

1. THE COLD WAR

a) African independence

Accra, 1957. In the first minutes of the sixth of March, in the great square bordering the ocean, Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah addressed the multitude assembled in the cool night air to celebrate their newfound independence. 'Ghana, our beloved country, is forever free!', proclaimed Nkrumah, and the crowd cheered. The Union Jack was lowered and a new flag was hoisted, with horizontal red, yellow and green bands and a black star in the centre. The colony of the Gold Coast had passed into history. Aside from Liberia and Ethiopia, which had never been European colonies, Ghana was the first country in 'black' Africa to be free of the colonial yoke. True, the British monarch was still the head of state and the governor-general would for a short time retain a ceremonial role, but the real leadership of the country was now in the hands of the African who had been prime minister ever since 1952. Just three years later, in 1960, Ghana was to break its last constitutional ties with Britain. The queen and governor-general would lose their authority and Ghana would become a republic, with Nkrumah as its president.

Both Ghana and President Nkrumah were in many ways emblematic of the new postcolonial Africa. Ghana had inherited the artificial structure which is a feature of so many African countries. Its name was taken from a Sahelian country that had prospered between the eighth and eleventh centuries as a staging post for caravans crossing the Sahara. That country lay more than a thousand kilometres northwest of its twentieth-century namesake on the Gulf of Guinea. The territory of modern Ghana had once been home to a flourishing empire, but in the 1950s there were political reasons for ignoring that fact. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before the British penetrated inland from the coast, the Asante empire had ruled most of present-day Ghana and the surrounding region. Its power was derived mainly from its position as a way station in the slave trade, between the African countries of the interior where the slaves were captured and the foreign settlements on the coast, where they were sold. In the newly independent state of Ghana, the Asante still formed the largest ethnic group, concentrated around their traditional capital of Kumasi in the west of the country. The other inhabitants of the ex-colonial territories that formed the new Ghana feared that the Asante would establish political ascendancy over the country. With British support, however, Asante dominance was averted: care was taken to ensure that the new rulers of independent Ghana were not Asante. Nkrumah, for example, came from a village on the coast of the country. The Asante responded to the new political situation by launching their own National Liberation Movement, which clashed with the Accra government in the 1950s and 1960s but was eventually defeated.

Nkrumah was not descended from a family of 'traditional' African chiefs. He owed his political career purely to the Western-style education that he had received, first from the British in Ghana and subsequently in the United States. The new Ghana he envisaged would have nothing to do with the local history of the Asante, Fante or other local ethnic groups; it was to be founded on the new Ghanaian citizenry, with their modern aspirations for Africa and for development. Nkrumah established himself as a champion of Pan-Africanism: the ideal of African unity and brotherhood. In his independence day address he said that Ghana's independence would be meaningless unless it was linked up with the total liberation of the continent. A year later, in 1958, he chaired the first Conference of Independent African States, held in Accra: an initiative that would eventually lead to the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Nkrumah's ultimate ambition was to achieve Pan-African unity. In 1959 he established a union with Guinea, which had just gained its independence from France, and in 1960 Mali joined too. However, this union was to remain a dead letter. In 1960 Nkrumah sent troops to Congo to support its prime minister, Patrice Lumumba. In this initial period of African independence, Ghana was the torchbearer of black Africa, the state to which many Africans throughout the continent (and beyond) looked with admiration and hope (and some others with a mixture of hope, envy and irritation).

Ghana's independence was a historic event, which must be seen against the backdrop of the global developments that followed World War II. The independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 had heralded a more general fragmentation of the British Empire. Africa was following in

Asia's footsteps. For the British, Ghana was simply one more jewel lost from the imperial crown. But even in Africa, Ghana was not – judged by the standards and sentiments of the time – the first country to seek independence. All the countries of North Africa and even Sudan had already gained their independence in the 1950s. The wave of decolonisation sped south, hitting Ghana first in the sub-Saharan region. Ghana's independence was preceded by a number of measures designed to increase the country's autonomy. In 1951, for example, the colony was granted a constitution providing for an elected legislative assembly with the power to appoint ministers from among its members. In 1952, elections were held for the legislature, the first general elections in the country's history. Nkrumah, already a popular radical politician, stood for election from his prison cell. His party won a large majority and five days later Nkrumah was released from prison, reputedly having softened his demand for 'self-government now' to one of 'self-government soon'. He became prime minister in the new administration.

Many Africans felt that the independence of Ghana presaged the total liberation, reunification and rebirth of the African continent. The example set by Ghana under Nkrumah's inspiring leadership encouraged Africans throughout the continent to join the struggle against their colonial masters. Around 1960 there was a second wave of African independence (counting the wave in North Africa as the first) in which almost thirty black African colonies gained their freedom. After that, however, the movement faltered, mainly because of Portugal's point-blank refusal to work towards independence for its colonies and because of white hegemony in South Africa and the surrounding countries. These last bulwarks of colonialism did not begin to crumble until the mid-1970s.

Nevertheless, around 1960 most of Africa gained independence. Political power passed into the hands of new leaders: members of new elites, who had enjoyed Western higher education and frequently become politically active as a result. Since the start of World War II, politics in the colonies had become increasingly open and African parties had been established, with the aim of achieving first self-rule and eventually independence. Rather than providing a safe outlet for nationalist pressures, as the colonial powers had hoped, these politicians actually became the voices of nationalism. The representative assemblies in which they sat became forums for the expression of nationalist aspirations. However, the ambitions of the new African elites were in keeping with the Western ideal of modernisation, which had been introduced into Africa in the first half of the twentieth century. Apart from political freedom and independence, their priorities were economic development, social justice and autonomy or even autarky. The nationalists believed that these aims could never be achieved within the colonial system, another factor that made the liberation of Africa their top priority. They assumed that they would then achieve the rest of their goals more or less automatically.

Freedom for their continent was the prime objective of the Africans at the time of decolonisation. When looking at subsequent events, however, including those between the end of the Cold War and the early years of the twenty-first century, it is important to consider what became of their other goals. After all, it was these goals that most African leaders adopted (or claimed to adopt) as guidelines after they took power. At the time of independence, some nationalists (including Nkrumah) almost literally promised their followers heaven on earth. This can be attributed to the euphoria of the period, but later African governments – including those around the turn of the century – can rightly be judged on their success in achieving the other aims mentioned above (decolonisation, economic development, social justice and autonomy/autarky). Democracy was not one of Africa's main priorities at this stage. It was probably too closely associated with the Western values that had also produced colonialism. Moreover, it was unclear how to combine democracy with the socialist-style development advocated by many African leaders.

The transfer of power was primarily political in nature. The colonial power handed over to the new African government a territory with defined borders, the population living there, a physical infrastructure and the means of controlling it (an army and police), plus public institutions with a bureaucracy at their centre. That bureaucracy was itself composed of people with special knowledge and skills, and offices with telephones and other equipment.¹ In other words, the

machinery of state was generally passed on in its entirety. It is important, however, not to overestimate the size of that machine. The European colonial powers had controlled Africa through indirect rule, with indigenous leaders as intermediaries. They themselves had built up few modern institutions. It was only in the twilight of colonialism, from the 1940s on, as the colonial powers began to concern themselves with the welfare of the indigenous population, that anything approaching a modern state apparatus really emerged.²

Even in the period of rapid growth following independence, the machinery of state in African countries remained modest by international standards. Public expenditure represented only a few per cent of gross national product (GNP), in contrast with the double digits usual for developed countries.³ Much economic activity in Africa was directed at subsistence and was beyond the reach of the state. Even so, the many informal links between politicians and the private sector meant that the influence of the state on the economy was much greater than the low percentage of GNP may suggest.

It was the job of the new leaders to 'Africanise' the modern institutions they had inherited. Their success was frequently far from complete. In some cases, the former colonial power continued to exert a striking influence on the independent state. Such influence might extend to the army, or even the bureaucracy. Its scope was largely dependent on the interests and wishes of the former colonial power and the deals it had struck with the new African regime. For example, France's influence remained strong in most of its former colonies, but vanished almost entirely in Guinea after the country voted for greater autonomy in a referendum. Belgium tried to retain its influence in the newly independent Congo, but was largely unsuccessful because of the chaos surrounding decolonisation there.

What means did the governments of independent Africa have at their disposal to achieve their aims? The only income they had was from taxes (which were very low) and other levies. It had taken the colonial powers decades to set up these systems, which allowed the colonies to bear the costs of their own administration. European treasuries had frequently been drawn on to bridge financial gaps. The leaders of the new states no longer had this option (though often they did receive financial assistance from abroad). Nor were they given access to the profits of the modern enterprises established by the colonisers; these remained in the possession of the original owners and were not part of the property handed over. For the rest, the new governments were forced – as it were – to board a moving train: though the transfer of power brought many changes, a great deal of life simply rolled on as before. Major social changes like the expansion of the monetary economy and urbanisation had already begun before World War II and continued throughout the latter half of the twentieth century largely unaffected by decolonisation. It was up to the new leaders to establish their own power base in African society in the midst of this tangled web of continuity and change.

b) The Africanisation of politics

The first leaders of independent Africa inherited states with colonial structures. Initially it was unclear how long these structures would survive. Although talk of a single great Pan-African union had virtually ceased, there were still plans to merge countries that had already achieved independence. Nkrumah's Ghana was at the forefront of this initiative. Nothing came of it, however, for various reasons.

Firstly, the larger countries resulting from these mergers would have been just as artificial as the newly independent countries – in a sense, even more so, since they would have had virtually no internal cohesion. The new African states all had colonial infrastructures which gave them a degree of internal unity and linked them to the former colonial power. With adjacent countries they often had no ties at all, apart perhaps from cross-border ethnic groups. Secondly, almost nobody dared to contemplate an entirely new order based, for example, on ethnicity. It was generally believed that this would open up a Pandora's box and lead to utter chaos. Thirdly, the ruling elites understood that it was not in their own interests to introduce a new political

structure which would heighten the uncertainty of the already precarious situation in the early days of independence.

