

Kissinger's Missing Continent

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... as we begin to help construct a more global international system, inevitably our concern with Africa south of the Sahara will increase. It is difficult now to tell what precise measures we can take.
—Henry Kissinger, September, 1973

To say that this is now Dr. Kissinger's world is more or less indisputable. But to say that his world includes the whole of the globe is inaccurate. In all Africa below the Mediterranean fringe there is not one leader who can refer to "our friend Henry." As Dr. Kissinger admitted in his confirmation hearings as Secretary of State, he had, after a quarter century as one of our leading academic authorities on foreign policy, not yet formulated any "philosophy" of African-American relations. He spoke vaguely of calling some of our ambassadors to Africa back to Washington "to give me their judgment on what the best U.S. philosophy should be in that area."

Relations between Africa and the United States continue in this conceptual void, and the pattern that emerges suggests that the Nixon Administration had an implicit African policy it could not defend publicly. Kissinger is willing to see African diplomacy preempted because he has no concept that Africa matters to peace in his world.

Dr. Kissinger's world is small and personal. While he refers frequently to a "global system" and "a structure of peace," one finds little evidence of either structure or a global perspective in his conduct of American foreign policy. Kissinger's publications provide a useful guide to the perimeters of his world. It would indeed be surprising if any person, once in public office, failed to draw upon concepts developed in a prior career so closely related to the policy process.

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The central element of this world is Kissinger himself. His published works reveal a preoccupation with great statesmen. Most impressive to Kissinger is the man who operates through solitary genius. To Kissinger, "a leader does not deserve the name unless he is willing occasionally to stand alone." Bismarck, Metternich, and De Gaulle are distinguished from lesser figures by their insight and their force of will. Kissinger is thinking of such men when he writes: "For some men become myths not by what they know, nor even by what they achieve, but by the tasks they set for themselves." He has compared United States policy-makers unfavorably with these professional statesmen: America produces committeemen, not statesmen.

The theme of individual creativity versus organizational mediocrity runs like a leitmotif through Kissinger's writings. Administration merely hampers genius and interferes with policy-making. "Profound policy thrives on creativeness; good administration thrives on routine—a procedure which can assimilate mediocrity." Since genius and routine can never be reconciled, Kissinger does not hesitate to endorse individual greatness. He reminds us that "It is no accident that most great statesmen were opposed by the 'experts' in their foreign offices, for the very greatness of the statesman's conceptions tends to make it inaccessible to those whose primary concern is with safety and minimum risk." Americans, he said, must recognize that "our challenge is to overcome an atmosphere in which all sense of reverence for the unique and therefore the capacity for real innovation stands in danger of being lost." As Professor Kissinger, he devoted himself to what he saw as the lonely task of thinking creatively about American foreign policy. Noting America's lack of adequate theories of diplomacy, he devoted most of his academic life to developing a concept of Great Power diplomacy in the nuclear age. This is a diplomacy of modified bipolarity, a diplomacy that can move

from cold war confrontation toward a more flexible and potentially less risky balance-of-power universe based on a "realistic" assessment of relative power and the parameters of mutual interest.

This world depends upon the skills of the professional statesman, for virtually everything in this world can and must be negotiated. These negotiations are a device for containing particular problems, thereby protecting the Great Powers from their ultimate consequences. Such opportunities for the consummate diplomat can be called "Kissinger Moments," subtle blends of symbol, style, and substance heavily dependent upon the confluence of particular types of problems. Kissinger's world requires other professionals like himself who understand the nuances of negotiation. It also depends upon problems that can be negotiated—positions that can be defined, modified, and redefined, and concessions that can be made without jeopardizing the basic security or interests of any party while establishing a momentum of reciprocity. Final solutions give way to acceptable interim measures that address only part of a complex problem. Cutting losses can be as important as maximizing gains. Such situations require one other essential ingredient before they become Kissinger Moments—they must be seen by Henry Kissinger as bearing directly on Great Power relations. All three elements were present in Kissinger's three most spectacular moments: the Vietnam negotiations, the Middle East negotiations, and the opening of official relations with the People's Republic of China.

Kissinger's style is so intensely personal, so oriented to resolving selected crises through personal negotiations, that other issues in other areas are ignored. Thus Dr. Kissinger's world remains small and personal. There is no room for Africa in it because it has not been the locale of a crisis Kissinger regards as a Kissinger Moment. The reasons African issues seem so peripheral to the conduct of American foreign policy relate both to the history of U.S. relations with Africa and to Kissinger's limited understanding of the new states.

