

H-Diplo ARTICLE REVIEW 972

6 August 2020

James Kirby. "Between Two Chinas and Two Koreas: African Agency and Non-Alignment in 1970s Botswana." *Cold War History* 20:1 (2019): 21-38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2019.1632291>.

<https://hdiplo.org/to/AR972>

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In the early 1970s, Botswanan non-alignment struck a delicate balancing act amidst Western pressures, aid negotiations, and mounting concerns of national security. In this article, James Kirby compellingly argues that for Gaborone, regional African interests were by far the most critical driving factor in Botswanan foreign policy vis-à-vis President Seretse Khama's positions on two key United Nations debates, one in 1971 over the recognition of the People's Republic of China and the other in 1974-1975 over reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

Landlocked Botswana bordered the white minority regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia, and in light of the geopolitical precarity of those countries, Seretse favored a gradual transition to majority rule for them. Washington had courted Botswana since its independence in 1966 as an African partner that embraced both capitalist development and liberal democratic values, a glittering example for the entire region and a model recipient of U.S. financial support. In this context, why did Botswanan foreign policy oppose Washington's desires, voting to seat Beijing and then siding with North Korea on the floor of the United Nations? The stakes were tremendous. In 1969, when Gaborone switched its vote from a "No" on the Albanian resolution, which would designate Beijing the only rightful occupant of China's position in the Security Council, to an abstention in 1970, the entirety of U.S. aid had been on the line (29).

As Kirby demonstrates, the explanation for such moves of defiance lay in Botswana's pursuit of legitimacy with the African states and liberation groups within the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In the late 1960s, in the eyes of OAU leaders like Tanzania's Julius Nyerere and Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, Botswana lacked "sufficient anti-colonial credentials in its moderate approach to independence and appeared too cooperative with the white minority regimes. Gaborone required OAU solidarity to benefit from Africa's mass voting bloc in international forums" (26). Furthermore, Botswana needed the various African liberation movements, many of which were based in nearby Zambia and Tanzania, to respect its national policies, which barred them from military activities within Botswanan borders. Additionally, Seretse sought the diversification of Botswana's diplomatic relationships and flows of aid. Non-alignment thus entailed the straddling of a myriad of political and economic considerations.

Kirby's article is an indispensable contribution to our understanding of the Cold War in southern Africa as well as the myriad stakes and interests that undergirded intra-Global South cooperation. Kirby reminds us that non-alignment was not only a Third World political position and movement during the Cold War, but an international image that necessitated meticulous cultivation, which, even then, sometimes became an outright tightrope to walk. The revelation that Botswana's China stance grew untenable in the period from 1966 to 1970 partially because opposition parties began to nurture their own connections to the Chinese government is also provocative, highlighting a trend in the history of China-Africa relations that is often obscured (28). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Beijing built a record of supporting 'leftist' or 'anti-imperialist' challenges to African ruling parties deemed not friendly enough with Chinese interests. This trend occurred with the African National Congress in early 1960s Tanganyika, the ephemeral opposition to the dominant Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) or, as George Roberts has discussed, the more splintered opposition among ethnic

Makonde to educator and political activist Eduardo Mondlane's Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), which fought for the independence of Mozambique.¹

The nuances of the covert relationship between Seretse's opposition and Chinese authorities, if the paper trail exists, may prove to be an illuminating direction for future research. The Chinese offer of military aid to Botswana, which the United States had actually declined to provide, is a testament to the ultimate success of Seretse's Cold War maneuverings. Seretse's condemnation of socialism in 1970 is remarkable when read in contrast to his glowing endorsements of Chinese leader Mao Zedong just a few years later in 1976. His "shallow phraseology" which attacked imperialism and capitalism while praising collectivism, Kirby argues, only indicates that he "was free to charm whoever he wished if it suited his goals" (31). This is a telling anecdote. In this vein, Kirby's piece is a valuable addition to two decades of scholarship that has uncovered the nature of African agency in the Cold War.² Kirby's contribution is also important in the insight it offers unto the dynamism and implications of postcolonial Afro-Asian conflict and cooperation. With respect to the latter field of literature, Afro-Asian histories have too often centered Asian governments and individuals to the exclusion of African states, territories, or activists who were just as instrumental to the orchestration of Afro-Asian solidarities. The 1955 Asian-African Conference at Bandung, for instance, is as notable for its absences, silences, and lapses in popular memory as for its accomplishments.³ Kirby's article, in a sense, advances a direct challenge to the marginalization of African strategies and considerations in the makings of Cold War 'Afro-Asia.'

