operation inside Angola so as to prevent a communist-backed government coming to power. By drawing on recently declassified documents from the United States, this article enhances our understanding of how domestic political factors had such a strong influence over the course of US foreign policy. As such, this article contributes to the wider literature on US foreign policy during the Cold War, which continues to debate how much credence should be placed upon the domestic variable in understanding US foreign policy. Moreover, this article focuses on how the failure of US covert action inside Angola contributed to US policymakers deciding to jettison their policy of superpower détente and return to a more confrontational and militaristic form of Cold War policy.

Soon after taking office in January 1969, US president Richard Nixon shared his geostrategic vision to a group of US officials assembled in Bangkok, Thailand, during his presidential tour of the region. Within the sweeping analysis proffered were his dismissive remarks on the importance of Africa. For Nixon, the region could ‘not govern itself for 200 years’. Rather, ‘Asia is where the action is and ought to be’.<sup>1</sup> Nixon’s subsequent grand strategy broadly reflected this belief. The president’s interest in African affairs was subsequently limited to mitigating communist influence throughout the continent via the overt or covert support of anti-communist regimes. More broadly, he sought to safeguard and promote US business interests, which explains why Union Carbide in 1970 was issued with a licence to import Rhodesian chrome, which violated UN sanctions against Rhodesia. Similarly, Nixon would go on to support the passing of the 1971 Byrd Amendment to the Military Procurement Act, which allowed for the importation of certain materials deemed of strategic necessity from Rhodesia.<sup>2</sup> Africa, all barring Egypt given its role within the Arab-Israeli conflict, remained on the periphery of Nixon’s interest. Likewise, African affairs, let alone events inside Angola,

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were a long way down Gerald Ford's list of priorities when he assumed the presidency on 9 August 1974. First and foremost, Ford had to decide whether to grant President Nixon a presidential pardon for any alleged crimes he committed in office. In the international realm, strategic arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union, tackling the on-going energy crisis, and the apparent violation of the Paris Peace Accords in Vietnam was of pressing concern. All told, Angola barely entered into the President's thinking. Yet, within a year, the president had sanctioned a major covert operation inside the country and the administration's entire foreign policy approach, as encapsulated under the moniker of 'détente', which was so closely associated with the US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, was for all intents and purposes jettisoned due to the apparent advance of Soviet communism inside Angola.

This article explores the covert action ordered by President Ford inside Angola in 1975–6. In doing so, this article seeks to answer three interconnected questions. First, what did the president, and Kissinger, believe this would achieve? Second, why was covert intervention preferred to overt action? And third, what factors best explain why this covert action was suspended prior to it being allowed sufficient time for it to achieve its stated outcomes? The overarching explanation in response to all three questions centres upon the internal domestic politics of the United States. Several historians have explored events inside Angola in detail. The involvement of the United States, Soviet Union, Cuba, South Africa, Zaire, and Zambia, as well as non-state actors in the form of mercenaries has attracted significant attention.<sup>3</sup> US centric studies explain how Angola acted as one contributory factor among many in forcing a move away from a strategy of détente to one of intensified conflict.<sup>4</sup> Still, what a closer examination of the US documentation finds is that events in Angola were vital in undermining Kissinger's position in the administration and, in turn, his desire to maintain superpower détente. In essence, the direction of the U.S. grand strategy was fundamentally altered as much a result of bureaucratic in-fighting rather than as a consequence of analysing the international setting. Kissinger's loosening grip over US grand strategic decision-making inside the administration is something that needs to be fully appreciated. Often historians downplay or ignore this fact. Political scientists, especially those drawing on 'realist' understandings of international politics, likewise marginalise the domestic variable that influences US foreign policy decisions.<sup>5</sup> This is not to ignore how perceived Soviet advances in Angola convinced President Ford and Kissinger that détente needed to be reshaped for it no longer best promoted US interests.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, that the Ford administration decided to pursue an alternative to détente was as much a product of internal bureaucratic politics and internal domestic political pressures as it was a rational assessment of the international strategic situation that confronted them. This work therefore builds upon the wider historiographical interpretation which champions the primacy of domestic politics in better

understanding the driving forces behind U.S. grand strategy and challenges recent accounts that suggest the United States was 'capable' of pursuing a 'realist' foreign policy.<sup>7</sup>

### **Growing U.S. interest**

Angola, situated on the western coast of Africa bordering the Atlantic Ocean, Zaire (the modern-day Democratic Republic of Congo), Zambia, and Namibia, remained a Portuguese colonial in 1974. Yet Portugal's hold on power was tenuous for its limited military forces confronted a nationalist inspired insurgency across a landmass twice the size of France. This opposition included the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), and the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA). Each group's membership comprised different indigenous tribal communities which, in part, explains their hostility to one another. Strong ideological differences also existed. The MPLA drew support from the Mbundu people based in the central-northern region of Angola. Led by Agostinho Neto, the MPLA promoted a Marxist agenda and had received military, logistical, and economic assistance from Cuba and the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> The FNLA, led by Holden Roberto, was predominately supported by the Bakongo people in the east of the country. The FNLA subscribed and promoted a mixed political philosophy, but its evident anti-communist leanings ensured it won Washington's backing, with Roberto receiving direct financial assistance from the CIA. UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi, was the smallest of the Angolan factions having originally been aligned with the FNLA but had assumed an independent identity and predominantly drawn support from the Ovimbundu people in the south of Angola. Like the FNLA, UNITA espoused a mixed ideological message but one that was assuredly anti-communist.<sup>9</sup>

All told, the interests of the two superpowers in Angola remained of marginal significance throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. However, by the time Ford took office, Angola had assumed a more prominent position. Washington and Moscow's intervention inside Angola intensified the scale, intensity, and duration of the on-going civil conflict as both reacted to the Portuguese government's announcement in late 1974 that it would grant Angola independence. The Alvor conference held in January 1975 outlined the terms of this independence: an interim government would hold power until October 1975, when a general election, based on universal male suffrage, would decide the composition of the new post-colonial government.<sup>10</sup>

The conclusion of the Alvor Agreement seriously stirred Washington's interest, in particular, that of Henry Kissinger. Given Kissinger's extremely powerful policymaking role within the Ford administration, after all he served simultaneously as the secretary of state and the president's national security

advisor, his views are central to understanding US policy. The MPLA's political orientation sparked Kissinger's suspicion. Yet, as Kissinger points out in his memoir, this did not necessitate US involvement. After all, Kissinger had opted to recognise the legitimacy of the post-colonial and neo-Marxist Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) government of Mozambique. The MPLA, however, was viewed differently because Kissinger believed that Moscow exerted a considerable degree of influence over the MPLA, which the Kremlin had not exercised over FRELIMO. Kissinger's worldview, concerned so much by the balance of power, meant an MPLA Angolan government had to be opposed if it was to act as a proxy of the Kremlin. Balance of power laws demanded it.<sup>11</sup>

A week after the Alvor Agreement was announced, Kissinger chaired a session of the 40 Committee, a sub-committee comprised of senior national security advisors that oversaw covert operations, to discuss Angola.<sup>12</sup> Recent Congressional legislation in the form of the War Powers Act (November 1973) and the subsequent Hughes Ryan Amendment of 1974 that required all covert activities to be reported to relevant Congressional bodies created significant legal and practical obstacles for the 40 Committee. Still, the 40 Committee agreed that the CIA should maintain its current level of limited financial assistance for the FNLA and UNITA.<sup>13</sup> Events inside Angola soon encouraged a rethink. As the Alvor Agreement broke down, perhaps now was the time to begin supporting the anti-MPLA forces more earnestly?