Most African states are entering their second decade of political independence. The United States has based its policy toward these new states on two principles: denying Africa to the Communist bloc and respecting the continuing paramount interests of the former colonial powers (our NATO allies) in independent Africa. Although Africa has always been a low-priority, nonstrategic area to the United States, there was a great deal of goodwill toward Africa in the Kennedy era. The dynamic young American President could never manage to steer foreign-aid bills through a reluctant Congress, but he did offer the new states and their leaders a cordial respect in the world of sovereign states.

The élan of mutual beginning died with the death

of JFK. The Congo crises, a rash of military coups, revelations that African leaders operated on no higher moral plane than did their counterparts in the old states, and the dawning awareness that economic development would be no less painful and protracted in Africa than in Latin America or Asia produced a general disenchantment with Africa. This disenchantment turned to disinterest as the Soviet Union indicated that it had no sustained or substantial interest in making another expensive Cuba out of any African state.

By the time Richard Nixon's electoral victory put Henry Kissinger in the basement of the White House, this disinterest-disenchantment with Africa was virtually complete. Kissinger was not the man to reverse this trend. It is unlikely that Dr. Kissinger, in any of his roles, ever thought specifically about Africa. Indeed, his references to any of the new states, which he tends to treat as an undifferentiated category, are infrequent. Such views as he has expressed show none of the creative insight that characterize his analyses of Great Power diplomacy.

While not endorsing the Dulles position that condemned neutralism as covert communism, Kissinger has shown a consistent irritation with the desire of the new and nonaligned states to play a role in world affairs. Describing the new states and their leaders as "thoroughly unprepared" for conducting a constructive foreign policy, Kissinger dismisses their attempts at diplomacy with the dictum that "in the international scene, it is possible to be the center of attention simply by striking a pose." Should any of the new states dare to criticize the international behavior of the United States, Kissinger is ready to dismiss their arguments with the observation that "as the richest and most powerful nation, we are the natural target for all frustration. . . . A great deal of anti-Americanism hides a feeling of insecurity both material and spiritual."

He has stated repeatedly that the new states cannot hope to contribute to better relations among the Great Powers, and makes clear that he opposes all forms of international interaction that create illusions to the contrary. Since the United Nations provides a forum for the new states, Kissinger allows it only a very small role in his world. He takes the position that the only useful contribution the new states can make to his world is to modernize themselves as expeditiously as possible with a minimum of inconvenience to the Great Powers. The problems involved in modernization he dismisses in his writings as merely technical and therefore in the domain of the bureaucratic mediocrities he frequently ridiculed therein.

The Secretary of State's only interest in modernization is to use it as a test of a state's fitness for participation in world affairs. His annoyance with states that have failed this test is summarized vividly by his dismissal of Bangladesh as an "international

basket case." Yet the criteria by which Kissinger assesses fitness are difficult to determine. He has repeatedly rejected any ideological test of fitness for participation in important negotiations. The only answer seems to be that the problems Kissinger associates with modernization bore him because he sees little opportunity for a professional statesman like himself to contribute to their resolution through the deft handling of a Kissinger Moment. This combination of boredom and exasperation with the new states and their problems makes Kissinger unable to understand the implications of the actions the United States does take. These actions amount to an arrogant and ultimately self-defeating neocolonialism.

The blatant discourtesy of the Nixon Administration to African heads of state transcended any purely diplomatic assessment of the importance of the African states in a world of powers. Richard Nixon, who went on sprees of symbolic summitry at the drop of an invitation, could not take a half hour out of his Washington schedule to receive President Kaunda of copper-rich Zambia or General Gowon of oil-rich Nigeria. This attitude suggests that the United States is now confident that even resource-extraction is not a matter that need concern the consummate diplomat. It can be left to the wiles of private enterprise. This moves U.S.-African relations out of the realm of government activity and into the domain of the American multinational corporations. Hence Kissinger's insistence that the prime task facing the new states of Africa is modernization can be translated to read that the prime task facing the new states of Africa is to learn to provide a hospitable environment to foreign investment. The only diplomatic task is to make the world safe for modernization.

There are several issues where the failure to take African states seriously as part of Dr. Kissinger's world has needlessly deleterious effects on Africa and on any chance for improved African-American relations. None of these issues could be treated as Kissinger Moments, but they could provide opportunities for more satisfactory long-term relations in a truly global international system.