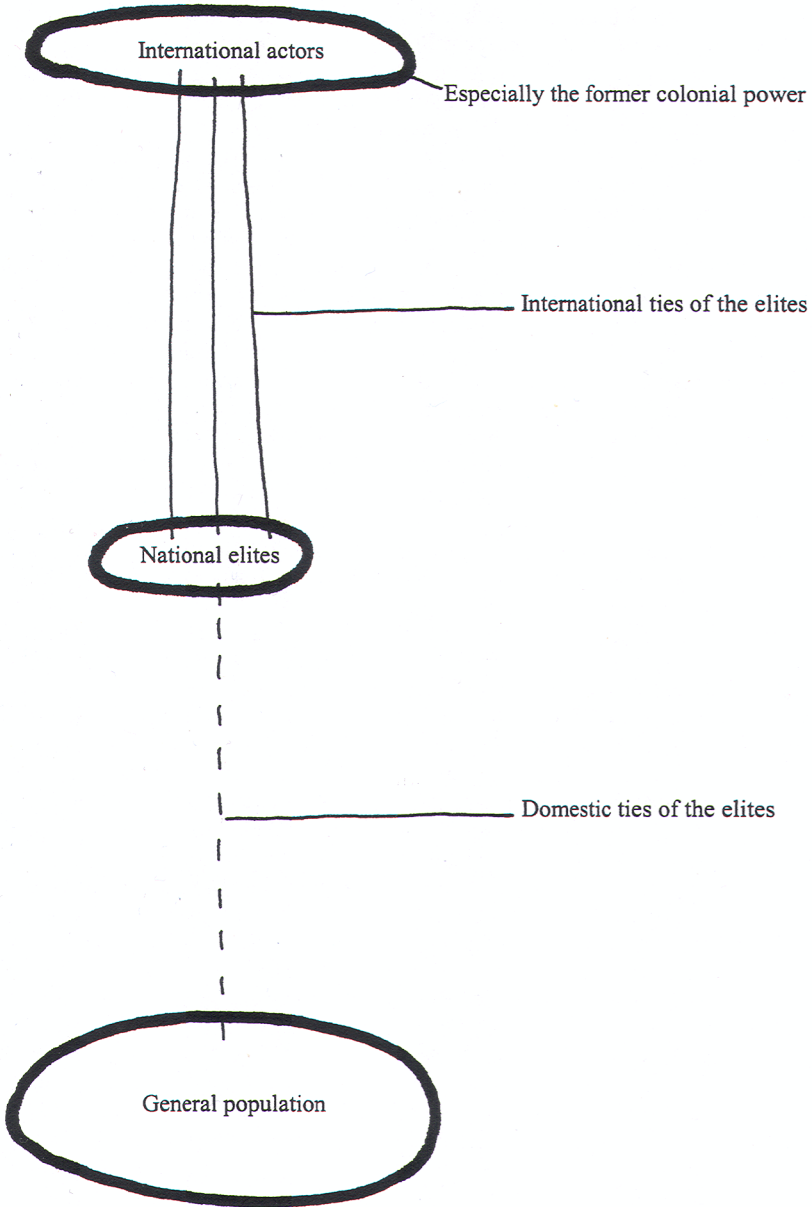
Eventually, therefore, the plans for new political entities faded into oblivion and it became clear that Africa would face the future with the national borders drawn by the European colonial powers. This principle was confirmed by the OAU, which was set up in 1963 in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. Political borders within Africa were henceforth to be regarded as sacrosanct, however unnatural their origins, and indeed, they remained unchanged until the 1990s.

Although the borders inherited from the colonial powers were regarded as non-negotiable, the structures of state were to be 'Africanised'. That is to say, they were to be taken over by Africans. The speed and extent of this transition varied from one country to another. Under President Sékou Touré, Guinea made a clean break with France, whereas – at the other end of the spectrum – Ivory Coast continued for many years to employ French nationals in key government positions and thus experienced a far more gradual transition.

Another, possibly still more important aim of independent Africa was the Africanisation of the economy. The indigenous economy, almost entirely consisting of agriculture, animal husbandry (or associated activities) and trade, had always remained largely in African hands. Alongside it, however, the Europeans had established new economic ventures designed to meet demand and serve markets in the affluent North. Most of them were large-scale agricultural enterprises in the form of plantations for the supply of tropical products like palm oil, cocoa, coffee and peanuts, but some were businesses engaged in the extraction of minerals like copper, iron and gemstones. These colonial companies and their associated infrastructure had a major impact on local African communities because of the employment they created, but remained in a sense islands of modern business in a sea of economic underdevelopment. Most of the large profits they generally produced found their way to Europe. One of the aims of the new leaders was to nationalise ('Africanise') these enterprises, but in the first years of independence there was no real hope of this. Any such move was ruled out by the imbalance of power between the African governments and the Western economic interests involved.

This situation presented the new rulers with a huge problem. As a new elite, they lacked any real power base within African society and owed their position purely to their links with the former colonial powers (diagram II). They had been selected to receive Western education not because they belonged to indigenous ruling families, but on the basis of individual merit. The decisive factor had not been their links within African society,⁴ but – on the contrary – their successful integration into the colonial, European-style culture. The new African elites had grown up within the colonial system and were its heirs. Once the colonial powers had withdrawn, they had to build support bases within their own African societies. In the countries which became independent around 1960, the struggle for independence had been too limited to forge an alliance between the general population and the new elite. The ideals of freedom and progress which the new leaders proclaimed when they came to power could certainly count on the enthusiastic support of the people and therefore produced a feeling of solidarity. But that feeling faded when the ideals proved too difficult to achieve.

Diagram II: The situation at independence



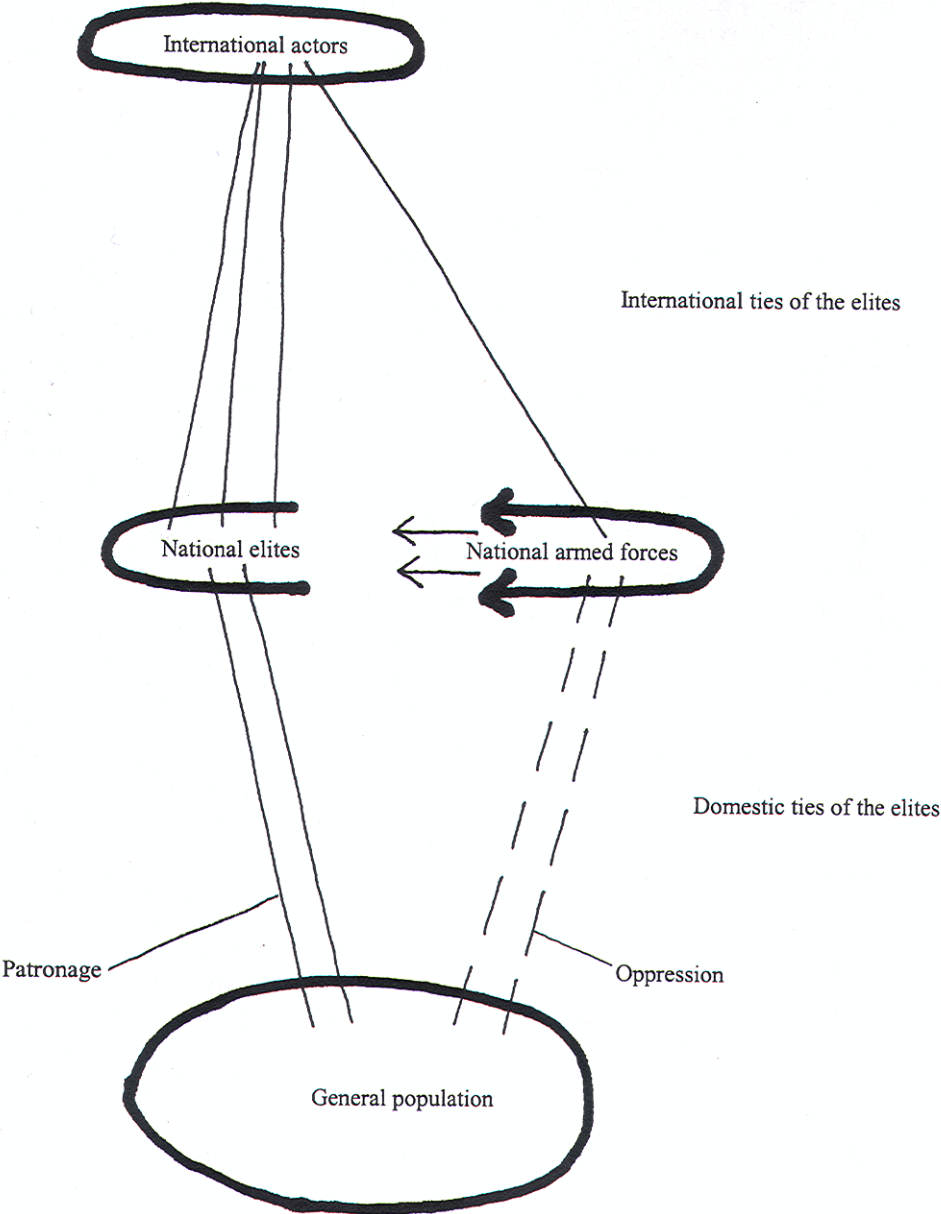
Unlike the establishment in the West, the new African elites had no economic base within their own societies. A very few countries (Ivory Coast, Kenya and Botswana, for instance) had a black middle class, but in most African countries the elite carried on no economic activity of their own. They were entirely dependent on their control over the state apparatus bequeathed to them. For this reason, they had a supreme personal stake in safeguarding their position: their individual incomes (and, indeed, personal safety) depended on it.⁵ The elite had no choice but literally to appropriate the state. Within just a few years of independence, the two had become indistinguishable. The tender shoots of democracy which the colonial powers had planted soon shrivelled and died. After all, politicians who lost elections forfeited their incomes. Given that the entire elite had to be absorbed into the machinery of state, the mechanism of cooptation worked flawlessly. With one or two high-principled exceptions, all its members were united in a one-party political system which itself became fully identified with the state.

In practice, the new elite regarded the independent state and its resources as their own property. Public revenue, part of it donated from abroad, was used not only to finance normal state expenditure in areas like defence, education and health, but also to fund private consumption, coopt rebellious compatriots and purchase and maintain a network of 'clients'. This took place first and foremost in the capital cities. Public funds were used to buy the support of the greatest possible number of local leaders, who in turn used them to maintain and if possible expand their own support bases. It is true that this system of clientelism (also known as patronage) produced national stability through informal networks of individuals, but it also damaged the political system. It encouraged corruption and was a major cause of the development of ever greater and less efficient bureaucracies. Although still relatively small by international standards, the mushrooming government bureaucracies in the cities absorbed more and more of the scarce resources available to the independent countries of Africa.

It should hardly be surprising that African politics became increasingly autocratic in the 1960s and 1970s. The necessary checks and balances entirely disappeared. Heads of state had absolute power and, as a result, tended to display capricious and often bizarre behaviour. The rise of autocracy in independent Africa can probably be best explained in Marxist terms.⁶ Unlike elites in Western countries, the African elite (the Marxist 'ruling class') had no sources of income other than the state. It was therefore not in a position to dissociate itself from the state (to grant the state autonomy) in order to allow the political apparatus to arrive at a consensus with other sections of society (the 'oppressed classes') on a new distribution of resources. This kind of establishment-led consensus produces political stability and thereby protects the long-term interests of the ruling class as a whole (as well as producing a wider distribution of wealth).

However, the African elite could not afford to grant any autonomy to the postcolonial state. It had to identify with it in order to ensure its own economic survival. In Marxist terms, although a ruling class, it was immature. A situation in which members of the ruling class are forced to harness the limited resources of the state tends to produce an atmosphere of cut-throat individualism which threatens the long-term interests of the elite as a whole. European history presents comparable situations in which new and still immature ruling classes struggled to harness the power of the state. According to Marx, this was the context in which an 'adventurer', a 'Bonaparte' – often a member of the military – could seize and retain power because he was sufficiently independent from the other members of the ruling class to be able to stand impartially 'above' them, while at the same time (perhaps unconsciously) serving their long-term interests. This theory of 'Bonapartism' seems to offer a reasonable explanation of African autocracy: it was not a good thing, but it was the best political solution that the elite could find to the problem of ensuring their own survival as a ruling class under unfavourable economic conditions. It meant that, alongside patronage, the elites had another tool for managing the population: old-fashioned oppression (diagram III).