Concurrently, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia visited Washington in April 1975 in a much publicised event.<sup>14</sup> Kaunda, concerned that civil war would spread to Zambia, outlined how, with US support for both the FNLA and UNITA, he could help engineer a comprehensive political solution whereby neither Roberto nor Neto would be allowed to exclusively govern. With US support for the FNLA and UNITA preventing the MPLA from ruling exclusively, they would be forced into a power-sharing arrangement. In essence, all three factions would be better off ruling together instead of engaging in a war from which no party was likely to emerge victorious.<sup>15</sup> The president and Kissinger were doubtful. First, they were sceptical as to whether Savimbi, Kaunda's notional national leader, could garner the necessary political power to deter Neto or Roberto from attempting to topple his leadership. Second, Kissinger did not believe that either the MPLA or FNLA would lay down their arms when they were being supported by powerful outside actors. The temptation to seek exclusive rule would prove too tempting.<sup>16</sup>

Events on the ground proved Kissinger correct as the MPLA achieved numerous battlefield successes predominantly as a result of the support provided by both Cuba and the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> By the summer of 1975 it was apparent that the MPLA was marching inexorably towards exclusive rule. If the United States wished to prevent MPLA victory, which the Ford

administration most certainly did, then a change in strategic direction was required. Kissinger concluded that the United States needed to both increase the level of support it offered to anti-MPLA forces and to concentrate them. The current 'spray tactics' of the CIA had yielded little success. The very limited support provided for UNITA had proven especially ineffective because Savimbi, fearful of assassination, had fled to Zaire for safety. This in turn had seriously undermined Savimbi's political support with key tribal communities inside Angola and galvanised support for the MPLA. The CIA was therefore instructed to concentrate its support behind Holden's FNLA. If Kissinger had his way Roberto would be Washington's man.<sup>18</sup>

Not everyone in Washington's policymaking circles was so convinced by Kissinger's new direction. Both the US Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, and the Director of the CIA, William Colby, cautioned against escalation. William Hyland, then serving as the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence but also acted as one of Kissinger's principal advisers on the National Security Council, offered the most sustained opposition. In Hyland's estimation, US escalation was unnecessary because Zaire's President Mobuto, so fearful that the MPLA would help to sponsor a coup against his rule, would never allow the MPLA to come to power. Given this, if an MPLA victory looked likely, Mobuto would unilaterally move against the MPLA and remove them from power. Hyland was arguing that Kissinger's desired outcome for a non-MPLA governed Angola would be achieved regardless of Washington's actions.<sup>19</sup> Kissinger was unconvinced. As he argued, US interests could not be sub-contracted to Mobuto.<sup>20</sup>

Escalating US assistance for the FNLA was only one side of Kissinger's strategy. The other aspect included improving relations with Mobuto's Zaire and Kaunda's Zambia with a view that both would take a more active role in opposing the MPLA. For Kissinger's plan to prove successful, Mobuto's support was particularly important. First, Zaire bordered Angola so was a critical supply route for the FNLA. Second, Zaire, behind that of South Africa, possessed the strongest military and economic strength in the region. For reasons surrounding racial sensitivity and domestic politics, overtly supporting South Africa's intervention in Angola was not a policy that Kissinger wished to pursue. Zaire's importance rose accordingly. Mobuto, however, was a difficult partner, not least because he suspected that the CIA was actively plotting to remove him from power.<sup>21</sup> Coupled to this, Mobuto's abysmal human rights record made him a somewhat embarrassing potential partner. In Kissinger's estimation, Mobuto was a 'semi-savage'.<sup>22</sup> Yet, a poor human rights record had never deterred Kissinger in supporting a ruler if strategic reasons dictated it. Indeed, Kissinger's entire approach to foreign policy was driven by concerns about the balance of power and was informed by *realpolitik*. As with Kissinger's decision to support regimes in Chile, Iran, and Timor, he

would support Mobuto if he believed the strategic need required it.<sup>23</sup> However, internal US domestic politics complicated Kissinger's thinking for he well appreciated that President Ford was set to contest the presidential election (1976) amidst mounting criticism from both conservative and liberal political opponents for pursuing an allegedly immoral foreign policy. Kissinger realised that these domestic political pressures could not be ignored. Pursuing a foreign policy driven by the dictates of *realpolitik* to the detriment of domestic political opposition was no longer feasible (if it ever truly was) by 1975. Fathoming a way in which to accommodate these domestic critics whilst still upholding what Kissinger deemed to be America's strategic interests would be at the core of his response to the evolving Angolan situation.<sup>24</sup> Domestic political calculations were an unwelcome irritant for the US secretary of state.

Improving relations with Mobuto assumed top priority in Kissinger's Angolan strategy. First, he authorised a new Zairian economic package that would help to galvanise Mobuto's hold on power. Second, Kissinger sought to appeal to Mobuto's vanity and assured him that the United States viewed him as a key African leader.<sup>25</sup> Third, Kissinger dispatched Ambassador Vance to visit Mobuto to convey a clear message: The United States was determined to prevent an MPLA victory inside Angola. In order to accomplish this, the United States wanted Zaire and Zambia to provide additional military support for the FNLA and UNITA with Washington directly replenishing this material support. All of this was designed to make 'it possible for Kuanda or Mobuto' to stop an MPLA ruled Angola.<sup>26</sup> This then was the basis of Kissinger's Angolan strategy.

Events inside Angola continued to evolve as US intelligence predicted that the MPLA would soon capture Angola's capital city Launda. For Kissinger, this was potentially disastrous as he believed that control of the capital equated to control of the entire country.<sup>27</sup> Reversing the immediate battlefield situation became Kissinger's priority. Kissinger instructed the CIA to begin preparing additional assistance for the FNLA.<sup>28</sup> Importantly, however, a final decision as to whether this assistance would be provided still had to be agreed by the president. On 27 June 1975, a meeting of the National Security Council was held to discuss Kissinger's proposals. Here, Kissinger warned that if the MPLA emerged victorious, then this would 'create instability in neighbouring states in which we have important interests such as Zaire. Instability in Angola would also increase resistance within the white southern African states of Rhodesia and South Africa. A Soviet-dominated Angola could be seen as a defeat for US policy'.<sup>29</sup>

For Kissinger, Angola could not be viewed as a regional matter. MPLA victory equated to a Soviet advance, which the logic of balance of power politics required Washington to resist. This logic had always governed Kissinger's worldview. The recent collapse of America's position in South



Vietnam only added additional pertinence to his belief that any Soviet advance, however marginal, had to be challenged. As Kissinger explained at the time of South Vietnam's collapse, the United States would 'pay dearly' in 'parts of the world outside of Indochina'.<sup>30</sup> Angola was now this part of the world where the toll had to be paid. What Kissinger had once viewed as a peripheral concern was now viewed as of vital significance in fighting the Cold War.

Others inside the administration were less convinced. James Schlesinger, the US secretary of defense, and William Colby, the Director of the CIA, were particularly perturbed by Kissinger's advice. As both argued, any increased US support for anti-MPLA forces would simply be countered by Moscow. US escalation involved additional outlay but would not provide any positive outcomes. Colby also warned that U.S. escalation would increase the probability of US involvement becoming public knowledge. As he suggested, such an eventuality would generate a 'great deal of criticism' against the president.<sup>31</sup> If Colby thought President Ford would be swayed by such considerations, then he did not give any hint of it during this NSC meeting. 'We can't sit here and worry about six Committees if we do what's right', he snapped back at his Director of the CIA.<sup>32</sup> Still, that the president would only countenance covert support rather than overt intervention revealed that he was deeply concerned that public knowledge of this undertaking would hurt his domestic standing.

Schlesinger, in contrast, argued that the United States should slowly withdraw from Angola. Instead, US vital interests inside Angola, which Schlesinger identified as its petroleum reserves, would be protected by encouraging the 'disintegration of Angola'.<sup>33</sup> In practical terms, this required encouraging Mobuto to annex the Angolan province of Cabinda where the majority of the nation's petroleum reserves were held. 'Cabinda in the clutches of Mobuto would mean far greater security of the petroleum reserves' Schlesinger candidly explained.<sup>34</sup> The president was sceptical. A litany of unknowns existed. What was the likelihood that Mobuto would actually undertake such an invasion? Could Mobuto even quickly seize Cabinda? Would Mobuto be able to ensure security once he had annexed Cabinda? Given Ford had experienced just how complicated military undertakings could be during the Mayaguez crisis, he well-appreciated Clausewitzian warnings about the 'fog of war'. What seemed achievable in Washington was in all likelihood a lot trickier to achieve on the ground in Cabinda. As for scaling back US involvement, Ford deemed this 'unacceptable' for he accepted Kissinger's argument as to the wider strategic importance of Angola to successfully prosecuting the Cold War.<sup>35</sup> Angola was now deemed by the President to be an important battleground in the Cold War. US financial assistance to Mobuto and Kaunda, so as to indirectly fund the FNLA and UNITA, was to begin in earnest.