It would be very simple for the United States to demonstrate its concern with Africa and its peoples when Ethiopia and six West African states are suffering from prolonged drought and famine. The death toll makes this one of the world's major disaster areas, all the more horrifying because the end is not yet in sight. The level of U.S. aid has been almost cynical, the minimum that could be used as evidence of official concern. While the United States has been the single largest supplier of famine aid, its total contribution has been only half the amount provided to Bangladesh in the last six months of 1972 alone. It is also less than half of the total international contribution. When one real-

izes that the United States is responsible for 72 per cent of total world food aid, the limited response to the African crisis becomes even more apparent. Most of the U.S. aid came in commodity form, but some of it was a sorghum that famine victims could not digest. This error caused further deaths from dysentery. A Carnegie Endowment Study by Hal Sheets and Roger Morris, aptly titled *Disaster in the Desert*, tells the appalling story of African starvation and the role the U.S. played in it.

Part of the reason for America's appalling indifference to the continuing crisis in the Sahel and for the limited and inappropriate aid sent to Africa compared to the response to the disaster in Bangladesh relates to the Soviet-American wheat deal. The aid agreement with Bangladesh was signed before American granaries were emptied into Soviet bakeries. The American aid agencies refused to take reports of devastating famine in the Sahel seriously until almost a year later, even though the drought had been unbroken since 1968. Kissingerian diplomacy requires that Russians eat well; it does not seem to matter whether Africans eat at all.

Such an ordering of priorities and such callous indifference to human tragedy renders suspect official U.S. statements of our concern with African relations. Indefensible as the official response to starvation has been, the U.S. record in other areas may create even greater problems for future African-American relations.



Professor Kissinger was fond of telling his Harvard colleagues how he and De Gaulle scorned economics. This disdain has had serious implications for U.S. policy in Africa.

In this, the United Nations' Second Development Decade, the disinclination of the Great Powers to give aid, and the concern of the new states about the conditions attached to receiving it have led to a new orthodoxy that development will result from trade and foreign investment. The new states, with their nonconvertible currencies and their consequent dependence on foreign exchange for all international economic transactions, must take their chances in an international economy to which they remain peripheral. Interacting in the international economy means interacting with the U.S. multinational corporations that dominate this economy. The new states have accepted these difficult necessities, but they are also seeking a greater voice in economic decisions that affect them more directly than the Great Powers are willing to admit.

U.S. policy encourages the dominance of the multinational corporations. In a January 19, 1972, "Policy Statement on Economic Assistance and Investment Security in Developing Nations," Nixon declared that "A principal objective of foreign economic assistance programs is to assist developing countries in attracting private investment." The Agency for International Development, according to a 1972 State Department pronouncement, is to devote itself to servicing the private sector abroad rather than to funding and administering its own projects. The more enthusiastic American proponents of the shift from aid to trade never mention the concurrent and consequent shift in the locus of diplomacy from the government to the multinationals. Instead, the multinationals are seen as the key to solving problems of increased employment and transfer of technology.

However, the nature of investment in the independent African states is unlikely to contribute significantly to either facet of development. Almost 90 per cent of U.S. private investment in independent Africa is concentrated in extractive industries, primarily oil in Nigeria. Investment in the manufacturing industries that the new states see as much more important to their development efforts is negligible. The pattern suggests that the United States is much more interested in resource extraction from Africa than in development in Africa.

Even this kind of interaction raises a number of issues which require international negotiation. Issues raised repeatedly by the new states revolve around questions of commodity agreements, trade preference, and mechanisms of international liquidity. These are complex technical issues, but they are all facets of the larger issue of the structure of the international economy. Such negotiations are not potential Kissinger Moments. They do not require the continued presence of the amazing Dr. K. They do re-

quire that the United States develop some concept it can defend publicly of the role of the new states in the international economy and in the world of sovereign states. This is a task for the Secretary of State-National Security Advisor, but events suggest that the United States has no such publicly defensible policy.

On the contrary, the United States has taken a series of actions that reveal remarkably little concern with African development and great resistance to African participation in any reforms of the international economy. Though our initial pledge for the African Development Bank was a token contribution of only \$60 million, it has yet to be paid. The United States is the only major cocoa importer that does not honor the International Cocoa Agreement, ostensibly because it would cause a hardship for American consumers. The same rationale is used to explain U.S. opposition to granting trade preferences to the new states. This rationale is a cynical cover for other motives. The price of cocoa, compared to the price American consumers must pay for other more basic items, can hardly be the issue. Rather, the United States is reacting to all such initiatives from the African states because of a fit of pique at the African states gaining associate status with the EEC and granting our European allies and economic competitors a preferred trading status. Since the United States cannot do anything about the EEC itself, it vents its spleen on African states whose total trade with the United States is minuscule. Since African trade is so small a part of total American investments and transactions, why this insistence on holding the line against inflation?