Diagram III: Patronage and oppression



This strategy kept most of the African leaders who inherited the colonies in power until the end of the Cold War, if they were not dislodged by a coup d'état in the interim. Given the circumstances in which they came to power, this was no mean achievement. Compared with states elsewhere in the world, the independent African states tended to be small. They had to get by with modest populations, extremely undeveloped economies and an inhospitable natural environment (despite rich natural resources in some areas). What is more, history had thrown their societies and cultures out of balance. They were ruled by elites which, once their initial ideals began to fade, were linked to the rest of the population only through the strategic support that they purchased (and through oppression pure and simple). But this system of clientelism itself led to state inefficiency, which weakened the legitimacy of the rulers. It seems likely that the structure of the independent African states could not have remained intact for so long if based only on this weak national foundation. To find out what else was shoring it up, we shall have to look outside Africa, at the international environment.

c) International support for the new states

World War II radically altered the international balance of power. After the war, the United States gained dominance but had to put up with a second new superpower: the Soviet Union. Britain and France lost some of their influence. Eventually the changes divided the globe: on the one side was the United States plus the countries of Western Europe and other allies (the 'West') and on the other the Soviet Union and its satellite states (the 'East'). The two camps were embroiled in an ongoing struggle over ideology, politics, economics and culture, but the conflict never flared up into a direct military confrontation; the war remained 'cold'. Nevertheless, the Cold War largely shaped the course of events on every continent for almost the entire second half of the twentieth century, right up to the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was regarded as its symbol.⁷

This was also true of Africa. In the years following World War II, almost the entire continent was in the hands of the European colonial powers (mainly Britain and France). The earliest result of the new world order, initially dominated principally by the United States, was considerable support for Africa's first steps towards decolonisation. Washington itself was keen to gain greater access to Africa and realised that this would be easier to achieve if it could deal directly with the Africans rather than with their colonial masters in Europe. There was also a great deal of idealism in this approach. As we have seen in the Introduction, American scholars came up with the modernisation theory, which postulated that in principle any country could develop and become richer. American foreign policy reflected this idea, especially during the Kennedy years (1961-1963). This was illustrated by the founding of the Peace Corps, consisting of volunteers who wanted to assist in the development of poor countries.

Besides, Washington feared that any postponement of decolonisation would play into the Soviet Union's hands. Anticolonial sentiments in Africa already tended to be linked to socialist or communist sympathies. This made it natural to look to the Soviet Union – which had also turned against the West. It was no accident that, soon after World War II, that prominent advocate of African independence and unity, Nkrumah, pronounced himself in favour of a Union of African Socialist Republics. In 1948 he was arrested and found to be in possession of a pamphlet entitled *The West African Soviet Republic*. Rapid decolonisation, it seemed, might be able to keep the new African rulers in the Western camp, especially given their close historical ties with Europe. But the longer the wait, the less certain this would become.

It was this Western (particularly American, British and French) analysis of the situation that powered the surprisingly rapid decolonisation of most of Africa around 1960. Its accuracy was demonstrated over the next few years, when Africa's Cold War began in earnest. Despite their official independence, the countries born of the British and French colonies frequently retained close links with the former colonial power, through either the British Commonwealth or the French *Communauté*. These new countries were almost all spared the armed conflicts that broke out in other parts of the 'Third World'. The same could not be said of the rest of Africa. The refusal of the authoritarian regime in Lisbon to grant independence to the Portuguese colonies in Africa produced, as had been predicted, an ideal seedbed for nationalist revolutionary

violence, taking the form of local outbreaks of Cold War hostilities. It was a similar story in Southern Africa, where the small white community refused to hand over power to the black majority. The Belgian Congo became independent in 1960, but the process of decolonisation was so chaotic that armed conflict broke out, with substantial international intervention motivated by the country's valuable natural resources. In the 1970s, Cold War hostilities also erupted in the Horn of Africa, a region that had no great history of colonisation outside of its links with Italy.

However, apart from these violent conflicts (which are discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter), the majority of the African colonies experienced a smooth and peaceful transition to independence. The result was a patchwork of independent states covering the continent. In view of the fact that the same process had taken place in Asia, it is fair to conclude that the international political structure was at this time moving rapidly towards a global system of independent statehood. This was seen as the most relevant form of political organisation. In principle, and increasingly in practice, the entire world was divided into states and together they formed a new world organisation: the United Nations (UN). In 1960, two resolutions of the General Assembly clarified which countries would become eligible for membership – a group that included all African colonies and ex-colonies. In cases of aggression, members were to have a right to protection by the international community, as laid down in the UN Charter.

As we have seen in the work of Jackson, Clapham and others (see Introduction, section b), the newly independent African states could probably not have met the criterion of effective control over a fixed territory and its population. They therefore did not have 'positive sovereignty' – it was never put to the test. The new state system in Africa was one of 'negative sovereignty', because the international support was probably decisive for its very existence.

Despite numerous internal uprisings, this artificial system of African statehood guaranteed stability throughout the Cold War period, because of the advantages for all concerned. It gave the two superpowers the chance to compete for the favours of independent African regimes. The European powers were relieved of the burden of their colonial possessions, but the continuing close ties with their ex-colonies enabled them to retain many of the benefits. And the African territories were now independent, formally at any rate. For the governments of the new countries, the situation meant that they stood not only at the apex of national client networks, but that they themselves were the clients of foreign patrons. This made them the link between internal and external systems of clientelism. As the official representatives of their countries on the international stage, they were in an ideal position to attract aid (for example, in the form of money or arms) to reinforce their grasp on the domestic situation. This international legitimacy was generally the decisive factor in domestic power struggles.

At the start of the Cold War, when the East-West conflict had not yet assumed global proportions, most African governments faced a simple choice.⁸ Close, stable ties with Western patrons would guarantee their domestic position. This was the most they could hope for. The Eastern Bloc countries did not present a realistic alternative. They were not interested in Africa and were in any case not in a position to provide the degree of support available from the West. In the mid-1970s, this started to change. While the United States declined in stature due to its problems in Vietnam, the Soviet Union stepped up its activities worldwide. By this time, there were plenty of opportunities for it to intervene in Africa's internal affairs: the struggle for independence in the Portuguese colonies was reaching a climax and the revolution in Ethiopia was destabilising the entire Horn of Africa. In this period of mounting tension between East and West, African governments sometimes had a serious choice to make between patrons. In the Horn of Africa, the situation produced a real *renversement des alliances*: Ethiopia and Somalia simply switched allegiance from one superpower to the other. But there was also scope for governments to sit on the fence, though it required a tricky political balancing act.

In a few places in Africa, the Soviet Union and its vassal states provided extensive military support. Overall, however, their influence over the continent remained very limited. The Eastern Bloc simply did not have the resources to compete successfully with the West so far from home. The West (particularly France) continued to invest in multifaceted relationships with

Africa, including not just military and financial support, but also economic, monetary, political, cultural and development assistance. The African authorities were able to use this support to maintain the internal stability of their countries, frequently in a way that permitted them to line their own pockets.

The inability of the Eastern Bloc to offer a serious alternative to the West was a blow to many African governments. Given the history of colonialism, it is not surprising that there was much anti-Western and pro-socialist rhetoric in Africa during the Cold War, even if such rhetoric largely ignored the material existence of continuing close ties with the West and a virtual absence of new ties with the East. There was, however, widespread support for the socialist model of state-centred, planned development. The West was unconcerned. In the eyes of Western strategists, whose attention was absorbed by the global conflict between East and West, the application of this model of development in Africa presented no threat to political stability or security. And, indeed, there was some support in the West for the idea that it might sometimes be better for development not to follow the capitalist Western model. This is why it was possible for new African socialist 'people's republics' (including some in the relatively stable countries that had once been French colonies) to remain within the Western sphere of influence.

d) Anglophone Africa following decolonisation

For a large group of seventeen African countries, English remained the official – or, at any rate, an important – language following decolonisation. With a population of around 330 million, Anglophone Africa predominated at the millennium. At that date, Francophone Africa encompassed the same number of sub-Saharan countries but had a much smaller population (approximately 170 million). Between them, the two language groups constitute a large majority in the forty-odd African countries south of the Sahara. Their colonial past has endowed each of the two groups with certain shared characteristics (such as similar public institutions) and influenced their membership of international political organisations: the British Commonwealth of Nations and the *Communauté* (Community of Francophone Countries) respectively.

With the exception of isolated individuals like Cecil Rhodes, who aspired to create a single great British territory stretching from Cape Town to Cairo, British colonial expansion in Africa was generally undertaken with mild reluctance. Colonial acquisitions were usually motivated by private commercial interests, the desire to provide better protection for existing possessions or the threat of expansion by other European powers.⁹ Even so, once the division of Africa between the European powers was virtually complete, the British found that they had not only inadvertently achieved Rhodes' dream – an uninterrupted British territory stretching from South Africa via southern Central Africa (now Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi), East Africa (now Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda) and the Sudan all the way to Egypt – but also possessed colonies scattered throughout the continent. These encompassed the greater part of Southern Africa, the whole of East Africa and large (if discontinuous) portions of West Africa. Although smaller areas had often been combined for administrative convenience, the colonial philosophy of the British government was not directed at uniting its territories. Each of the colonies was different, existed in isolation and had its own ties with Britain. These were not expected to be too close. For example, in British (unlike French) colonial theory, it was unthinkable for Africans from the colonies to occupy seats in parliament.

The individualised approach to the British colonies was reflected in the approach to independence. Following the loss of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the retention of the remaining colonies was no longer a matter of life or death. The African colonies could be granted independence if the international situation or local circumstances made the move desirable. There was no question of a uniform approach. In 1956, Sudan was the first to go, in the wake of the international crisis concerning Egypt's nationalisation of the Suez Canal. The British were afraid that Egypt (in victorious mood following the withdrawal of the Western powers from the Canal zone) would turn its attentions to the British colony on its southern border: a large and thinly populated country straddling the dividing line between Arab North Africa and sub-Saharan black Africa. They saw that rapid independence for Sudan would prevent

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser from using a war against colonialism as a pretext for territorial expansion and would turn an Egyptian occupation of Sudan into an act of aggression. In the event, the strategy proved successful. The largest country in Africa (in terms of territory) gained its independence, although it faced a turbulent future plagued by relentless civil strife between the Arab north and the African south.

