

dissent regardless of the ethnic or religious affiliation of the actors. The regime's victims of abuse come from all corners of Eritrea. If groups or individuals express any dissent it matters little whether they are from the Highlands or Lowlands or if they are Moslems or Christians. Rather, what seems to matter is the presence or perceived presence of dissent and how dangerous the government perceives the dissent to be. The alleged collaboration of some Kunama with Ethiopia during the wars between the two countries, of course, is bound to attract the government's wrath. Yet, alleged collaborators from other ethnicities are also not spared. The authors' claim that the government targets the Kunama, thus, needs more concrete and comparative evidence than is provided in the book.

The authors' claim that the state expropriates land from the Kunama also lacks both comparative evidence and historical perspective. The Italian colonial state, like many other colonial states in the African continent, expropriated much of the land in Eritrea's lowlands and placed it under state control (*demaniale*). By contrast in the highland areas, the colonial

state expropriated only pockets of land, perhaps due to the population density in those areas. The Eritrean state, like many other post-colonial states in Africa has failed to restore land appropriated by the colonial state back to its rightful owners. Instead, it promulgated a land reform proclamation, which transferred control of all land to the state. Despite the proclamation, however, land use rights in the highlands largely remain in the villages while in the lowlands the state has used some formerly *demaniale* land for expansion of commercial farming and for settlement of returning refugees, infringing on the customary use-rights of pastoralists in the lowlands. There is little doubt that there prevails inherited injustice with respect to land in the lowlands and it needs serious attention. However, the authors fail to give this historical perspective of the land tenure problem in the lowlands, including the Kunama areas. They also do not provide any data on how much land has been alienated from the Kunama relative to those from other ethnic identities in the Gash Barka and Semhar regions of the country, where the land was brought under state control by the colonial state.

Similarly, the authors give little historical background on how the Jeberti (Moslem minorities in the Christian dominated highlands) came to be denied access to land in Highland Eritrea. Historically land in the highlands is generally under the control of villages or kinship groups. In order to get access to use-rights of land one has to be native to the village or a member of the kinship that controls a parcel of land. Villages hardly have the authority to deny any native person access to land for changing one's religion. It is also not customary for villages or kinship group to give land to non-natives or non-members regardless of how long they live in the villages. It would have been a useful contribution for the authors to clarify how the Jeberti came to be denied access to land in the highlands. In any case, landlessness of the Jeberti precedes the Eritrean state.

Another important omission by the book is that it does not explain why the Eritrean population has failed to prevent the emergence of such a repressive regime or why the regime continues to garner support from segments of the Eritrean population, including those in the diaspora, despite its record of repression.

The factors may be several; however, the regime has ably exploited the existing 'no-peace-no-war' situation with Ethiopia to divert attention away from domestic repression. It is likely that the country's security risk is viewed by many to be a greater concern than domestic repression even though domestic repression also puts the country's security at risk.

Despite the identified limitations the book makes a valuable contribution in explaining Eritrea's political structures and their repercussions. It provides readers with meticulous documentation of Eritrea's dismal human rights record. Readers will obtain a clear understanding of why so many young Eritreans leave their country fleeing the open-ended compulsory national service that forces them to provide free labor in the firms controlled by the PFDJ. The government claims that the refugees are economic migrants leaving the country for better economic opportunities neglecting the fact that open-ended compulsory service denies the young people the opportunity to work and lead normal life during their productive years.



The end of Portuguese colonialism ignited the dormant liberation struggles in South Africa and in neighbouring Namibia. Cuba was, as Piero Gleijeses argues in this important exposition on the topic, the catalyst for the transformation of the region from one dominated by white settler minority rule to single party constitutional democracies led by the former liberation movements. The author's careful use of archival material and interviews from the three main protagonists – Cuba, the United States and South Africa – is the key distinguishing feature of this authoritative account. Covering one and a half decades, the book describes in great detail the policy initiatives, debates and reactions as the three capitals sought to shape the politics of a region on the cusp of change.

Cuban foreign policy towards Southern Africa comes across as the personal initiative of the country's iconic leader, Fidel Castro. His intimate involvement is evident in all significant decisions on Cuban policy, be they military, diplomatic or economic in orientation. The book puts paid to the idea, so prevalent in the West during the Cold War, that Cuba was 'a client state' acting on behalf of the Soviet Union in the region. In fact, Gleijeses documents a number of critical divergences between Havana and Moscow over the initial intervention in November 1975 and the handling of the attempted coup by Nito Alves aimed at ousting the MPLA leader Agostino Neto from office four years later.