The answer relates not to inflation but to U.S. annoyance with the demands the new states make for a greater role in international economic affairs. Through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) the new states have called for increased representation in such bodies as the International Monetary Fund. They point out that the Smithsonian Agreement, about which they were not consulted, required matching devaluations in most of the new states. They ask that their circumstances and concerns at least be considered.

This change in decision-making procedures is resisted by the United States for two reasons. The first is the official unwillingness to take the new African states seriously as part of the world of powers. The second is the long history of political and economic support the United States has extended to the minority regime in South Africa. South Africa is the only state in Africa where investment in manufacturing industries is larger than the investment in extractive industries. In view of South Africa's unbroken history of brutal racism, this pattern of investment and the unwillingness of the U.S. to deal with independent Africa on the same terms is taken by Africans as both insult and injury. The situation is rapidly deteri-

orating, for by the end of 1974 all regulations imposed in the 1960's to stem the flow of investment capital to South Africa will be suspended. This fact alone, in view of the larger picture in Southern Africa, suggests that the United States does not think that development in independent Africa need bear any relation to American diplomacy.

Recent changes in Lisbon have, of course, brought about a dramatically new situation for the Portuguese colonies. U.S. policy, however, has been a pastiche of vague rhetorical support for the general idea of self-determination but concrete obstruction of the movements that are actually bringing it about. The U.S. has given oppressive minority regimes overt and covert support. Overt support has taken the form of vetoes or abstentions in the United Nations on matters of concern to the forces of African liberation. The United States has consistently sought to protect South African apartheid from international censure, while opposing any international recognition of the liberation movements. Dismissing the participants in these movements as terrorists, the United States voted against giving observer status to the liberation movements at the United Nations during the 1972 General Assembly.

The Nixon Administration was much less concerned about according such respectability to the occupying powers, even when, as in the case of the Smith cabal in Rhodesia, the entire international community has declared such a regime illegal. The Administration reacted lethargically when Congressional conservatives, put out about the new relationship with the People's Republic of China, passed the Byrd Amendment requiring the United States to cease participation in the United Nations-sponsored boycott of Rhodesian chrome. The Administration declared its opposition to the Amendment but did little to secure its repeal. Instead, Clark MacGregor, Nixon's campaign manager, made a very high-profile visit to Salisbury, giving Smith and his rebels the kind of international acceptance they crave. If Kissinger had a global concept that had some idea of the need for a viable long-term African policy, this visit would never have taken place. And since Kissinger remains Secretary of State under Gerald Ford,

there is little reason to think this new Administration will change its African policy.

It is a measure of the failure of U.S. diplomacy in Africa that American intervention in support of South Africa is widely rumored. A more sensible U.S. stand on U.N. representation, a greater willingness to see the liberation movements as true nationalist movements rather than as terrorists could help ease the situation. It might also have a restraining effect on the South African government. Some restraint is clearly in order. The first response of the South African regime to the Portuguese coup was to send a representative to Washington to inquire quietly what aid the United States would be prepared to offer the minority regimes of Southern Africa in these altered circumstances. There is little precedent in U.S. policy to reassure Africans or Americans about the U.S. response.

The prospects for future policy—or for future actions in lieu of policy—are even more disquieting. Kissinger's world depends on Kissinger. Such dependence on one towering figure was one of the problems that most intrigued Professor Kissinger. As he has frequently noted, lesser figures can neither work with nor replace such a person. While the academic Kissinger stated that the statesman's greatest achievement was the creation of institutions not dependent on his personal artistry, Kissinger the statesman seems destined, like Bismarck, to leave what Kissinger called "a heritage of unassimilated greatness."

Such a heritage rapidly becomes a legend, and legends can be dangerous in conducting world affairs. The dangers of a mythic Kissinger legacy are far more serious than the problems of the Kissinger present when Kissinger is still available to negotiate Kissinger Moments. The danger is that a myth of system will survive the Kissinger style. Others will try to apply what they took to be the Kissinger "concept" or "structure," failing to realize that Kissinger ran his small and personal world through artistic intuition. Pondering the absence of Africa from Dr. Kissinger's world helps us see that this artist is not a composer of symphonies but a virtuoso solo oboe.