It was in West Africa, however, that the struggle for independence south of the Sahara proceeded most rapidly. As we have seen, Ghana was the frontrunner in this region. Following independence in 1957, the country experienced several years of relative prosperity. However, the 1960s saw rapid political and economic decline in this model African state. The new constitution of 1960 had made the country a republic and given President Nkrumah sweeping powers. As time went on, his regime became increasingly dictatorial. Press freedom was limited and political opponents imprisoned. In 1964, amendments to the constitution created a one-party state and made Nkrumah president for life. He was to find it less easy to consolidate his power in practice: just two years later, while Nkrumah was on a visit to Beijing, a military coup put an end to his presidency. The first leader of an independent African state went into exile in Guinea, where his friend Sékou Touré provided a safe haven. Meanwhile, Ghana's economy had suffered since 1960 both from Nkrumah's attempts to introduce socialist economic policies and from the decline in the price of cocoa. There was a succession of coups and the standard of living steadily deteriorated. It was not until the 1980s that Ghana succeeded in halting its political and economic decline.

In 1960, Nigeria became the second of Britain's West African colonies to achieve independence. It was the only country in Africa to become a federation. Each of its original regions (Northern, Western and Eastern Nigeria) was dominated by a single ethnic group. (Later, the number of regions increased.) Together, the three regions made Nigeria by far the most populous country in Africa. Of the approximately 200 million Africans in 1960, no fewer than 40 million were Nigerians. The country's economic potential (based in part on the large oil reserves discovered soon after independence) confirmed its status as a giant on the African scene. Nigeria too, however, failed to live up to its early promise. Democracy perished in 1966 and there was no improvement in the standard of living. The government had huge difficulty in maintaining the unity of a country with such ethnic diversity.

In Eastern Nigeria, the region with large oil reserves, there was particular discontent with the management of the country. The Ibo who inhabited the region, which they themselves called Biafra, resented the growing practice of using local wealth to meet financial shortfalls in the rest of the country. In 1966, an Ibo resistance movement launched a war of secession. The federal army responded violently, prompting three years of bloody fighting in Biafra, where the situation was further exacerbated by a famine. Although the Biafrans proclaimed a people's republic, they were unable to internationalise the struggle and attract support from the Eastern Bloc. Despite some assistance from France, Biafra finally lost the war, following hostilities and associated misery that cost the lives of two million people. The unity of Nigeria was preserved, although skirmishes between the various ethnic groups continued to occur on a fairly regular basis. Because of the size of the country, the failure of Nigeria to realise its potential was a problem for the entire region.

The three countries in East Africa – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – had all been British colonies, but each of them experienced an entirely different process of development between independence and the 1980s. This was partly due to the influence of the Cold War, with its competing models of development. Perhaps surprisingly, these differences between the countries in the region (and even within the individual states) produced no great tension. The models of development in Kenya and Tanzania were diametrically opposed. Whereas Kenya opted for Western-style capitalism and offered generous facilities to transnational enterprises, Tanzania was determined to extirpate the capitalist spirit and establish an African form of socialism. Quite apart from the chaos in Uganda, these contrasting development ideologies, as well as personal differences between the leaders of the countries, made it extremely difficult to achieve

cooperation in the East African Community (which was launched in 1967). Not surprisingly, therefore, attempts at regional cooperation ground to a halt in the 1970s and were not resumed until 1993, once relations between the three countries had improved. At that point, the three countries established the East African Cooperation, whose aims include the improvement of regional road and rail networks.

The Kenyan economy, in which white settlers had a considerable share, had long been one of the strongest in Africa. Following independence, it continued to expand at such a rate that per capita income increased despite the rapid rate of population growth (at one point the highest in the world at four per cent a year). President Jomo Kenyatta made the country a single-party state and ruled in an increasingly dictatorial fashion. At the time of his death, in 1978, Kenya's boom years had just been ended by the rising price of imported oil and the declining prices of the country's main export products. Kenyatta was succeeded by Daniel Arap Moi, who had a much weaker power base in the country, if only because he was a member of an ethnic minority (the Kalenjin). Despite this, Moi proved able to survive tensions between different ethnic groups and an attempted coup in 1982 to remain head of state. But the period of prosperity was gone for good. The population continued to grow at a rapid rate while the economy stagnated and the quality of governance deteriorated. It was in a debilitated state that the country staggered into the 1990s.

The same was true of Tanzania, even though it had adopted a totally different course since independence. President Julius Nyerere, universally respected for his personal integrity, adhered to an ideal which he called *ujamaa*, a Swahili word meaning 'neighbourliness' or 'community spirit'. Rather than emphasising the importance of urban life and industrialisation, he concentrated on rural areas and agriculture. He believed that the sparse rural population of the country should be concentrated into larger villages, so that they could be given easier access to modern facilities like education, health care and clean drinking water. These villages could be connected to the road network and hence with the rest of the country. In two stages during the 1970s, more than eighty per cent of the rural population were relocated (on a non-voluntary basis, of course). The policy met with great resistance, but did eventually produce results. In the 1980s, according to UN researchers, educational and medical provision in rural areas of Tanzania was among the best in Africa. But these results were not achieved for the country as a whole. The socialist model of development produced no economic growth.

Tanzania's decision to adopt a form of socialism was connected with the union of the island of Zanzibar with the part of the mainland previously known as Tanganyika. Zanzibar was formally ruled by the Sultan of distant Oman. In January 1964 there was a revolution on the island, directed mainly against the local Afro-Arab elite. The new left-wing leadership sought international recognition of Zanzibar as an independent country and accordingly recognised the German Democratic Republic (becoming the first non-Eastern Bloc country to do so), as well as the other Eastern Bloc countries, North Korea, Cuba, and the socialist countries and freedom movements in Africa. The West was displeased by these events, which took place shortly after the Cuban missile crisis, and Zanzibar became known as the 'Cuba of Africa'. Yet there was no panic, nor any reason for it. Many of the people of Zanzibar, especially the black Africans, were far more moderate than their revolutionary leadership and had no desire for their small and impecunious island to become independent. They much preferred a union with Kenya and/or Tanganyika, which were at that time still discussing a possible East African Federation. Nothing ever came of that proposal, but Tanganyika proved willing to merge with Zanzibar. In April 1964 Tanganyika and Zanzibar united to become Tanzania.

The union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar certainly neutralised the radical elements on the island, as the Western countries had hoped, but at the same time it led to a certain alienation of Tanzania from the West, particularly because Zanzibar's socialist past could not be smoothed over without some trouble. Part of the problem was the issue of Germany. Zanzibar had the only embassy of the German Democratic Republic in Africa. Because Tanzania was reluctant simply to break off relations with East Germany (although was willing to replace the embassy with a consulate), West Germany reduced its support to the country. Nyerere was so offended that he refused all further assistance from the German Federal Republic. Relations with

the United States and Britain also suffered. Tanzania became increasingly reliant on aid from socialist countries, as well as Scandinavia and the Netherlands. When Tanzania wanted to build a railroad to Zambia in order to enable that country to conduct its international trade without routing goods through Rhodesia and South Africa, the Western countries refused to finance the project. One Western ambassador wryly remarked to President Nyerere, 'I think you'll find that the railroad to Zambia passes through Zanzibar.'¹⁰ The Tanzam railroad was eventually built by the People's Republic of China.

Relations between the United States and Tanzania improved during Jimmy Carter's presidency in the 1970s. By this time, relations with the main European countries had also been gradually restored. Despite his socialist sympathies, President Nyerere was admired in the West for his personal qualities. This could not, of course, protect Tanzania from the adverse economic effects of his policies and of the international crisis of the 1970s. Nyerere felt forced to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but to the last refused to comply with the loan conditions, which he believed would mean dismantling his model. In 1986 he retired voluntarily from the presidency – a first in the postcolonial history of East Africa and rare anywhere on the continent. Right up to his death in 1999, he continued to play an important behind-the-scenes role in Tanzanian politics, although he could not prevent the country's further economic decline and changes in policy in the direction demanded by the IMF.

The stability of Kenya and Tanzania stood in sharp contrast to the instability of the third country in East Africa: Uganda. Once known as the pearl of Africa, Uganda was unable to live up to its initial promise once it had achieved independence. The socialist government of Milton Obote (more or less a kindred spirit of Tanzania's President Nyerere) did nothing to improve Uganda's economy. In 1971 Obote was deposed by a military coup headed by the commander-in-chief of the Ugandan army, General Idi Amin. The new president proved to be a cruel and arbitrary tyrant. His greatest victims were the economically important Asian population (who were, in fact, suffering all over East Africa as a result of the policy of economic Africanisation): they were forced to leave the country at short notice, abandoning all their possessions. Under Amin, there were massive abuses of human rights in Uganda. Nobody was safe. Even the Archbishop of Kampala was murdered, according to rumour by Amin himself. Within a few years of Amin coming to power, the country was in chaos.

In 1979, a risky invasion of Tanzania by the Ugandan army was Amin's downfall. Nyerere (who was giving Obote safe haven in his capital, Dar es Salaam) seized the opportunity to topple Amin. The Tanzanian army marched on Kampala, meeting little opposition. Amin fled the country and Obote was reinstated as president. However, his second period as head of state was no more successful than his first. His supporters engaged in widespread violence against members of Amin's regime and against certain ethnic groups. Armed uprisings continued until 1986, when a faction led by the minister of defence, Yoweri Museveni, seized power. Museveni had himself appointed president and succeeded in restoring stability to the country. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Uganda gradually began to recover.

From 1960 onwards, events in Southern Africa were dominated by African resistance to the white domination of South Africa, Rhodesia, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique. This resistance was not only internal, but also external, from the newly independent 'frontline states' to the north. President Kenneth Kaunda's Zambia (the former British colony of Northern Rhodesia) was one of these frontline states, but neighbouring Malawi (the former British colony of Nyasaland) under President Hastings Banda caused much commotion in Africa by adopting a stubborn pro-South Africa stance motivated by economic considerations. The many tensions within Southern Africa made it an ideal terrain for the superpowers to extend their spheres of influence. This violent period in Southern Africa's history is discussed in detail later in this chapter, in section g.

e) Francophone Africa following decolonisation

With the single exception of Guinea, the Francophone countries (like their Anglophone counterparts) escaped the direct influence of the Cold War. And, again like the Anglophone

countries, they displayed wide variations in development from the 1960s to the 1980s. Even so, Francophone Africa was more uniform than the Anglophone parts of the continent. The reason for this was the French policy of maintaining far closer ties with the former colonies than Britain thought desirable. Unlike Britain, France believed that the African colonies should remain, so far as possible, within its own sphere of political and cultural influence. France's *mission civilisatrice* was to disseminate its culture in Africa.

Around 1960, the French government successfully converted its colonies into a new community of nations (the *Communauté*), in which France continued to hold sway. The great political units of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa were broken up. Talks on independence were held with the much smaller fragments of the French colonial empire which were to become separate nations and France then concluded with each of these new political units a separate bilateral treaty defining the limits to its sovereignty. The French government frequently continued to have a say in important matters like foreign policy, defence, the economy and the commodities and monetary policies of the former colonies. France also remained the leading aid donor. The 1948 *Communauté Française* (later to become the *Communauté Financière Africaine* or CFA) remained in existence, with its own currency (the CFA franc), the exchange value of which was guaranteed by France. The constitutions of the new countries were modelled on that of the French Fifth Republic and the education system remained French.