A mixture of bureaucratic incompetence, inertia, and outright opposition put paid to President Ford's ambitions. As Kissinger discovered, State



Department officials were deliberately delaying additional funding for Zaire in the hope that this would give the President increased thinking time so as to reverse his decision. Kissinger was livid. 'I don't want our people giving Africans any lectures on non-violence, on love and brotherhood-lectures which to them will be nonsensical, which will sound insane to them', he complained.<sup>36</sup> Aside the histrionics, Kissinger well understood that overcoming this opposition to his plans within Washington's policymaking circles was vital if his plans were to have any hope of succeeding.

This bureaucratic opposition was serious for it existed within the State Department, Department of Defense, CIA, and even among his closest advisers. Kissinger dismissed the arguments put forward from Schlesinger and Colby on the grounds that both were motivated by a determination to undermine his authority. Schlesinger's opposition was therefore just the latest battleground in their broader struggle over the direction of US grand strategy. In the case of Colby, Kissinger certainly had a valid point, given the Director of the CIA was mired in public controversy over the Church Committee's hearing into the activities of the CIA. Media coverage was deeply critical of what the Church Committee was unearthing, which led to some to even call for the abolition of the agency. Colby, a career CIA officer, was keen to shield the agency from further scandal. Public knowledge of CIA involvement inside Angola was likely to be harder to prevent under Kissinger's escalatory plan, which would encourage Congressional actors to implement serious remedial punishments against the agency.<sup>37</sup> 'I'm scared of the Congress on this', Colby told Kissinger. As Kissinger retorted, he was 'scared of losing' Angola.<sup>38</sup>

Kissinger found it harder to dismiss the sincerity of the advice proffered by his closest advisers. Joseph Sisco, serving as the State department's under-secretary for political affairs, along with William Hyland, were the most vocal in articulating their opposition. As Sisco argued, Angola was 'simply not important enough' to warrant the level of escalation that Kissinger desired.<sup>39</sup> Kissinger simply disagreed with this analysis. For Kissinger, non-action would lead to a communist government inside Angola. This would result in 'a string of countries dependent upon the USSR . . . If all the surrounding countries see Angola go communist, they will assume that the US has no will. Coming on top of Vietnam and Indochina, their perception of what the US can and will do will be negative. If the USSR can do something in a place so far away, what is the US going to do' he asked his opponents?<sup>40</sup>

Kissinger's balance of power worldview, which saw all areas of the world as being interconnected and intertwined, often referred to by historians as 'linkage', again came to the fore. America's retreat from Indochina would be interpreted by Moscow as a sign that Washington would not oppose communist advances throughout the 'Third World'. Apparent also was the lingering influence that the domino theory, that being, the fear that a communist success

in one country would precipitate similar successes in neighbouring states, exercised over Kissinger's thinking. That a consensus on the optimal strategy could not be reached would be ultimately irrelevant. Under the US system of government it is the president whom ultimately decides on national policy. And, in this situation, Kissinger had President Ford's support. The CIA and State Department would eventually be compelled to follow the White House's orders. Bureaucratic delay could only be sustained for so long.

Kissinger may have emerged victorious from his latest bureaucratic spat, but the situation inside Angola was evolving against US interests. The transitional government, which would theoretically lead Angola to independence, collapsed as fierce fighting between the MPLA and FNLA continued around Launda. The FNLA's casualties were so serious that its leadership was compelled to retreat to neighbouring Zaire. In a further sign of desperation, the FNLA mobilised all its remaining forces in preparation for a last ditch confrontation with the MPLA.<sup>41</sup>

### Operation IA feature

The FNLA's setbacks only cemented Kissinger's thinking that it was imperative to improve relations with Mobuto. Yet Mobuto's own calculations had altered. As Kissinger learned, Mobuto now wanted the United States to provide a 'concrete demonstration' of their willingness to defeat the MPLA. Without such a demonstration, Mobuto threatened to withdraw his support for the FNLA and accept the MPLA would rule Angola.<sup>42</sup> What then was this 'concrete demonstration'? In Mobuto's mind it meant additional economic and military aid for Zaire. It also required the CIA to ratchet up its support for anti-MPLA forces inside Angola and to directly supply them with military equipment (via funnelling them through Zaire). Mobuto was skilfully exploiting President Ford and Kissinger's growing concern about developments inside Angola to win additional support for his regime. Indeed, President Ford would accede to Mobuto's wishes.<sup>43</sup> President Ford thus authorised supplies to be sent to the FNLA and UNITA by initiating Operation IA Feature in July 1975 in defiance of the earlier vote of the US Senate, which barred US assistance for the belligerents of the Angola war. The CIA was given an original budget of \$6 million which expanded to a sum of \$25 million by August 1975. Importantly, this information was not to be shared with the Senate Intelligence Oversight Committee let alone the wider US public.<sup>44</sup> President Ford, persuaded by Kissinger's logic and alarmed by recent intelligence assessments that MPLA battlefield success was primarily the result of Cuban and Soviet assistance, opted to defy congressional wishes and begin a covert programme of support for the FNLA and UNITA inside Angola.<sup>45</sup>

What then was U.S. policy designed to achieve? In short, as Kissinger explained: 'Anything's better than a MPLA victory'.<sup>46</sup> In practical terms,

Kissinger preferred a FNLA-UNITA coalition government, not least because this was the condition that both Mobuto and Kaunda had set for their on-going support.<sup>47</sup> To help achieve this, the battlefield performance of the FNLA and UNITA needed to be improved quickly, which would require outside assistance, perhaps from South African regulars or mercenary forces brought in from Brazil. This raised the thorny matter of South Africa, which, given its white apartheid policies, was deemed by some US policymakers to be too problematic a partner to work directly with inside Angola. As Sisco suggested, utilising 'Black Brazilians' would be preferable. Kissinger queried why 'white Brazilians' could not be sent to Angola. Sisco never answered that question. Regardless of just how much weighting the racial variable had on US policy is open to dispute. After all, the United States was cognisant that South Africa was quietly providing support for anti-MPLA forces inside Angola and did not oppose this. Yet, that such a discussion was held demonstrates that racial sensitivities were having some affect over the composition of U.S. covert action.<sup>48</sup>

Whilst US officials procrastinated, the MPLA continued to win battlefield victories, which, in no small part, was due to the considerable influence exerted by Cuban ground forces coupled to the significant amounts of Soviet material assistance.<sup>49</sup> Limitations imposed by the 40 Committee only further hampered Operation IA Feature. As the 40 Committee instructions stipulated, the CIA could not operate inside Angola itself. Rather, assistance had to be funnelled into the country or provided in neighbouring Zaire, which led to the CIA relying more heavily upon mercenaries of divergent quality.<sup>50</sup> As Kissinger was warned 'UNITA's capability even to defend its own front may be severely strained'.<sup>51</sup> Kissinger was informed that the CIA had not been able to dispatch US military trainers to Angola to assist UNITA and the FNLA's defensive preparations. Efforts to dispatch Brazilian or French mercenaries had also not materialised.<sup>52</sup>

All told then, Ford and Kissinger expected the MPLA to declare itself as the legitimate government of a post-colonial Angola. Such prophecies soon manifested. Following the departure of the Portuguese High Commissioner at midnight, 10 November 1975 intensive fighting between MPLA and FNLA forces soon erupted with the most dramatic fighting taking place around Luanda in the Battle of Quifangondo. Troops from Zaire assisted the FNLA. Pretoria also opted to intervene on the FNLA's behalf and launched Operation Savannah on 22 October 1975. This was to have two important external ramifications. First, Castro responded by escalating Cuban support for the MPLA. Up until this point, the Cuban military presence had been limited, with its predominantly focused on training the MPLA. Now, on 4 November, Castro authorised Operation Carlota, which led to large-scale Cuban military intervention that were instructed to stymie the South African advance. Eventually, circa 40,000 Cuban military personnel would be deployed to

Angola. This Cuban military intervention, coupled to the increased levels of material support offered from Moscow, would halt the South African advance.<sup>53</sup> Second, direct South African participation was to have an important domestic political impact back in Washington as this intervention was leaked within the global media and led to accusations that the Ford administration was supporting the apartheid regime in crushing a black nationalist movement.<sup>54</sup> It would be this domestic backlash to overtly supporting South African military intervention that would directly lead to the US Senate deciding to prevent additional funding for covert operations inside Angola (discussed below).<sup>55</sup> As the conflict raged, Agostinho Neto declared the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola. Diplomatic recognition from Moscow and Havana quickly followed. In response, the FNLA and UNITA proclaimed that they had entered into a coalition and were the legitimate Angolan government with Holden Roberto declared as Angola's president.<sup>56</sup>