Certain lines of inquiry alluded to in the article can be more vigorously pursued. To start, Kirby makes frequent references to the OAU leadership, especially Nyerere and Kaunda, as crucial background actors who encouraged Seretse to become friendlier with Communist powers like China (32). It would have been productive also to have included a discussion of the nature of their exchanges with Botswanan officials, whether on the meeting floors of the OAU or in private, supported by Tanzanian and Zambian records. What discourses did Nyerere and Kaunda harness in their efforts to influence Seretse? Did their conception of postcolonial sovereignty and non-alignment ultimately dovetail with his? Such an expanded study would offer insight into the political landscape of Pan-Africanism in the era of African decolonization, perhaps further illuminating the role that Pan-Africanism—whether as an ideology, concept of governance, or continental aspiration—played in the Global Cold War. Second, Taipei's efforts to maintain diplomatic relations with Botswana during this period warrants closer examination. What kinds of material aid did Taipei provide to Gaborone in the 1960s? Before Seretse announced the official recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1974, did the Taiwanese express any resistance or efforts to negotiate? The inter-China angle of this conflict in Botswana may merit a closer reading.

¹ Alicia Altorfer-Ong, "Old Comrades and New Brothers: A Historical Re-examination of the Sino-Zanzibari and Sino-Tanzanian Bilateral Relationships in the 1960s" (Ph.D. diss., The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014): 99-102; George Roberts, "The Assassination of Eduardo Mondlane: FRELIMO, Tanzania, and the Politics of Exile in Dar es Salaam," *Cold War History* 17:1 (2017): 9-10, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2016.1246542>.

² Matthew Connelly, "Rethinking the Cold War and Decolonization: The Grand Strategy of the Algerian War for Independence," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 33:2 (2001): 221-245; Elizabeth Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007); Jeffrey Ahlman, *Road to Ghana: Nkrumah, Southern Africa, and the Eclipse of a Decolonizing Africa*, *Kronos* 37 (2011): 23-40; Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Frank Gerits, "When the Bull Elephants Fight: Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957-66)," *The International History Review* 37: 5 (2015): 951-69, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2015.1064465>; Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³ Robert Vitalis, "The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-doong)," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4:2 (2013): 261-288, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2013.0018>.

Third, with regards to the Korean dimension of this story, did the South Korean presence in Gaborone take on a truly substantial, meaningful relationship of its own beyond the limited exchange of aid, or was Seretse's decision to recognize Pyongyang more the result of a strictly political calculus vis-à-vis the Western powers, Tanzania, and Zambia? Last but not least, within Botswana itself, how did Seretse render legible to Botswanan citizens this ten-year shift in Cold War foreign policy? It is revealing that in his exchanges with Chinese and North Korean officials, he so convincingly marshalled the language of anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and Afro-Asian solidarities. It may bear fruit then, to deconstruct and understand the ways in which Seretse shifted this narrative for Botswanans, and how this reinvention of foreign policy affected the contours of domestic politics in the country.

Most of these ruminations are beyond the scope of this article and should be taken more as provocations. All in all, this is a well-written and well-argued article that makes incisive use of archives of Western intelligence, primarily in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as the personal collections of Western diplomats. The extent to which this conversation would change with the incorporation of records from other OAU countries and leaders, however, remains a critical question. Such an expanded vantage point would bring to light a more comprehensively inter-African story of collaboration, conflict, and mutual influences in context of intensifying Cold War pressures and considerations.

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