The French government had various reasons for this policy. It was one of the things that supported France's continuing claim to be a major world power and it helped to counter the influence of the Anglophone countries in Africa. In international organisations like the UN, France could rely on the support of its African allies. It could continue to pursue its mission of disseminating French culture around the world. And – of course – there were economic reasons, in particular the desire to retain its privileged access to the commodities and agricultural products of the countries concerned. French development assistance also had major economic benefits for the giver. It was closely tied to African imports of French products and the use of French technicians. But, alongside this French self-interest, there was also genuine anxiety about the future of the new African states. Around 1960, President Charles de Gaulle believed that they still did not have nearly enough structure to function properly as independent states. His government felt that the cost of maintaining a French presence in Africa, providing assistance in a wide range of areas and supporting the exchange value of the CFA franc was worth paying.

Once the French government under de Gaulle had concluded that African decolonisation was inevitable, it devoted itself to the task with great vigour. The process was carefully orchestrated by Paris, which organised a referendum in 1958 offering the African colonies the choice between independence on France's terms (that is, within limits but with continuing French assistance) or total independence with the loss of all their ties with France. The only one to opt for total independence was the small country of Guinea, led by the charismatic and self-reliant Ahmed Sékou Touré. The French government decided to make an example of the country. De Gaulle ordered all French government employees working there to leave immediately, taking with them every piece of government property they could. Before the end of the year, Guinea had become an independent sovereign state – but it had been stripped of virtually the entire machinery of government. The departing French had taken with them all of their supplies and equipment, right down to the office telephones and stationery. And all forms of French assistance and investment had been halted.

The other countries were quick to learn the lesson of Guinea. France had little trouble in gaining their rapid consent to independence on French terms. In the majority, the process of independence was completed by the end of 1960. In August of that year, no fewer than eight French colonies became independent. The leaders of these new nations accepted the French deal with little resistance, since the limits on their full independence were offset by obvious advantages. French funding continued. Major African leaders who complied faithfully with the agreements were kept in power by Paris, irrespective of the nature of their regime. The French secret service played an important role. Requests from various heads of state for French

intervention in their countries were kept ready and waiting in Paris; only the date needed to be filled in.¹¹ From 1960 on, there was an average of one French military intervention a year in the former French colonies. France could rely on the tacit support of the other Western powers, including the United States. They saw the French presence in Africa as a major bulwark against possible infiltration by the Soviet Union. In 1983, when Libya once again intervened in the civil war in Chad, President Ronald Reagan of the United States reminded his French colleague President François Mitterrand of France's 'historic responsibility' to eliminate Libyan influence (probably backed by the Eastern Bloc) in this former French colony – a duty which was duly performed with the use of French military muscle.

Despite many coups and occasional ethnic clashes in countries of minor political significance, the Francophone countries were to remain peaceful compared to the rest of Africa. The monetary cooperation surrounding the CFA franc had a favourable influence on economic development. Right through to the mid-1980s, inflation in the CFA zone (actually two zones: Francophone West Africa and Central Africa) was considerably lower than elsewhere on the continent and the convertibility of the CFA franc was attractive to foreign investors. Since it made imports cheaper, it was also extremely attractive to the local elite. In addition, countries in the zone could count on substantial French development assistance. Partly for these reasons, the economies of the Francophone countries did reasonably well, despite being dealt a heavy blow by the crisis of the 1970s, when oil prices rose rapidly and the price of most African exports declined.

Political cooperation between France and Francophone Africa took firmer shape in 1973 when President Georges Pompidou organised a Franco-African summit. This was the first of a series of conferences, held alternately in France and in Africa, where the heads of state of France and Francophone Africa discussed topics of common interest. In time, heads of state of other African countries were also invited. The first were the leaders of the former Belgian colonies. Later, leaders of non-Francophone countries were also welcome to attend. Around 1990, these summits were to provide important encouragement for political reform in Africa, but during the Cold War years the emphasis was on political stability. To ensure it, the French government was not infrequently prepared to support African leaders who were indifferent to the development of their countries or who stopped at nothing to line their own pockets.

The development of Ivory Coast in the decades immediately following independence is perhaps the best advertisement for this approach. The relationship between Paris and the former independence fighter Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who became president in 1960, was always close. The president's loyalty to France was such that he never had to fear for his position, right up to his death in 1993. Numerous French nationals continued to be employed in the public institutions of Ivory Coast, especially in posts concerned with the economy. A few years after independence, there were actually more French nationals working in Ivory Coast than at any time during the colonial period. However, this did not prevent the entire apparatus of government becoming permeated with corruption and favouritism. Eventually, even the elderly president – nicknamed '*Le Vieux*' – became infected with greed and megalomania. In 1983 he proclaimed his birthplace, the inland village of Yamoussoukro, the new capital of Ivory Coast and in the late 1980s he had a gigantic basilica built there: a replica of St Peter's in Rome, albeit – at the urgent request of the Vatican – on a slightly smaller scale.

Even during the colonial era, Houphouët's great African rival was Léopold Senghor, who became the first president of Senegal. Senghor, often dubbed the 'poet-president', felt himself to be both an African Frenchman and a French African. He refused to choose between the two cultures, preferring to draw sustenance from both. He was the first African to be admitted to the prestigious *Académie Française*, but was also fascinated by African culture. In an attempt to promote a sense of self-worth among Africans, he developed the term *négritude* to denote the entire world of African values and culture. As president, he had to content himself with the small country of Senegal. Once, in colonial times, Senegal and its capital Dakar had been the heart of all French West Africa. In 1960, however, it adopted a policy of isolation. At first Senghor ruled the country in a fairly autocratic manner and with relatively little success. In 1976, however, he decided to adopt a new course. Political prisoners were freed and Senegal became a multiparty

democracy. In 1978 there were general elections, which he won by a large majority. In 1980 he stepped down voluntarily, appointing his prime minister, Abdou Diouf, to succeed him. In the forty years following independence, Senegal would have only two presidents.

The third most prominent former French colony (actually a trusteeship) was Cameroon. This republic was the result of a merger between a small British protectorate and a larger French one. Together they formed the Federal Republic of Cameroon, but barely a year later President Ahmadou Ahidjo proclaimed a United Republic. Tension between the Francophone and Anglophone parts of the country remained a constant feature in the history of Cameroon, with the English-speakers always feeling themselves to be at a disadvantage. Ahidjo ruled the country in autocratic fashion until he, quite unexpectedly, stepped down in 1982 and handed over power to his constitutional successor, Paul Biya. However, the elderly ex-president did not find it easy to relinquish his influence. The prolonged power struggle between him and his successor in the 1980s did little to improve the stability of the country. Ties with France remained close, although there were fewer French nationals in key positions in Cameroon than in countries like Ivory Coast or oil-rich Gabon.

These three leading countries – Ivory Coast, Senegal and Cameroon – were surrounded by many other new but smaller Francophone countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Benin, Togo, Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville) and Gabon. During the 1970s, some of the Sahelian countries were struck by famine as a result of drought. Economically, they had little to offer (apart from Gabon's oil). Partly because of a rapid rate of population growth, it was difficult for them to prevent a decline in the general standard of living. With the exception of Gabon, they were less politically stable than Ivory Coast, Senegal or Cameroon. There were occasional coups, but France refrained from intervening, preferring to keep watch from a distance. Cold War tensions had little impact on these countries.

After its rejection of a continuing relationship with France, Guinea was always the odd man out in Francophone Africa. In 1960 President Sékou Touré took his country out of the CFA zone and in 1965 he even broke off diplomatic relations with France. As a result, Guinea became completely isolated. No other Western country was prepared to risk offending France by offering assistance. For a time, Soviet or even Chinese support seemed to be an option but none was forthcoming in practice. As early as 1961 the Soviet ambassador had to leave the country amid accusations of interference in Guinea's internal affairs. This put an end to any threat of a Cold War conflict involving Guinea. Nevertheless, Sékou Touré continued to rule the country in an oppressive manner and to pursue a Soviet-style approach to the economy. In 1979 he proclaimed a 'Revolutionary People's Republic'. Under his reign of terror, no fewer than a million people fled from Guinea. His sudden death in 1984 left a power vacuum which was immediately filled by the military. The new leaders abandoned the policy of isolationism and sought *rapprochement* with France and with Guinea's neighbouring countries.

f) From the Belgian Congo to Zaire

After the end of the Cold War, Central Africa was the least stable region in the whole continent. The reasons for this were mainly historical. The story is well known. In the second half of the nineteenth century, King Leopold of Belgium appropriated the region and turned it into his private fiefdom, called the Congo Free State. In 1908, the Congo became a normal colony under Belgian rule. This change produced some improvement in the lot of its people. Belgium established a more or less modern administration based in the capital, Leopoldville (today's Kinshasa), but displayed little interest in the rest of the country. The emphasis was on exploiting the country's rich reserves of raw materials and minerals (in particular, copper, cobalt, diamonds, gold, uranium and oil). Where profits could be made, as in Katanga, in the far southeast of the country, white settlements grew up, surrounded by concentrations of black workers. Attempts were made to supply the rest of the population with basic health care and education (mainly through missionary work), but this seldom extended further than primary schooling. No effort was made to establish, as in other African colonies, an elite of Western-style intellectuals who

would eventually be able to take over the country. Brussels maintained that the colony was so undeveloped that it would have to remain under Belgian rule for generations to come. Its approach was completely based on the assumption that the Belgian presence would continue indefinitely. Even in the latter part of the 1950s, when the colonies in Asia had become independent and similar decolonisation seemed to be on the way in Africa, Brussels still foresaw no end to the Belgian presence in Central Africa for some decades to come.

The decolonisation of the Belgian Congo in 1960 was therefore a complete surprise to everyone, including those directly involved. With the rapid advance of the French and British colonies towards independence, and riots in Leopoldville, the Belgian government had woken up to the fact that decolonisation was inevitable. Their decision to withdraw as quickly as possible was based on two beliefs: firstly, that this would allow them to avoid the sacrifice of Belgian lives and resources in a conflict with Congolese nationalists (of whom there were as yet very few); secondly, that they might then retain more control over the Congolese economy and the undeveloped state. The Belgian government assumed that the main economic enterprises, the armed forces and the administration of the country (such as it was) would continue under Belgian management. The political and social structures handed over at independence on 30 June 1960 were little more than an empty shell.

In the vast jungles of Congo, with its many different peoples, there was really only the army to maintain or promote the unity of the country. Other public institutions were confined in Leopoldville and the other major towns. The structure that was handed over was largely Belgian. The king was replaced by a president with exclusively ceremonial duties, while political authority was invested in the prime minister. Between these two figures – the conservative President Joseph Kasavubu and the left-wing nationalist Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba – a power struggle quickly developed. The bicameral parliament had a nationalist majority. It may never be clear whether the Congolese government had any chance of retaining control over the country, given that there were virtually no administrative structures and the international environment was against it. What is certain, though, is that the clumsiness of the Congolese leaders exacerbated the situation, not only plunging the country into chaos but also entangling it in the web of Cold War intrigue.