Officials in Washington continued to monitor events closely. The CIA concluded that recent Cuban support had been decisive in the MPLA's recent battlefield success. The 40 Committee again met to discuss what action the United States should undertake. Now chaired by Brent Scowcroft, given his promotion to National Security Adviser, the 40 Committee surveyed a number of possibilities. It was suggested, for instance, that Soviet MIGs stationed in the Congo that were providing air support for the MPLA could be destroyed via a raiding party. In addition, it was proposed that additional funding and armaments be provided to the FNLA and UNITA. Another option was to utilise America's special relationship with Israel. This would involve the United States supporting an Israeli special forces operation inside Angola that would destroy MPLA aircraft that were proving effective in targeting FNLA and UNITA ground forces. The 40 Committee did not solely focus on military options. As was mooted, US diplomatic power could be exercised to help broker a ceasefire between the belligerents that would engineer a political settlement that did not afford the MPLA exclusive authority inside Angola.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the ambiguity, there existed a clear sense that a new strategy was required if, as Scowcroft put it, FNLA and UNITA forces, were to remain 'in the ball game'.<sup>58</sup> The 40 Committee, however, was divided in how to best accomplish this objective. Colby strongly argued against the proposed covert operations for they would not secure the outcome that the United States sought. Instead, the United States needed to focus its energies on securing a diplomatic solution. Such advice ran into serious opposition from Kissinger. As he argued, diplomatic and military action was not mutually exclusive but was complimentary. As Kissinger reasoned, diplomatic efforts would fail if the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the MPLA did not believe US military power (in whatever guise) would be used to prevent them seizing control of Angola. Kissinger's advice reflected his belief that successful diplomacy often required the threat or utilisation of military force if it was to prove successful.<sup>59</sup>

Two days later, another session of the 40 Committee was convened. Colby had evidently been deaf to Kissinger's argument as he once again urged the 40 Committee to pursue a 'diplomatic initiative'. Again, he encountered serious opposition. Scowcroft took the lead in challenging Colby's thinking as he essentially reiterated Kissinger's previous argument that force and diplomacy were two sides of the same coin.<sup>60</sup> Kissinger and Scowcroft had a point. Why would the MPLA enter into a power-sharing arrangement when its advantageous battlefield position could allow it to rule unilaterally? Did the MPLA even have had the authority to negotiate such a settlement given the backing they received from Moscow and Havana? It was this type of rationalisation that explains why Kissinger and Scowcroft were desperate to improve the military position of the FNLA and UNITA and to reject any hasty efforts at entering into diplomatic negotiations.

How then was this to be achieved? First, as Scowcroft identified, it was imperative to improve the fighting morale of the FNLA. Whilst the FNLA had initially performed well in engagements, they had fared poorly when confronted with MPLA units that were reinforced with Cuban soldiers.<sup>61</sup> Addressing this was an obvious starting point. This would be achieved by incorporating South African soldiers and French mercenaries directly into FNLA combat units. Second, the FNLA's fighting capability would be bolstered by providing them with more ammunition, heavier armaments, and improved communication devices. How then was the United States to best implement these programmes? As Colby explained, there were really two options open to the United States. The US could supply South Africa with the necessary material to help them defeat the MPLA or, alternatively, the US could directly increase its military aid to the FNLA and UNITA.

Neither of these options were attractive. Supporting South African efforts in Angola were undesirable for a mixture of strategic and domestic political factors that touched on the thorny issue of racial sensitivity. On strategic grounds, US support for South African intervention was believed by key US policymakers to spark a general anti-US response amongst other African states. Zaire was a special concern because South Africa was viewed as a growing strategic threat. From the perspective of Zaire, if the United States supplied South Africa with a new influx of sophisticated military hardware, this could be turned against Zaire at some future date. Consequently, Zaire would be tempted to look towards the Soviet Union for military assistance which Moscow could provide both quicker and cheaper.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Kenneth Kaunda had told Ford and Kissinger during his April visit to Washington of his hostility towards the United States intensifying its cooperation with South Africa as a means of combatting the MPLA. So, from the perspective of regional security, intensifying cooperation with South Africa was fraught with potentially serious strategic downsides.

Even if the president was willing to ignore these regional complications, domestic political pressure suggested that a restrained course of action was preferable. Given the recent US evacuation of South Vietnam, the political and broader domestic atmosphere inside the United States was violently opposed to engaging in action that could spiral into another US war. If the Ford administration directly supported the FNLA and this became known, then the president would be exposing himself to explosive criticism.<sup>63</sup> It was hardly a giant leap of faith to see how Ford's political opponents would be able to spin a credible narrative that US support for the FNLA and UNITA mirrored US intervention inside Indochina between 1945-63. Likewise, if the president opted to overtly support the racist South African government, it would only help his political opponents mobilise anti-racist constituents inside the United States against the president in the forthcoming election. Indeed, in the 1976 election, the Democratic nominee for the presidency, Jimmy Carter, would do this very thing by linking improved domestic civil rights to that of promoting international civil rights as a part of his broader human rights agenda.<sup>64</sup> For domestic political reasons alone then a new approach was needed, but it would have to predominantly be centred upon covert, rather than overt, action.

This new approach rested to two pillars. First, Washington would not 'discourage' Pretoria from pursuing its current military efforts inside Angola. Covertly supporting South Africa was tolerable so long as it remained in the shadows outside of public purview. Second, the United States looked to increase the number of foreign mercenaries into the ranks of the FNLA and UNITA.<sup>65</sup> The 40 Committee convened one week later to deliberate further action. Here, an additional assistance package for the FNLA and UNITA was agreed to. What exactly this consisted of remains unclear as the minutes of this meeting remain classified. We do know that an overall budget for financing the FNLA and UNITA was agreed to, though the exact amount remains classified. The 40 Committee authorised the supply of both anti-aircraft and anti-tank missile systems. Whilst the available documentation is short on specific details, the records demonstrate that the Ford administration had undertaken a serious commitment to the FNLA and UNITA in order to turn the tide of the Angolan Civil War in its favour.<sup>66</sup>

Even though the decision to militarily escalate had been taken, Kissinger, in keeping with his philosophy that effective military and diplomatic action had to work in tandem, now pressed ahead with his diplomatic efforts. Kissinger arranged to meet with the Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly Dobrynin, to ascertain Soviet willingness to support an Angolan ceasefire. As Kissinger suggested, both superpowers needed to work together in order so that both could withdraw from Angola so that 'no one would lose face'.<sup>67</sup> The following day, Kissinger telephoned Dobrynin to emphasise the importance President Ford attached to finding a method for both superpowers to amicably withdraw from the Angolan Civil War. Kissinger therefore proposed that the Organization of



African Unity should issue a public decree that would call for all outside powers to stop supplying arms to the belligerents. Along with this, Kissinger proposed that the two superpowers could act as arbitrators in ceasefire negotiations between the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA with a view to engineering a tripartite power-sharing arrangement.<sup>68</sup> Moscow made its disinterest known as it intensified its support for the MPLA.<sup>69</sup>

With Kissinger's diplomacy yielding little the 40 Committee analysed alternative approaches. However, as the participants of the 40 Committee were all too aware, domestic political factors seriously restricted their options. As a case in point, the House Select Committee, which would have to authorise the funding for any covert operations, had already outlined its opposition to intensifying US involvement inside Angola. Any request for additional funding was likely to be rejected. Problems were also growing with prominent members of the African-American political elite, including the likes of Congressmen Dellums and Clark, who could, in the upcoming presidential election, generate considerable political problems for the president. As Dellums and Clark told White House officials, if US support for the MPLA became publicly known, it would 'generate a racist problem' inside the United States because of South African involvement in the war against the MPLA.<sup>70</sup> Once again, domestic politics surrounding race was having a direct bearing upon the tenure of US foreign policy. Nevertheless, concerns around being perceived as acting in a racist fashion that would be construed negatively either in the domestic or foreign spheres remained limited. Thus, whilst conscious of potential domestic political recriminations, the 40 Committee still advised the president that the United States could make a material difference to the outcome of the fighting if the United States Air force would transport the 1000 mercenaries that the French government had recruited.<sup>71</sup>

