

NA NN YM M ALL C

Ne Be rnn n nd n C w en e
A e r c n o e n o cy o A r c o en nedy o

ney, c ned n

n e r y o e o r

e o r o A r c

c o e 9

When President Kennedy was sworn into office on January 20th, 1961, he inherited a world that was a battleground between extremes of the right and left, between democracy and totalitarianism, extinction and survival.

For Kennedy, this battle was most acute in the developing world, the Third World, where nationalism, which he recognized as consistent with the values of democracy, was being threatened by the prospect of communist subversion.

Following a trip through strife-torn Asia in 1951, Kennedy remarked that nationalism "is the most important international fact of life in the second half of the twentieth century."

Therefore, Kennedy concluded, the United States could no longer afford to buttress the "inequitable status quo" of colonialism. The nationalist era had to be acknowledged and engaged.

At the same time, the United States had interests in Africa and elsewhere, especially security and commercial interests, which some argued demanded caution and continuity in policy.

This dichotomy, between nationalism and anti-communism, defined the contours of American policy toward Sub-Saharan Africa during the Cold War.

B e n e M o d

The first months of the Kennedy Administration did indeed see a break from the past.

At the United Nations, the Administration voted against Portugal's ongoing colonial rule and extended material and political support to Frelimo in Mozambique and the FNLA in Angola.

At the same time, there were those in the Pentagon and elsewhere in the bureaucracy who believed Portuguese threats to deny refueling rights for American military aircraft on the Azores in the mid-Atlantic, thereby weakening America's capability to protect Western Europe, and lobbied against engaging the new order in Africa.

Policy toward Southern Africa was codified early in the Nixon Administration with the issuance of National Security Decision Memorandum 39. The key paragraph stated:

"The Whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them. There is no hope for the blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence, which will only lead to chaos and increased opportunities for the communists. We can through selective relaxation of our stance toward the white regimes, encourage some modification of their current racial and colonial policies..."

Morality aside, key elements of this analysis proved profoundly wrong when on April 25th 1974, the Armed Forces Movement, led by General Antonio de Spínola, toppled the dictatorship in Lisbon setting the scene for a rapid end to 400 years of Portuguese colonial rule in Southern Africa.

And as the Administration was soon to find out, the incentives provided to the Soviet Union through détente were no deterrent to Moscow's decision to increase its influence in Southern Africa.

This mix of people, politics and geography captured my imagination at an early age and compelled me to

By the time Crocker left the State Department, after the election of George H.W. Bush, Southern Africa was changed forever.

First, the Cold War was over, and the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, had stated explicitly that the

Accordingly, expectations for Bush in Africa were quite low, but in fact, he surpassed the expectations of many, including myself--evoking the African proverb: don't insult the crocodile until you cross the water.

This does not mean that the United States can, or will, or, indeed, believes it ever could, solve every problem. To the contrary.

As President Obama said at the United Nations last month, the U.S. expects help from others in addressing global security issues.

As he put it: "Those who used to chastise America for acting alone, cannot stand by and wait for America to solve the world's problems alone. (The Obama administration) has sought...a new era of engagement with the world. Now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response to global challenges."

With regard to Africa, there has never been an American president as knowledgeable of this continent as Barack Obama, given his Kenyan heritage.

But the President isn't alone. Secretary of State H

young person growing up in Johannesburg or Lagos or Nairobi or Djibouti can say to themselves, I can stay here in Africa, I can stay in my country and succeed, and through my success, my country and my people will get stronger."

This perspective is reflected in a recent article by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda who wrote: "Africa and the United States may be on the verge of a new partnership, not one of dependency and aid but one of shared ideas, vision and investments that increase our mutual prosperities."

So, it's fair to ask, will we get there?

I recently read the poem, "Behold Mama, Flowers," by the distinguished South African poet, Dr. Mongane Wally Serote, and there is a verse that says:

*what will happen now
memories keep coming back
and the future is a wall scrawled with the graffiti of my memories
what will happen now
even as I wave the truth away as if it were smoke coming to my eyes
my sight knows*

And it is that sight, that vision, which Ted Kennedy spoke of shortly before he died, when he said: "I hope for an America where we can all contend freely and vigorously, but where we will treasure and guard those standards of civility which alone make this nation safe for both deTJ 196.4346(r)-1.41517()-10.0057ge e