Tensions started to emerge even as the independence ceremony was under way. In his speech, the Belgian king described Belgian rule in Congo as a heroic feat, while Prime Minister Lumumba emphasised the racial discrimination and brutal exploitation it had entailed. Less than a week later, a mutiny broke out in the army, with African troops rising up against the Belgian officers who still commanded them. Believing that independence would change nothing in practice, the army chief-of-staff (Lieutenant General Émile Janssens) had scoffed at the ambitions of the new Congolese government. The heart of the mutiny was in the mineral-rich area of Katanga, where the mutineers worked hand in hand with a local group resisting continuing rule from distant Leopoldville. The leader of the local uprising, Moïse Tshombe, proclaimed the province independent. Belgian civilians were caught up in the ensuing fighting and some were killed. In July 1960, within a month of its official withdrawal from the country, Belgium intervened on its own initiative, uninvited by Lumumba and without international consultation. Lumumba had Janssens replaced with a Congolese army officer called Joseph-Désiré Mobutu.

The government in Leopoldville was itself unable to control the uprising in Katanga, but received help from the UN, provided on the initiative of the United States. This American move was motivated by Washington's fear that Lumumba would carry out his threats to call on the Soviet Union to help restore order in the country. Only 35 at the time and with no international experience, the young prime minister probably had no idea of the mistake he was making. Rather than playing off the West against the East, he was in fact signing his own death warrant. In 1960, the Soviet Union was in no state to intervene effectively in the heart of Africa – at the height of the struggle there were less than five hundred Russian and Czech advisors – while his threats made the Americans see red. For Washington, Lumumba was no longer an acceptable custodian of Congo's mineral resources. The conservative President Kasavubu was persuaded by the Americans to remove Lumumba as a political force. In the same year, during a journey in the

interior, the prime minister was picked up by a group of combatants and taken to Kinshasa as a prisoner. He was subsequently handed over to his archenemies in Katanga, where he was promptly murdered.

For some time, the country was effectively divided into three. The capital, Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), was controlled by the conservatives (also known as neocolonialists, because of their ties with America). Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi), in the mining area of Katanga, was under the influence of the old colonial power, Belgium. Finally, Stanleyville (now Kisangani), in the northeast, was in the hands of the nationalist adherents of the murdered Lumumba. Thereafter, the United States played a major role in ensuring that the conservatives came to control the whole country. To this end it intervened both directly and via the UN, which was principally concerned to restore peace in the country. Without foreign interference, the nationalists would probably have won (at one time they held as much as two-thirds of the country), but the American support for the conservatives in the capital and for the official Congolese army was eventually to prove decisive. The new balance of power became clear in 1965, when the commander in chief of the army, General Mobutu, seized power in a coup d'état. He appointed himself president, dissolved the parliament, forbade all political activity and subsequently ruled by decree. With the help of the West, he was to keep control of the country for the next thirty-two years.

Mobutu enjoyed some initial popularity among the Congolese population. He had, after all, put an end to the civil war. But this support crumbled away during the long years of dictatorship. His rule was marked by the same paternalism practised by Belgium in the colonial period. His main priority was to control the country's territory for purposes of economic exploitation. Social development was seen as irrelevant and perhaps even counterproductive, since it would only encourage political unrest. Under Mobutu's regime, therefore, there was no real attempt to improve the general standard of living. Education and health care deteriorated rapidly after the churches, which had been critical of Mobutu, were banned from providing them. Organisations of any kind were taboo, with the sole exception of the revolutionary people's party – *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) – set up in 1967.

In internal affairs, Mobutu relied partly on a system of 'divide and rule', but most of all on the army. Increasingly, it was drawn from his own ethnic group, the Ngbandi, native to the north of the country. Mobutu did attempt to attract wider domestic support through actions of a more or less symbolic nature, such as the development of an ideology of *authenticité* in the 1970s. This entailed an Africanisation of Congolese society and the Congolese state. For example, most of the remaining names from colonial times were changed and Congo became Zaire. In his own name, Mobutu replaced Joseph-Désiré with Sese Seko. Every measure he took was legitimised by reference to 'Zairisation'.

Without foreign military assistance, however, his regime could not have survived. In 1977 and 1978, there were two major uprisings in the mining area in the south. These were supported by Angola, where a Marxist regime had come to power after independence in 1975. These assaults on Mobutu's position could not have been suppressed without the Western military support provided both directly (primarily by Belgium and France) and indirectly through pro-Western African countries like Senegal, Morocco and Egypt. The communist sympathies nurtured by organisations opposing Mobutu's regime were sufficient reason for Washington to keep its vassal in power.

Under Mobutu, Zaire pursued an unambiguously pro-Western course, with just a few exceptions (such as the treatment of the major Western-owned private enterprises in the 1970s). Apart from the former French colony of Congo (Brazzaville), Central Africa remained free of communist influence. The West's hold on the country's mineral riches remained unshaken, though Mobutu demanded a good price for them. In stark contrast to the complete absence of economic development in the country as a whole, the personal fortune of the head of state grew to dizzying proportions. In the late 1970s, Mobutu was one of the richest men on earth. Around the same time, the worldwide economic recession drove up Congo's per capita national debt until it was among the highest in the world. During the 1980s, there was no real change in the

situation. Fundamentally, the circumstances in Congo-Zaire were identical to those a century earlier: an authoritarian regime was using foreign support to maintain control of the interior from a remote capital (Leopoldville/Kinshasa). However, the Cold War was now drawing to a close. The Soviet Union no longer posed a threat to Central Africa and the West's interest in keeping Mobutu in power was waning. The end of the Cold War would herald a new era for the country.

g) Late decolonisation in Southern Africa

Southern Africa today accommodates ten different states, with borders that reflect the colonial history of the region. The southern tip of the continent, strategically located at the confluence of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, is inhabited by the descendants of a large group of white European settlers (mainly Dutch and British). It was these descendants of European settlers who, in 1910, obtained independence for the Union of South Africa and so created the first modern independent state in the region. The majority of both the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean coastline in the region was then controlled by Portugal, the earliest European colonial power in Africa. These coastal areas and their hinterland formed the colonies of Angola and Mozambique. An intervening strip of Atlantic coastline (mostly desert) was once one of Germany's African colonies. Germany had to surrender it following its defeat in World War I, together with the other German possessions in Africa: Togo, Cameroon, Rwanda-Burundi and Tanganyika (the mainland portion of the territory that eventually became Tanzania). Following the departure of the Germans, South Africa was allowed to administer what was then known as South West Africa, initially on behalf of the League of Nations and later of the United Nations.

Scattered over the interior were other countries which had once been British colonies or protectorates. Three of them – Swaziland, Basutoland and Bechuanaland – had been taken under Britain's wing in the latter half of the nineteenth century in order to prevent northward migration by South African Afrikaners (descendants of Dutch settlers, who lived in a state of permanent friction with the British immigrants in the area). These thinly populated areas also became independent after World War II. By that time Lesotho (formerly Basutoland) was already entirely surrounded by South African territory and Swaziland and Botswana (formerly Bechuanaland) largely so. Immediately to the north of South Africa lay the white outpost of Rhodesia, for the time being still under British rule, and further north were Zambia and Malawi, both of which gained their independence from Britain in 1964.

Portugal had no intention of granting independence to its colonies, which it regarded as inalienable overseas provinces. Its colonies in Southern Africa were resource-rich Angola and poorer Mozambique. Portugal, like France, felt it had a mission to inculcate its own language and culture into the local population. In theory, an *assimilado*, a local who had assimilated Portuguese education and culture, presenting the right documentation could eventually acquire the same rights as white settlers. In practice, however, the Portuguese took a harder line than the French. There was little real assimilation; in Angola, only around thirty thousand Africans ever received Portuguese citizenship, and in Mozambique no more than a few hundred. Exploitation and oppression were routine. While France and Britain were reducing their presence in Africa during the years around independence in the 1950s and 1960s, the authoritarian government in Lisbon actually increased the Portuguese presence by encouraging emigration to Africa. The new Portuguese settlers found themselves surrounded by growing demands for independence. The struggle for independence in both colonies was to be shaped largely by the Cold War.

South Africa was the political, military and economic heavyweight of Southern Africa (and, indeed, the whole of sub-Saharan Africa). Because of the large numbers of white settlers, the history of the country had been entirely different from that of the rest of Africa. Because the settlers in South Africa had always intended to remain there permanently, there could be no question of a simple handover of power to the black population. The Union of South Africa had become independent in 1910 but power in the country remained entirely in the hands of whites. They had built up an economy which was as modern as any in the West in terms of its structure and productivity, but which was based on cheap black labour. Around 1990, South African

production was almost equal to that of all the rest of Africa put together. Moreover, this powerful economy was located at a highly strategic point for international navigation and had access to rich reserves of raw materials and minerals, including the uranium that was so important to the arms industry.

So it was that the black 'developing country' of South Africa harboured within its borders a prosperous and industrialised white nation. Interaction between the two worlds was confined almost entirely to the economic sphere. As the century wore on, successive white governments phased in a system of apartheid (racial segregation). In its most extreme form, this meant that, apart from supplying their labour for use in the white economy, blacks were forbidden to have any contact with whites or even to visit the same places. Racial segregation was codified in a wide range of legislation. The official justification was that separate development for each population group would produce the best results. The blacks, it was claimed, would automatically lose out if forced to compete with the whites. In actual fact, the system was far less neutral than the doctrine might suggest: for example, provision for health and education was far worse in the case of the black community than for whites, so there was no level playing field for development.

As more and more countries in Africa became independent, the fundamental inequality between blacks and whites in South Africa became a thorn in the flesh not only of the South African blacks, but of the whole of Africa and even of the entire world, because of the associations the system evoked with the racist doctrines of Nazi Germany. But as long as the Cold War continued, the white population of South Africa and the adjacent region could use the international environment to reinforce its own otherwise shaky strategic position. Internationally, the South African authorities presented the country as a bulwark against the advance of communism. The white people in the region saw themselves as an integral part of Western civilisation and, at the same time, as protecting the West's substantial economic interests in that part of the world. They saw the black population, both in South Africa and in the rest of the region (indeed, in the whole of Africa), as the enemy. In Cold War-speak, this meant that black Africa would opt for communism if it were to become independent. Accordingly, South Africa was opposed to independence for the rest of Africa, although it could not exercise any direct influence on the situation in distant countries. Closer to home, in Southern Africa, things were different. The black population of South West Africa could forget about independence for the time being, despite the dismay of the UN, which had formal authority over the region. Pretoria also forged successful alliances with Portugal to prevent independence for Angola and Mozambique.