Whilst the 40 Committee analysed covert measures, the President sought to clarify US goals inside Angola and how best to achieve them. Accordingly, he instructed a new National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM 234) to be drawn up.<sup>72</sup> While the Ford administration was laudably seeking to clarify its goals and create suitable strategic approaches on how to achieve them, this clarifying action was only undertaken *after* the decision to materially escalate US involvement had occurred. Since April 1975 the president had been consciously aware of the growing influence of the MPLA, Moscow, and Havana inside Angola and had begun covert operations in the summer of 1975 to counter this. Yet, it was only now in December 1975 that the President wished to clarify US objectives and a holistic approach to achieving them. The critics of the administration that pointed to the similarity of how the Kennedy-Johnson administrations escalated US involvement inside Vietnam without sufficiently defining US goals and creating suitable strategies for accomplishing them had more than a kernel of truth to them. That said, bad or unclear strategy can be altered. It is far preferable to rectify one's errors then it is to



deny that they exist. To its credit, the Ford administration was now undertaking this.<sup>73</sup>

Whilst NSSM 234 was being drawn up, Kissinger continued to pursue diplomatic avenues in the hope that Angola could be 'neutralised' in the Cold War contest. The US secretary of state turned his attention to Mandungu Bula Nyati, Zaire's Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. As shown above, one of the key reasons as to why the United States had been reticent in directly supporting South African involvement in Angola was the fear of upsetting Zaire. Kissinger now attempted to exploit the alliance with Zaire to his advantage. On meeting with Nyati, Kissinger confirmed that the Zairian arms request made earlier in the year would be granted. Kissinger believed this arms package would be a sufficient inducement to ensure that Zaire continued to fight the MPLA.<sup>74</sup> Discussions then turned to the efforts of both the United States and France in helping to defeat the MPLA. As Kissinger promised, both powers would ensure that they got 'people, guns and helicopters' to the FNLA. That evening, Kissinger met with Rupiah Banda, Zaire's Minister of Foreign Affairs, and assured him that any Soviet arms being shipped to the MPLA would be balanced by US support for the FNLA.<sup>75</sup>

Yet on his return to Washington, Kissinger soon found that Congressional opposition would prevent him fulfilling the commitments made to Nyati. Senator John Turney (D-CA) had attached an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill, which prohibited funding the belligerents fighting the Angolan Civil War. The proposed amendment not only prevented an escalation of US support but would, more crucially, require all-existing support to be withdrawn. More important yet was that Turney had sufficient numbers within the Senate to ensure that the Defense Appropriations Bill, which under US law needs to be agreed to annually, would only pass if this amendment was attached. Whilst the president could ignore this law and illegally support the FNLA and UNITA, the recent fate of Richard Nixon lingered heavily on the president's mind. Put simply, President Ford had no intention of flouting Congress's will and thereby risking impeachment. The only alternative was to persuade Senator Turney to retract his amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill. The Christmas Ball at the White House was taken as an opportunity to 'put the arm on key leaders' inside Congress but such tactics failed to deliver the desired results.<sup>76</sup> On 19 December 1975, Senator Turney's amendment won the Senate's approval. The Senate had flexed its constitutional muscle and had shackled the president's Angolan policy.

US domestic politics had critically undermined the president's desired Angolan strategy. As Kissinger was told, 'funds for our Angola program [were] drying up'.<sup>77</sup> And without continued financial assistance there was little hope of preventing the MPLA emerging victorious. As Ford complained,

the passing of this legislation was 'deplorable'.<sup>78</sup> Deplorable or not, the majority of the mainstream media coverage endorsed the Senate's stance as they exploited contacts within the State and Defense Departments to provide enormous detail on US action inside Angola. No wonder given the negative press coverage Kissinger reacted furiously during a meeting with his staff: 'No one can think that our interest there [Angola] is because of the Soviet base or the "untold riches" of Angola. This is not a whorehouse; we are conducting national policy. Just so that you may know my policy, we are interested in Angola because the Soviets intervened 8,000 miles away and transformed the third-largest faction [MPLA] into the largest'.<sup>79</sup> Irrespective of such complaints, Congress had exerted its constitutional authority. US covert support for the FNLA and UNITA would have to cease.<sup>80</sup>

Domestic politics forced a rethink. Kissinger first removed key members of the African bureau within the State Department that he suspected of leaking information to the press.<sup>81</sup> He then sought to calm any anxiety amongst America's African allies.<sup>82</sup> Holding a meeting with delegates from Zaire, Zambia, and Cameroon he encouraged them to 'hold the line' against the MPLA.<sup>83</sup> Quite how this was to be achieved Kissinger never elucidated. Kissinger also reconsidered his stance towards South Africa. As he argued forcefully during one meeting with his advisers, South Africa would be able to defeat the MPLA if only the United States marginally increased its assistance for Pretoria. Others were not so convinced. As Sisco pointed out, by supporting South Africa so overtly it would provide the Soviet Union with 'an enormous club to beat you with in Africa'. Sensitivities relating to race were being utilised as a reason to not to do something. Yet, *prima facie*, this had little impact on Kissinger for he dismissed this racial concern. As Kissinger retorted to Sisco, if additional support for South Africa led to the defeat of the MPLA, then it was worth risking being charged with conducting a racist foreign policy.<sup>84</sup>

Whether Kissinger would have been able to pursue this South African course was made moot by events. Pretoria, evaluating its own interests, decided to withdraw its troops from the conflict. The South African National Security Council was concerned that at the forthcoming summit of the Organization of African Union, scheduled for January 1976, member states would vote in favour of recognising the MPLA as the government of Angola if South Africa was seen to be directly trying to remove it from power. To avert this, Pretoria negotiated with the FNLA and UNITA to withdraw its military personnel from Angola so that FNLA and UNITA delegates at the conference could credibly deny that South African forces were fighting inside Angola.<sup>85</sup> At the subsequent summit, South African withdrawal had the desired effect as the conference was evenly split on the question of recognising the MPLA as Angola's government.<sup>86</sup> Time, therefore, had been won for the anti-MPLA forces.

This turn of events only compelled Kissinger to think of more creative ways in which to support the anti-MPLA forces. It was to America's global allies including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and France that he turned. Kissinger's plan was simple. Iran and Saudi Arabia would supply military equipment to Zaire, who in turn would continue to supply the FNLA and UNITA. The United States, meanwhile, would replace Saudi and Iranian military equipment by increasing the level of their next military shipments which Congress would approve. France would be encouraged to secure the services of foreign mercenaries. Kissinger's scheme skirted the edges of legality but it would overcome the current Congressional sanctions.<sup>87</sup>

The Shah of Iran, appreciating his alliance with Washington, agreed to the request. Yet this avenue was only of temporary utility as the fall in the price of oil, which was Iran's major source of wealth, led to Tehran suspending arms sales to Zaire. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, was none too interested in Kissinger's schemes.<sup>88</sup> Whilst the French government was as convinced as Kissinger as to the need to prevent an MPLA government, Paris struggled to find the funds required to hire sufficient quantities of mercenaries to fight the MPLA.<sup>89</sup> All told, the mixture of domestic restraints and lack of international support meant that the MPLA would now be the *de facto* government of Angola. As Kissinger lamented in his memoir, 'it was all over'.<sup>90</sup>

### **Angola, détente, and U.S. grand strategy**

At the beginning of 1976, Kissinger was reminded that 'we will be seen as having been substantially bested by the Soviets in a power contest' if the MPLA secured its position in Angola.<sup>91</sup> Such a warning was hardly necessary for it encapsulated Kissinger's own assessment of the geostrategic stakes at play. The MPLA's situation looked favourable as its ranks were bolstered by Cuban forces and, as US intelligence detected, Moscow significantly increased its material support.<sup>92</sup> As one US intelligence assessment correctly predicted, the MPLA would win a conventional military victory over its opponents and consolidate its hold on power.<sup>93</sup> Over the next months this outcome manifested.<sup>94</sup> Even UNITA, which had proved the most capable fighting force, could not mount viable long-term resistance without significant US support.<sup>95</sup>

Diplomacy inside the United Nations only compounded the US predicament as a vote was set for June 1976 to whether or not recognise the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola. Kissinger hoped that the remaining funds allocated to Operation IA Feature could be utilised to help weaken the MPLA's hold on power and perhaps convince the United Nations not to vote for its recognition. Such hopes proved illusory as funding had been exhausted.<sup>96</sup> The reality was that the MPLA controlled large swaths of the country and was therefore, *de facto*, ruling Angola. The