South Africa owed this dominant role not only to its own considerable power but also to the support of the West (in particular the United States). As Cold War tensions increased, South Africa's offer to serve the West as a bastion against communism proved irresistible. During the 1950s, extensive arms shipments were made to South Africa and an agreement was concluded for the use of South African uranium in US nuclear weapons. Even so, the Americans were never entirely comfortable about their friendship with South Africa. They had ethical objections to apartheid and were repeatedly reminded of them both by the black community in the United States and by the newly independent black African states, which Washington was also supporting. The black states to the north of South Africa saw themselves as 'frontline states', with a responsibility to fight for the liberation of the whole of Africa south of their borders. Their aims included both the expulsion of the Portuguese from Angola and Mozambique and the end of white rule in South Africa, South West Africa and Rhodesia.

The former British colonies immediately set out to make life difficult for South Africa at meetings of the British Commonwealth. As early as 1961, shortly after the South African police had massacred black demonstrators in Sharpeville, South Africa realised that its position as a member of the Commonwealth was no longer tenable, and withdrew from the organisation. A few months later, the rift with Britain – which had joined in the criticism of apartheid – was widened by the proclamation of a republic. This meant that the British queen was no longer head of state in South Africa.

In Rhodesia, relations between Britain and the colony's white administration were becoming still more strained. Britain refused to grant independence to Rhodesia if white rule was to continue. In 1965, when it became clear that London would not back down from this position, the country's hardline white leader, Ian Smith, issued a unilateral declaration of independence. Relations with Britain were broken off. The white population of Rhodesia (a mere 250,000 out of a total population of five million) would henceforth stand alone against the black freedom fighters. In doing so, they received practical assistance from neighbouring Portuguese Mozambique and economic and military support from South Africa. Even so, the whites realised that they could not remain in conflict with the majority population indefinitely if they wished to maintain an acceptable standard of living and security for themselves. There was strong international pressure on Ian Smith and mounting African support for the black freedom fighters. In 1980, the white settlers gave up the struggle. For a few months Rhodesia returned to the formal authority of Britain, but only long enough to enable a handover of power to a black majority administration. In the same year, Rhodesia achieved internationally recognised independence under the new name of Zimbabwe (after the imposing ruins of an ancient empire).

In the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, too, various liberation movements had also been increasing the military pressure on the white settlers. Following the 1974 coup d'état in Portugal, there was a complete U-turn on the issue of the colonies. The African wars in the colonies were unpopular and the new democratic government wanted to end them immediately. In great haste and within just a few months, the country divested itself of all its African colonies (as well as East Timor in Southeast Asia). In Angola and Mozambique, power was handed over to the liberation movement controlling the capital city: in Angola this was the MPLA in Luanda, while in Mozambique it was FRELIMO in Lourenço Marques (the name of which was immediately changed to Maputo). The leftist government of Portugal was indifferent to the fact that both these organisations were Marxist. Unfortunately, however, both countries (and Angola in particular) had a number of other liberation movements, each with its own sources of international support and ethnic and economic power bases. Consequently, the transfer of power did nothing to ensure national unity. This was to remain a problem so long as the Cold War continued to feed the flames of local rivalries.

Cold War hostilities were fiercest in Angola, where the main opposing parties were the government army (the former MPLA freedom fighters) supported by Soviet advisers and Cuban soldiers, and UNITA, backed by South Africa, Zaire, Zambia and – much more importantly – the United States. Although the two superpowers were represented only by soldiers from satellite states, the confrontation was so fierce that neither side was willing to back down. As a result, the main loser was the local population. The same was true in Mozambique, where the struggle between the government army (FRELIMO) and the RENAMO rebel movement (originating mainly from the Rhodesian security service) plunged the country into chaos and misery. This in itself fulfilled South Africa's main aim of ensuring that Angola and Mozambique could present no possible threat to the apartheid regime in Pretoria. No fewer than fifty thousand Cuban troops helped the regime in Luanda to keep control of a portion of the country. By the end of the 1980s, it was they who presented the last remaining potential threat to South Africa and Western interests in the region.

Washington managed to solve this problem by linking it to the independence of South West Africa/Namibia. As early as 1966, the UN had withdrawn South Africa's mandate to administer this territory, but the Pretoria government steadfastly refused to withdraw. The main Namibian liberation movement, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), operated from bases within Angola. The fear in Pretoria and Washington was that an independent Namibia would open its doors to a Cuban military presence. In the late 1980s, the thaw in relations between East and West made it possible to come to a compromise. Under the watchful eyes of the two superpowers, Angola, South Africa and Cuba reached an agreement: South Africa would withdraw from Angola and Namibia, and would cease to support UNITA, if the Cubans withdrew from Angola within two years and Angola ceased to support the African National Congress, South Africa's main resistance movement. In November 1989, elections were

held in Namibia and SWAPO won with a clear majority. The liberation movement formed a government and, a few months later, in March 1990, Namibia finally obtained independence.

The black population of South Africa had to wait longer, until 1994. In that year Apartheid was finally abolished (chapter 4, section c).

h) The strategic importance of the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa – comprising the present-day countries of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and (according to some authorities) Sudan – is a transitional region between the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. In racial and cultural terms, the peoples to the south of the mountains are part of sub-Saharan Africa, while those to the north have a different background. Although often darker in complexion, they are more closely related to the peoples of the Middle East, with whom they also have close cultural and religious ties. Relations between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East (and even Europe) are far more deeply rooted in history than those between the Horn and the rest of Africa, which are actually of recent date.

In 1869 the Suez Canal was opened, establishing a new passage between Western Europe (then the centre of the world) and Asia (with the main European colonies) via the Red Sea. Instantly, the Horn of Africa became a key strategic area. All the great European powers wanted to possess a base close to the southern end of the Red Sea (which meant in or opposite the Horn of Africa). Britain was the first to achieve this ambition, when it captured the port of Aden, in Yemen. France followed suit in Obock (now part of Djibouti) and Italy in Abbas (now Assab). The territory occupied by Italy would expand after 1882 to become the colony of Eritrea.

The European conquests included not only small areas of Arab or Somali desert, but also the coast of Ethiopia. This northern part of the Ethiopian empire was sequestered by Italy and turned into the separate colony of Eritrea. It was only the astonishing Ethiopian defeat of the Italians in the battle of Adwa in 1896 that stopped Italy advancing inland and overthrowing the whole empire. Instead, the country retained its independence and was even able to take part in the large-scale European conquest of Africa in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Under Emperor Menelik II, Ethiopia conquered a large area in the south, doubling its territory. Many of the conquered peoples had previously had some form of contact with the empire (usually armed conflict), but did not share its Christian culture. As a result, twentieth-century Ethiopia was more ethnically and culturally diverse than ever. Consequently, it faced special difficulties during the Cold War period and thereafter. One problem area was the Ogaden desert, under Ethiopian rule but populated by Somali clans.

The state of Somalia is of very recent, postcolonial origin. The areas inhabited by Somalis – a large portion of the coast of the Horn of Africa and its low-lying hinterland – had been occupied in colonial times by Italy (Italian Somaliland), Britain (British Somaliland and British East Africa), France (around the city of Djibouti) and Ethiopia (the Ogaden). Italy was on the losing side during World War II and had to surrender its colonies to British administration. During the period of decolonisation, the territories previously known as Italian and British Somaliland were united to form the new state of Somalia, which became independent in 1960. The French refused to give up Djibouti, which they had turned into an important military base, and Ethiopia was equally unwilling to contemplate the inclusion of the Ogaden, given that it had come to regard it as an inseparable part of its national territory. However, the first Somali government refused to accept this state of affairs. Its key policy was the inclusion of all Somalis in a greater Somalia. To achieve this would require many adjustments to its borders. The French would have to give up Djibouti, Ethiopia the Ogaden and Kenya its northeastern province. Apart from Morocco, which aimed to annex the Western Sahara (then under Spanish administration), Somalia was the only country in Africa that did not comply with the OAU's taboo on changes in national borders.

Given the political situation in the Horn of Africa, Somalia's expansionary aspirations were unrealistic. Making foreign enemies might promote national unity between its warring clans, but Somalia was still an insignificant little country by any standard. Its population numbered around two million and eighty per cent of its inhabitants were tent-dwelling desert

nomads. The country lacked even the rudiments of a modern economy. Its main income was from the export of bananas to Europe. However, none of these considerations prevented the Somali leaders from pursuing a policy of expansion. Judging Djibouti and Kenya to be impregnable due to their respectively French and British support, they turned their attention to Ethiopia. So it was that the traditional rivalry between Islam and Christianity in the Horn of Africa was restyled in the second half of the twentieth century to become part of the Cold War, with the Ogaden desert as the potential spoils of victory.

In 1956, with Egypt's nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the ensuing international crisis, the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa regained the strategic importance they had possessed almost a hundred years earlier. The United States could not leave the defence of the region to Western Europe, even though the French already had a strong military presence in little Djibouti. Washington's attention focused in particular on Ethiopia, where Emperor Haile Selassie showed himself an enthusiastic champion of close relations between Ethiopia and America. Substantial American military support would protect Ethiopia from Somali aggression and would at the same time guarantee the presence of a Western military base in this strategically vital region. But immediately after independence in 1960, Somalia also applied for American support. Economic aid was granted, but military assistance was withheld in order to avoid disturbing the balance of power between Somalia and Ethiopia. But this was precisely what the leaders in Mogadishu wanted to do. Accordingly, they seized the opportunity provided by the Cold War and in 1963 they played the Soviet card. The Somali government offered to promote Soviet interests in the region if the Russians would give Somalia the extra military muscle it needed to expand its territory. At first Moscow responded cautiously, but eventually Soviet military assistance started to flow into Somalia.

In this way, Ethiopia and Somalia used the international tension between the superpowers in the interests of their mutual rivalry and created an arms race in the region. The increasing military build-up continued despite the 1969 coup in Somalia, which established a military regime under Siad Barre. Somalia did change its tactics, however. It no longer displayed direct aggression towards its neighbours but attempted to undermine them by supporting local Somali 'liberation movements'. Its expansionary rhetoric waned and public support for the military regime became less general. The new government tended to rely on the support of only a few clans, while playing the others off against each other. Ties with the Soviets remained intact. Somalia became a 'socialist republic' and in 1974, when Nikolai Podgorny became the first Soviet president ever to visit Africa, Somalia was the chosen destination.

That same year, however, regional stability was threatened by a coup in Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Selassie was dethroned and a military junta seized power. In 1977 Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam personally liquidated his rivals during a shoot-out in military headquarters in Addis Ababa, enabling himself to rule Ethiopia as a dictator. Mengistu belonged to a radical movement advocating a clean break with the Ethiopian past, including the country's ties with the United States. He embarked on a revolutionary socialist path towards complete modernisation of the country. The Americans were expelled and approaches were made to the Soviets. For Moscow this was almost too much of a good thing. Because South Yemen had also turned to the Soviet Union, all the countries around the southern end of the Red Sea were now Russian allies, but there were major tensions between them. In an attempt to resolve these and to create an atmosphere of mutual cooperation within a large socialist federation, a conference was held in Aden under the chairmanship of the Cuban president, Fidel Castro.

The approach was doomed to fail. The Somalis saw no advantage in such cooperation because it meant they would have to give up the dream of national expansion which had been the reason for approaching Moscow in the first place. In desperation, when it became clear that the Soviet Union preferred Ethiopia to Somalia, Siad Barre decided to take pre-emptive action. By this time, Somalia had one of the largest armies in Africa (as indeed did Ethiopia). While Mengistu's attacks on political opponents and rivals (the 'Red Terror') were causing chaos in Ethiopia, Somalia expelled its Eastern Bloc military advisers and embarked on a stealthy but swift invasion of southeastern Ethiopia. In an impressive logistical feat, Moscow responded by

transferring its military base from Berbera in Somalia via Aden in South Yemen to Ethiopia in the space of just a few days. Cuban soldiers were flown in to strengthen Ethiopia's defences. By the end of 1977, Somalia was in possession of virtually the entire Ogaden, but the fruits of its conquest were mainly desert sand. The Somalis lacked the military might to strike at Ethiopia's heart and to end the war with a decisive victory.

Over the next few months, the roles were reversed. Ethiopia's Eastern Bloc support proved decisive: the Somali army was driven back over the border, losing almost all of its tanks and air power in the process. In a dramatic *renversement des alliances*, Somalia called on the Carter administration in Washington to supply military assistance. It drew a blank, spelling the final failure of the great Somali project after years of extraordinary effort. The country had failed to expand its territory, its huge army had been destroyed and no national development had been achieved. In the 1980s, Somalia would continue to receive economic assistance from the West (mainly from the United States and Italy), but – bereft of its dream of expansion – the state became mired ever deeper in clan rivalries.

Despite its victory in the Ogaden, Ethiopia was little better off. All the resources of the destitute country were absorbed by its military, since it also had to engage in military action in the north in order to put down a secessionist uprising in Eritrea. Eritrea had originally been taken from Ethiopia by Italy but was returned to Ethiopian rule as a mandated territory following World War II. In 1962, Emperor Haile Selassie formally annexed it, in effect restoring the situation prior to 1880. However, the Eritreans resisted reintegration into the Ethiopian empire. Historically, Eritrea had been far more open to the outside world than more inward-looking, 'traditional' Ethiopia. Its period as an Italian colony had heightened the contrast between the two countries. Annexation by Ethiopia was a signal that peaceful secession was no longer possible and instantly prompted violent hostilities.

The Eritrean struggle for independence continued from 1962 to 1991, making it the longest uninterrupted war in the history of twentieth-century Africa. The rebel province received virtually no support from the outside world. Despite its position on the Red Sea, it had less to offer the two superpowers than the far larger and potentially richer Ethiopia and they accordingly abstained from intervention in the dispute. Nevertheless, the war placed a heavy burden on the Ethiopian government, first under Emperor Haile Selassie and later under Mengistu. It cost one and a half million lives and ravaged large parts of Eritrea and northern Ethiopia. It was not until Soviet support for Mengistu started to dry up in the late 1980s that the rebel province finally got the upper hand. So it was that the formal independence of Eritrea in 1993 was ultimately made possible by the end of the Cold War.

The war in Sudan had no connection with the Cold War. Its historical roots lie far deeper. In the nineteenth century, when the British gained control of what is now Sudan, the north and centre were inhabited by Muslims of Arab extraction and the south by animistic black Africans. Under British rule, many southern Sudanese converted to Christianity, creating a sharper religious division between the two parts of the territory. After independence in the 1950s, the new, Islamic government in Khartoum embarked on a policy of dominance over the south, and met with armed resistance from the local population. Hostilities continued until 1972, when the south obtained a measure of autonomy. However, the 1980s saw a rise in Islamic fundamentalism in Sudan, prompting renewed north-south tensions. Fighting broke out again in 1983 and has dragged on ever since.

i) Africa and the shadow of the Cold War

The Cold War had a major influence on Africa. Above all, it stabilised the patchwork of weak independent states. Most of the countries of Africa remained beyond the scope of tensions between the superpowers, even in the 1970s when these tensions boiled over in many other parts of the Third World. This positive effect was especially true of the ex-British and French colonies. These new countries enjoyed a relatively large measure of internal stability. This was partly due to the

state structures built up during the colonial period, but the importance of their close continuing ties with their former colonial masters is undeniable. These meant that their leaders felt no need – and indeed had no chance – to turn to either of the superpowers. The only exception to the rule was Guinea, which deliberately broke off ties with France and was then, as it were, disowned by the West. In other former French colonies, like Benin and Congo (Brazzaville), the influence of the Cold War remained relatively slight. These countries borrowed their rhetoric and their economic policies from the Soviet Union but, since they received no material assistance from that quarter, they too remained within the Western sphere of influence and were not sucked into any serious East-West conflict.

The situation was quite different in almost all parts of Africa which had not been colonised by France or Britain. This historical difference created special local conditions which left these areas exposed to the global struggle between East and West. The most important special condition of all was the delay in granting independence to the Portuguese colonies. Over the years, the nationalist movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau drew military and other support from the Eastern Bloc, inevitably evoking a response from the West. The mounting struggle in the Portuguese colonies, with the Cold War shaping events behind the scenes, only made it more difficult to reach the inescapable settlement in the form of independence. Both these (sometimes fierce) struggles for independence and the continual postponement of the transfer of power must be seen as consequences of the Cold War.

In the countries most directly influenced by the Cold War, another important consequence was the politicisation of the armed forces and the militarisation of politics.¹² In the new African states, whose internal political structures were still relatively undeveloped, it was only to be expected that the military would become more involved in national politics if international tensions affected national security. The armed forces began to take a firmer stance on issues like the national budget. Their foremost aim was to secure sufficient funds to procure military equipment. But their influence frequently went further than that and could even extend to the whole of national politics.

Even without the stimulus that the Cold War provided, internal conditions in most African states favoured an expanding role for the military, whether its leaders were already part of the elite or had to muscle their way into the elite. The position of the civilian leaders was often quite vulnerable. Military commanders had inherited troops and equipment which were intended for maintaining law and order, but which could equally well be used to stage a coup d'état. There was thus considerable temptation for them to seize power, dramatically enhancing their own authority and that of their clients. Apart from their monopoly on international contacts, the civilian leaders had almost no means of staving off the military. However, the veneer of legitimacy that they could provide sometimes enable them to reach some kind of settlement with the armed forces, a settlement that offered both groups the advantages of exploiting the state. The growing importance of the military in turn had major repercussions for the fledgling political cultures of the African countries. It gave an authoritarian twist to politics, at the expense of human rights and nascent democratic institutions. It also meant that development ended up low on the list of national priorities.

The Cold War damaged not only the political but also the socioeconomic development of the African countries that became most deeply involved. Military coups and other forms of political instability in themselves reduced the chances of healthy social development. Global tensions sometimes translated into increasing conflict between ethnic communities or clans in their struggle to control the state, or even just to hang on to a decent power position in their multi-ethnic society. And there was also, almost always, an inequitable distribution of government funding among sectors. Defence tended to receive the lion's share at the expense of the other, more development-oriented, sectors like education and health. The authorities often neglected their responsibility for development. Somalia was an extreme case of this widespread phenomenon. In those African countries drawn furthest into the Cold War, priorities shifted from development to security and military spending.

The Cold War also had major consequences for the security situation in Africa. Superpower rivalry increased the tension surrounding local conflicts, for example in the Horn of Africa and in the former Portuguese colonies in the south. Perhaps the rivalry between capitalism and communism in Africa (and elsewhere) served as a release valve for the aggression of the superpowers, unable as they were to engage each other directly in armed conflict in the presence of the nuclear deterrent. The United States and the Soviet Union were careful to ensure that their own or allied armed forces did not find themselves ranged directly against each other: the fear of escalation was as effective a deterrent in Africa as it was elsewhere. After the Cold War, however, African actors would no longer be restrained by the superpowers and could settle their differences freely. Deterrence was followed in those years by a kind of decompression. But the end of Cold War rivalry also left room for a positive new trend: international cooperation aimed at resolving local conflicts. Southern Africa was to benefit greatly from this development (see chapter 4, section c).

African leaders were often aware of the dangers of excessive involvement in the global conflict between East and West. There was immediate and widespread interest in the deliberately neutral position advocated by the Non-Aligned Movement. This worldwide organisation was the brainchild of the leaders of the newly independent countries in Asia. In 1959, its first major, more or less formal, meeting was held in Bandung, Indonesia. It was attended not only by prominent figures like Sukarno (Indonesia), Jawaharlal Nehru (India) and Chou En Lai (China), but also by Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana). In the years following this ‘Afro-Asian’ meeting in Bandung, ever more African countries joined the movement.

The desire of the African countries to occupy a distinct international position and to have their own political forum, separate from the great powers elsewhere in the world, was also expressed in the establishment of the OAU. This took place in 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The event demonstrated the survival of the old Pan-African ideal, but from the beginning there was also recognition that this was not likely to be achieved any time in the near future. To promote the stability of the member states, therefore, the organisation adopted the principle that national borders of independent countries were not to be disputed, however artificially those borders might have been drawn in colonial times. The African leaders were aware of the risk that any discussion of borders might open up a Pandora's box and ultimately destabilise the whole continent. The purpose of the OAU was to promote African unity through voluntary cooperation between the independent member states.

In the course of the 1970s, the European Community made its appearance as a new international player on the African stage, though at first it was primarily a co-financier of French policy. In 1975, the association agreements between the European Community and individual African countries were recast as the first Lomé Convention, an agreement between the countries of the European Community (later the European Union) and some seventy countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (the ‘ACP countries’). The Lomé Conventions, reviewed every five years, embraced both aid and trade, the latter in terms of access to the European market (see also chapter 7, section e).

Since it was not only the political environment but also the economic status of Africa around 1990 that determined the starting position of the continent for the post-Cold War period, chapter 2 provides an historical overview of the economy, with the emphasis on the reforms of the 1980s. The main effect of these were to liberalise Africa's economic systems. They were accompanied by liberalisation of its political systems, beginning as soon as the Cold War came to an end. This political transformation is the subject of chapter 3.

¹ Young, ‘The colonial state and post-colonial crisis’.

² Oliver and Fage, *A Short History of Africa*, pp. 191-199.

³ Smits, ‘Financiële kenmerken van Afrikaanse staten’ (‘Financial characteristics of African states’).

⁴ Freund, *The making of Contemporary Africa*, p. 209.

⁵ Goldsmith, 'Risk, rule and reason'.

⁶ Fatton, *Predatory Rule*.

⁷ Painter, *The Cold War*, is a useful survey of the Cold War period.

⁸ Marte, *Political Cycles in International Relations: Africa during the Cold War, 1945-1990*.

⁹ Wesseling, *Verdeel en heers (Divide and Rule)*.

¹⁰ Chachage, *Environment, Aid and Politics in Zanzibar*, p. 71.

¹¹ Dutch government memorandum, *Frankrijk en de Franse Gemeenschap (France and the French Community)*, taken from *Foccart parle. Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard. (Foccart Speaks: Conversations with Philippe Gaillard)* Paris (Fayard / Jeune Afrique) 1995, p. 275.

¹² Marte, *Political Cycles in International Relations: Africa during the Cold War, 1945-1990*.