UN membership was likely to recognise this fact. Indeed, international recognition was only blocked via the exercise of the US UN Security Council veto in June 1976.<sup>97</sup> But by the end of the year, MPLA's de facto rule was officially recognised by the United Nations as President Ford instructed the US Ambassador at the United Nations to abstain on the question of Angolan UN membership.<sup>98</sup> Congress had pulled its support for IA Feature and with it so went the possibility of preventing MPLA rule. The president had decided that the reality of MPLA rule had to be recognised. Normalization of relations would follow once Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency in 1977 as he put a stop to all anti-MPLA US intelligence activities inside Angola. It would be another president, Ronald Reagan, that would resume America's anti-MPLA crusade in Angola.<sup>99</sup>

By the beginning of 1976 as the campaigning for the presidential election went into full swing, Ford's pursuit of détente with the Soviet Union came in for increasing criticism. Ford's election opponent, Jimmy Carter, made it the centrepiece of his foreign policy attacks on the president. Carter's critique of détente was so powerful that President Ford actually banned his staff from using the word 'détente' to explain his foreign policy ambitions during the election campaign. As one journalist put it, 'détente' had become a 'dirty word'.<sup>100</sup> Kissinger well appreciated that his grand strategic vision and the ensuing architecture he (and Nixon) had built would be dismantled by his opponents in Washington. He well understood that there was a convergence of liberal and conservative opinion against détente.<sup>101</sup> Cuba's military success in Angola was particularly alarming as Kissinger feared this would encourage Havana to dispatch troops to Africa's other hotbeds, such as Namibia or Rhodesia, so as to instigate revolution.<sup>102</sup> In such an event, Kissinger's opponents inside the administration that wanted a return to a more militaristic and confrontational US approach to fighting the Cold War, such as Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Cheney, used Angola as evidence to bolster their case.<sup>103</sup> Kissinger's removal as National Security Advisor on 4 November 1975, as part of a border effort by the President to recalibrate his policy-making team which saw him firing James Schlesinger and William Colby (dubbed the Halloween Massacre by the press), only emphasised the stakes at play.<sup>104</sup>

One way in which Kissinger could bolster his own position was to secure some sort of concession from Moscow for this would demonstrate the practical value in maintaining détente. Kissinger was reasonably confident this could be achieved if he threatened to jettison superpower détente and embrace a more hostile grand strategy that his critics were calling for. As he informed the president, the Kremlin wished to maintain détente, but they did not believe Washington would abandon it because of Soviet actions in Angola. Now was the time to persuade the Soviet leadership otherwise.<sup>105</sup> Kissinger informed the Kremlin that Soviet actions in Angola had broken the US-Soviet

understanding that no unilateral advantage at the expense of the other side should be undertaken. Coupled to this, the Soviets had violated the 'cardinal law of balance of power: that if one power seeks and obtains a margin of advantage over the other, the other is bound to seek to redress the balance'. The message was clear: the United States would more combatively pursue its interests vis-à-vis Moscow if the Kremlin would not exercise caution in the Third World.<sup>106</sup>

Inside the administration the criticism of détente intensified. Rumsfeld (now promoted to Defense Secretary) and President Ford's political and election advisors, notably Richard Cheney, believed détente was impudent strategy and a vote loser. As Rumsfeld argued in March 1976, détente could not be sustained if the Soviets deliberately sought to subvert America's position inside Angola. Ford's political advisors were aghast that détente was being framed by both Ronald Reagan, who was challenging Ford for the Republican Party's nomination for the presidency, and Carter, the Democratic nominee, as a policy of weakness akin to the folly of appeasing Hitler's Germany. Angola, ruled by the MPLA, would be exploited by President Ford's political opponents to support their case. As Reagan alleged in one speech in February 1976, the case of Angola highlighted the fallacy of this assumption.<sup>107</sup> Reagan's challenge intensified throughout the spring as he took a number of primaries that left the Republican Party's nomination for president in some doubt come the time of the Republican Convention in July 1976. At the convention, Ford would emerge as the party's candidate but not before the Reagan team had forced the president to accept an entire section of the Republican Party's platform titled 'morality in foreign policy'.<sup>108</sup> In sum, Angola gave credence to the critics of détente.<sup>109</sup> By the time of the 1976 general election, détente was considered a 'dirty word' as its use was banned by the president to describe his grand strategy. Rather, the Ford election machine emphasised a more muscular and militaristic policy in fighting the Cold War.<sup>110</sup>

Kissinger was aghast but understood the realities of US domestic politics. Kissinger, whom pursued a foreign policy predicated on the logic of *realpolitik* and not usually one so interested in the vagaries of US domestic politics, spent an inordinate amount of time throughout 1975–6 publicly and privately explaining that his foreign policy championed the supposed traditional US values, such as liberty, freedom, and human rights.<sup>111</sup> Thus, Kissinger, following inter-departmental agreement in Washington, extended tremendous energy throughout the early half of 1976 trying to bring about a majority rule settlement in both Namibia and Rhodesia.<sup>112</sup> In part, this was influenced by the strategic necessity of trying to win majority support away from the Soviet Union.<sup>113</sup> But, as Kissinger candidly admitted in private conversation, such action could be exploited by the president for electoral purposes. In his estimation this would make 'inroads to the Negros' which could lead to him

getting ‘more delegates’ at the Republican convention set for July 1976.<sup>114</sup> Kissinger, however, remained alarmed that domestic pressure could force him to pursue far more troubling policies in Africa. Thus, in the event that Cuban forces, supported by Moscow, acted as the vanguard of a broader communist revolution throughout Africa, he believed popular US sentiment would demand that the United States topple the Castro regime that would threaten a major confrontation with the Soviet Union.<sup>115</sup>

This episode highlighted the primacy of Congressional influence over that of the executive branch, which had rarely been the case in the conduct of US foreign policy since the advent of the Cold War. US action in opposing communist forces throughout Southern Africa was deeply circumscribed by domestic political factors. The covert action undertaken by the Ford administration would eventually be brought to a halt because of domestic pressure. Yet, this influence would prove to be fleeting. Whilst the Carter administration would continue to recognise the MPLA as the legitimate Angolan government, the intensification of the Cold War during the presidency of Ronald Reagan would see the United States once again seek to topple the MPLA as a part of the president’s strategy of rolling back communist influence throughout the ‘Third World’. Reagan, however, unlike Ford and Kissinger, would prove much more astute at manipulating public support for his Cold War policies.<sup>116</sup>

## Notes

1. Memorandum of a Conversation, 29 July 1969 in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS): Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969–1972*, Vol. I, Doc. 31.
2. The best treatment on Nixon’s Rhodesian policies are within: Eddie Michel, *The White House and White Africa: Presidential Policy toward Rhodesia during the UDI Era, 1965–1979* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 86–142. Businesses such as Union Carbide and Foote Mineral had taken an active interest in securing natural resources from Rhodesia in spite of the sanctions regime. See: Anthony Lake, *The Tar Baby Option: American Policy Toward Southern Rhodesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 201; and Eddie Michel, “The Luster of Chrome: Nixon, Rhodesia, and the Defiance of UN Sanctions,” *Diplomatic History*, 42, no. 1 (2018): 138, 153.
3. For the broadest international perspectives see: Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2002) and Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 208–241. The best Soviet account is Jonathan Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 290–4. Recent works that emphasise the international dynamics at play include: Bruno C. Reis, “Decentering the Cold War in Southern Africa: The Portuguese Policy of Decolonization and Détente in Angola and Mozambique, 1974–1984,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21, no. 1 (2019): 3–51; Candace Sobers Independence, “Intervention, and Internationalism Angola and the International System, 1974–1975,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 21, no. 1 (2019): 97–124, and Eddie Michel, “Racial justice and the Cold War:



- Gerald R. Ford, Rhodesia and the Geneva Conference of 1976,” *Safundi* 20, no. 4 (2019): 467–88.
4. Recent U.S. centric accounts include: Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 403–15; Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 163–4; Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 220–5; and Tiago Moreira de Sá “The World Was Not Turning in Their Direction’. The United States and the Decolonization of Angola,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21, no: 1 (2019): 52–65.
  5. For works that downplay or ignore Kissinger’s weakening position within the administration and therefore miss the rising importance of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney’s influence over policy (both whom were motivated more keenly by domestic political calculations instead of international ones) see Moreira de Sá, “The United States and the Decolonization of Angola,” 52–65; and Zanchetta, *Transformation of American International Power*, 163–4.
  6. Détente, that being a relaxation of the superpower rivalry, was not Nixon or Kissinger’s objective. Rather, it was a means to an end, with the end being the maintenance of U.S. primacy within the international system. Or, as one historian puts it, to uphold Pax Americana. Relaxing superpower competition was deemed necessary to prevent nuclear confrontation, to allow the U.S. economy to recover from the burdens of the Vietnam War, and to help galvanise domestic support behind the president, and overcome the bitter sectional in-fighting that the Vietnam War had helped exacerbate. These efforts, when combined by exploiting the international balance of power, especially in relation to Sino-Soviet relations, would ensure that U.S. primacy within the international system would be maintained. The conflation between means and ends was not something that the critics of détente were much interested in. For a good discussion on this see: Sargent, *Superpower Transformed*, 43–8.
  7. Campbell Craig & Frederick Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1–6. On the idea that U.S. domestic politics did not prevent the pursuit of a ‘realist’ driven grand strategy see: Galen Jackson and Marc Trachtenberg, “A Self-Inflicted Wound? Henry Kissinger and the Ending of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 32, no:3 (2021): 571.
  8. Havana took this decision without consulting Moscow. This distinction, however, was lost on Washington’s most important policymakers. See: Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War*, 291; and Hatzky, *Cubans in Angola*, 4.
  9. Fernando Andresen Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict* (Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan, 2001), 33–49.
  10. The full text of the agreement can be found here: [https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/sites/www.un.org.dppa.decolonization/files/decon\\_num\\_4-1.pdf](https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/sites/www.un.org.dppa.decolonization/files/decon_num_4-1.pdf)
  11. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 794, 810. On Kissinger’s worldview see: Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 138–96.
  12. The CIA have published a short chronological history of the 40 Committee’s origins. See: Evolution of the 40 Committee, undated, CIA Electronic Reading Room: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-301-1-9-6.pdf>
  13. Memorandum for the Record, 23 January 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 102, 235.



14. Andy DeRoche, *Kenneth Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 33–4.
15. Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 316.
16. Memorandum of Conversation, 19 April 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 103, 236–43.
17. Cuba had dispatched ground forces to fight inside Angola.
18. Memorandum for the Record, 5 June 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 106, 246–8.
19. Memorandum for the Record, 5 June 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 106, 246–8.
20. Ibid.
21. As reported here: Memorandum to the Secretary from Edward Mulcahy, ‘Vance Mission to Zaire: Terms of Reference’, 20 June 1975 in File: Misc Docs etc, Folder 3 in RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973–77, NN3-059-00-005, Box 1.
22. Quote in: Memorandum to the Secretary from Edward Mulcahy, 20 June 1975 in File: Misc Docs etc, Folder 3 in RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973–77, NN3-059-00-005, Box 1, NAI. Also see: Telcon: Ingersoll-Kissinger, 16 July 1975, 5.55 p.m., HAKTELCONS.
23. See for example: Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28–9; Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect*, 401–3.
24. Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 231–4.
25. Telcon: Ingersoll-Kissinger, 16 July 1975, 5.55 p.m., HAKTELCONS.
26. Memorandum of Conversation, 20 June 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 111, 259.
27. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 27 June 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 113, 265–70.
28. Memorandum of Conversation, 27 June 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 112, 261–5.
29. Talking Points for Secretary Kissinger: National Security Council Meeting on Angola, 27 June 1975, in Box 2, folder: ‘NSC Meeting, 6/27/1975’, National Security Adviser’s NSC Meeting File, GFL.
30. Telcon: Kissinger-Schlesinger, 27 March 1975, HAKTELCONS.
31. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 27 June 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 113, 269.
32. On Colby’s relations with the president and Kissinger see: Randall B. Woods, *Shadow Warrior: William Egan Colby and the CIA* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 413–20.
33. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 27 June 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 113, 269.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 269.
36. Memorandum for the Record, 14 July 1975 in Ibid., 276.
37. John Prados, *William Colby and the CIA: The Secret Wars of a Controversial Spymaster* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 297–330.
38. Memorandum for the Record, 14 July 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 115, 279.
39. Ibid., 278.
40. Ibid., 280.
41. Meredith, *The State of Africa*, 315.

42. Paper Submitted to the 40 Committee, undated in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 116, 284.
43. Memorandum of Conversation, 17 July 1975 in Memoranda of Conversation, NSA Files, Box 13, GFL, and Memorandum of Conversation 18 July 1975 in *Ibid.*
44. Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (New York: Harper, 1996), 412.
45. For intelligence assessments on growing Soviet and Cuban military support for the MPLA see: Ambassador in Kinshasa to Kissinger, August 1975 from CIA Electronic Reading Room: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-559-25-6-8.pdf>
46. Memorandum for the Record, 20 August 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 125, 300–4. Quotes at 301, 304.
47. *Ibid.*, 301, 304. For President Ford's approval for additional funding see: Memorandum for the Record, 21 August 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 126, 305.
48. Memorandum for the Record, 13 September 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 127, 307. How racial considerations impacted U.S. policy throughout Africa is covered in detail within: Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), *passim*, 238.
49. An interdepartmental working group estimated that the Cubans had somewhere between 1,200 and 1,900 military personnel in the country which would swing the military advantage in the favour of the MPLA. Report Prepared by the Working Group on Angola, 22 October 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 132, 326–8. Kissinger was also informed that 'intelligence reports are pouring in' about the significant increase in support the Soviet Union was offering the MPLA. See: US Mission at the UN to Secretary of State, October 1975 from CIA Electronic Reading Room: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-102-5-30-9.pdf>. Cuban support had indeed proved critical in ensuring MPLA success during the Battle of Quifangondo. Edward George, *The Cuban intervention in Angola* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 89–90.
50. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 309.
51. Memorandum for the Secretary from William Hyland, 3 October 1975 in File: Misc Docs etc, Folder 4 in RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973–77, NN3-059-00-005, Box 1, NAI.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Eddie Michel, "A Principled Pragmatism: Gerald R. Ford and Apartheid South Africa," *South African Historical Journal*, 73, no. 3 (2021): 652.
54. Piero Gleijesis, "Cuba and the Independence of Namibia," *Cold War History* 7, no. 2 (2007): 287–8.
55. On this linkage see Michel, 'A Principled Pragmatism', 652.
56. Piero Gleijesis, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 201–4; John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), 162.
57. Memorandum for the Record, 14 November 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 137, 336–42.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Memorandum of Conversation, 19 November 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 138, 343–5.

60. Memorandum for the Record, 21 November 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 139, 346.
61. *Ibid.*, 346–53.
62. *Ibid.*, 350. Earlier U.S. thinking on bolstering U.S. assistance for Zaire is discussed here: Memorandum for the Secretary from Edward W. Mulcahy, 7 October 1975 in Folder 2: Briefing memos, 1975, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973–77, NN3-059-00-005, Box 14, NAI.
63. Julian Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security-From World War II to the War on Terrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 255.
64. Andrew J. Deroche, “Standing Firm for Principles: Jimmy Carter and Zimbabwe,” *Diplomatic History*, 23, no. 4 (1999): 657–85; and Herschell Challenor, “The Influence of Black Americans on U.S. Foreign Policy towards Africa,” in Abdul Aziz Said edited by *Ethnicity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Greenwood, 1981), 143–81.
65. Memorandum for the Record, 21 November 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 139, 346–53. Quote at 350.
66. Memorandum for the Record, 28 November 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 143, 360.
67. Memorandum of Discussion, 9 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 145, 365–6.
68. *Ibid.*, Telcon: Kissinger-Dobrynin, 10 December 1975, 10:15 a.m., HAKTELCONS.
69. Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War*, 293; Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola 1965–1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale* (London: Routledge, 2012), 108.
70. Memorandum for the Record, 11 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 147, 368–75.
71. *Ibid.*, 374–5.
72. National Security Study Memorandum 234, 13 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 148, 377–8.
73. Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18, 23.
74. Memorandum for the Secretary from Sisco, 18 December 1975 in File: Misc Docs etc, Folder 4 in RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973–77, NN3-059-00-005, Box 1, NAI.
75. Memorandum of Conversation, 17 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 149, 379–84; Memorandum of Conversation, 17 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 150, 385–8.
76. Message from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft) to Secretary of State Kissinger in Paris, 17 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 151, 388–9.
77. Memorandum for the Secretary from William Schaufele, 20 December 1975 in: Misc Docs etc, Folder 2 in RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973–77, NN3-059-00-005, Box 1, NAI.
78. For President Ford’s quote see: Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 22 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 163, 412.
79. Memorandum of Conversation, 18 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976 Southern Africa*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 152, 389–90.
80. Kissinger certainly complained at length in his memoir. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 913–24.
81. Telcon: Kissinger-Scowcroft, 18 December 1975 in HAKTELCONS.
82. Memorandum of Conversation, 19 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 156, 399–401.

83. Kissinger's briefing papers for these discussions here: 'My Meeting with President Mobuto', Memorandum for the Secretary from William E. Schaufele, 23 December 1975 in File: Misc Docs etc, Folder 5 in RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973–77, NN3-059-00-005, Box 1, NAI.
84. Memorandum of Conversation, 19 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc.156, 399–401.
85. Memorandum from Director of Central Intelligence (Colby) to Secretary of State Kissinger, 23 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc.165, 414. On warnings about the likelihood of the MPLA winning recognition see: Telegram from the Embassy in Zaire to the Department of State, 27 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 163, 415–7.
86. Vladimir Schubin, *The Hot Cold War: The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto, 2008), 62.
87. Message from Secretary of State Kissinger to French President Giscard d'Estaing, 20 December 1975 in *FRUS 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 157, 403–4; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Zaire, 20 December 1975 in *Ibid.*, Doc. 158, 404–5; Backchannel Message from Secretary of State Kissinger to the Ambassador to Iran (Helms), 20 December 1975, in *Ibid.*, Doc. 159, 406–7; Backchannel Message from Secretary of State Kissinger to Ambassador to Iran (Helms), 21 December, 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976, Iran; and Iraq, 1973–1976* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2012), Vol. XXVLL, Doc. 150, 449.
88. On the Shah's agreement to sell arms to Zaire see: Backchannel Message from Secretary of State Kissinger to Ambassador to Iran (Helms) 21 December 1975 in *FRUS, 1969–1976, Iran*, Vol. XXVLL, Doc. 150, 44; and Backchannel Message from the Ambassador to Iran (Helms) to Secretary of State Kissinger, 21 December, 1975, in *Ibid.*, Doc. 151, 450.
89. Letter from President Giscard d'Estaing to Henry A. Kissinger, 2 December 1975 in File: Memcons Nov–Dec 1973, Folder 6, in RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973–77, NN3-059-00-005, Box 2, NAI; and Memorandum of Conversation, 24 January 1976 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 172, 427.
90. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 832.
91. Memorandum from the Counselor of the Department of State (Sonnenfeldt) to Secretary of State Kissinger, 9 January 1976 in *FRUS, Soviet Union, August 1974–December 1976*, Vol. XVI, Doc. 238, 895.
92. Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, 3 February 1976 from CIA Electronic Reading Room: [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000307945.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000307945.pdf)
93. Intelligence Memorandum: The Present Military Situation in Angola, 26 January 1976 from General CIA Records, CIA Electronic Reading Room: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00353R000100240009-1.pdf>
94. Scott Fitzsimmons, *Mercenaries in Asymmetric Conflicts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 109–11.
95. The Ford administration continued to look to acquire mercenaries to fight against the MPLA. This was made public knowledge in John Stockwell's tell-all memoir on his time in the CIA. See: Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 226. However, U.S. documentation makes it clear that funding simply did not exist to maintain this effort for any length of time. Report prepared by the Working Group on Angola, 2 April 1976 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 186, 471. For documentation discussing the utilisation of mercenaries, their utility, and, importantly, how the United States would fund this see:

- Memorandum for the Record, 3 February 1976 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 173, 431–2.
96. See the levels of funding provided and the amounts remaining within: Letter from Director of Central Intelligence Bush to the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense (Mahon), 18 March 1976 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 183, 461–3.
  97. Indeed, the Angolan working group within the State Department estimated that Cuban and Soviet aid for the MPLA stood at roughly \$400 million which dwarfed the sums approved under IA Feature. Report prepared by the Working Group on Angola, 2 April 1976 in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 186, 467.
  98. L. Andor, J. Kally & E. Shoeman, *Southern African Political History: A Chronology of Key Events from Independence until 1997* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 5; Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft) to President Ford, undated (circa May 1976) in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XXVIII, Doc. 188, 474–6.
  99. F. Ugboaja Ohaegbulam, *U.S. Policy in Postcolonial Africa: Four Case Studies in Conflict Resolution* (London: Peter Lang, 2004), 180.
  100. Transcript of Interview with President Ford, 1 March 1976 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Soviet Union, 1974–76* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2012), Vol. XVI, Doc. 268, 1014; Aldo Beckman, “‘Détente’ a Dirty Word, Ford Decides to Shun It”, *Chicago Tribune*, 2 March 1976, 3.
  101. See Kissinger's comments to this effect the previous year: Telcon: Kissinger-Ed Klein, 25 July 1975 in HAKTELCONS; Telcon: Kissinger-Church, 7 August 1975 in HAKTELCONS.
  102. William M. LeoGrande & Peter Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 148.
  103. Rumsfeld was particularly concerned by Kissinger's domination of policy making. See his complaints within: Meeting with the President, Notes on the National Security Council Meeting, 12 May 1975, Donald Rumsfeld Papers; Meeting with the President, Ford and Rumsfeld, 13 November 1974, Donald Rumsfeld Papers.
  104. Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 669–70.
  105. Memorandum for the President from Brent Scowcroft, 28 December 1975 from CIA Electronic Reading Room: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-104-1-4-0.pdf>
  106. Memorandum from the Counselor of the Department of State (Sonnenfeldt) to Secretary of State Kissinger, 9 January 1976 in *FRUS, Soviet Union, August 1974-December 1976*, Vol. XVI, Doc. 238, 895–7, quotes at 896, 897.
  107. *Wall Street Journal*, 13 February 1976, 8.
  108. The Platform is found here: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1976c>
  109. See the long position paper here outlining the interconnection between Angola and the domestic political attacks on the president: Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense from Harry E. Bergold, 23 March 1976, in folder ‘Cuba – Military Intervention in Africa’, Richard B. Cheney Files, Box 3, GFL.
  110. Of course, this change in emphasis would not prevent the Carter campaign from utilising similar terminology as the Reagan campaign had in attacking and depicting Ford's foreign policy. See: Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 2–12.

111. Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 658–9. One astute practitioner and observer of U.S. foreign policy noted that certain American institutions had a deep interest in jettisoning détente and returning to a more militaristic Cold War policy. The pressure they had exerted on Congress and over public opinion would therefore force any sitting president to present their grand strategy in more forceful terms. Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger & American Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper Row, 1977), 285.
112. An excellent discussion on this is contained within: Michel, “Racial justice and the Cold War,” 478–83.
113. This policy was articulated within National Security Study Memorandum 241 of 21 April 1976 which is available at: <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0310/nssm241.pdf> On these efforts more broadly see: Eddie Michel, “‘This outcome gives me no pleasure. It is extremely painful for me to be the instrument of their fate’: White House Policy on Rhodesia during the UDI Era, 1965–1979,” *South African Historical Journal*, 71, no. 3 (2019): 459–60.
114. Telcon: Kissinger-McCloskey, 30 June 1976 in HAKTELCONS.
115. Memorandum of Conversation, 25 February 1976 in National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversations, 1973–1977, Box 18, GFL.
116. On this see: Thomas K. Robb & James Cooper, “In Search of a Winning Grand Strategy: Ronald Reagan’s First Term, 1981–5,” *International History Review*, 6, 8, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/07075332.2023.2245848?needAccess=true>.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

*Thomas K. Robb* is currently working on two major studies, the first of which focuses upon US grand strategy during the Civil War period, 1848–1871. The second explores US covert operations and intelligence activities during the second half of the Cold War, 1969–1991. His most recent work, co-authored with David James Gill, was *Divided Allies: Strategic Cooperation against the Communist Threat in the Asia-Pacific during the Early Cold War*, published in 2019 with Cornell University Press. Contact is best made via email at [drthomasrobb@gmail.com](mailto:drthomasrobb@gmail.com)