At the same time, it is clear that the ability of Cuba to sustain its costly intervention in Angola was a function of Castro's revolutionary vision and the concomitant willingness of Moscow to

maintain general financial and economic support for the island nation throughout this period. Beyond Havana's military commitment, which turned the tide in 1975 and grew to nearly 50,000 troops in the latter stages of the conflict, support for the embattled MPLA-led government came from the secondment of hundreds of Cubans to various positions within key ministries, as well as the health and social services sectors. Their puritanical voluntarism provided vital assistance in restarting economic activity and played a critical role in staving off an internal coup from the aforementioned MPLA dissidents in 1979. Nonetheless, the book explains how, once the immediate threat to MPLA rule had passed, the government in Luanda began to replace most of its Cuban advisors – with the notable exception of the military contingent which remained vital to regime survival in the face of South African military intervention and support for UNITA – the counter-revolutionary opposition.

For South Africa's apartheid government, the task through the last fifteen years of apartheid was fundamentally a defensive one, figuring out how to hold on to power while recognising the necessity of

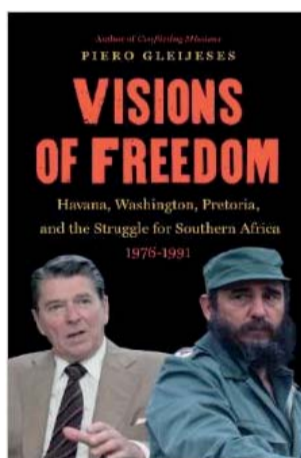
Cuba in Africa

Chris Alden

Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991, By Piero Gleijeses

Wits University Press/University of North Carolina Press, 2013, pp.655,

ISBN 978-1-86814-749-6, \$35.40



some form of acceptable political compromise with an apocryphal majority of 'moderate blacks' based on continuing white domination. In this context, many of the approaches instituted in Namibia by Pretoria – from counter-insurgency policies to reformist initiatives – were efforts at experimenting and refining policies that could eventually be applied back at home. When it came to Namibia, this took the form of a destabilisation policy aimed at bringing about a severing of Luanda's support for SWAPO (and the ANC) while introducing an 'internal solution' based on the leadership of the multi-racial Democratic Turnhalle Alliance under white leadership.

From Pretoria's perspective, the forward strategy in Angola and the alliance with UNITA succeeded in buying it significant time to pursue its preferred domestic policies. Ultimately, however, the contradictions inherent in maintaining forms of racially-defined minority rule determined its failure, as witnessed by SWAPO's electoral sweep into power in 1989 (replicated by the ANC in South Africa's democratic elections in 1994). As a result, the primary function of the South African Defence Forces (SADF) was to hold back the tide of liberation through a

series of military incursions into Angolan territory and targeted operations against SWAPO and the ANC bases there. The seasonal pattern of invasions and the push back by combined Cuban and Angolan forces, alongside with Soviet support and involvement, came to a halt with the loss of South African air superiority in 1987. Thereafter, Pretoria came to realise that South Africa would have either to incur significant costs to hold on to its position in Namibia or come to a negotiated settlement with its enemies.

The United States approached the regional contestations from the dual perspective of a conservative Cold War lens that was increasingly tempered during this period by liberal desires to end apartheid in South Africa. The unusual constellation of South African, Chinese and US backed 'counter-revolutionary forces' in Angola in 1975 aimed at thwarting the MPLA takeover gave way to 'constructive engagement' under President Reagan which sought to rollback Cuban and Soviet involvement in Angola by backing South African and UNITA military forces. At the same time, US policy makers brought selective public pressure to bear on Pretoria to embark on gradualist domestic reforms that would usher in democracy (as well as ease criticism of US foreign policy from domestic and international audiences). As Gleijeses demonstrates in *Visions of Freedom*, analysts within the US State Department and Central Intelligence Agency carefully assessed the moves of the Cuban and South African governments, measuring the degree to which these contributed towards realising American policy aims.

Gleijeses's description of the parallel story of US-Cuba relations – which included episodes of near diplomatic

normalisation such as discussions held by President Jimmy Carter that were ultimately thwarted by Cuban intervention in Angola – and the part that it played in determining official reactions to events in Southern Africa and his integration of this neglected dimension is an important addition to our understanding of Washington's policy towards Southern Africa. Negotiating a withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola thus became the lynchpin for regional change for Washington, combining all key aspects of US concerns that shaped its approach towards Southern Africa at the global, regional and even domestic levels

Perhaps one of the most arresting findings of the book is the policy debates in Havana and the ancillary discussions in Pretoria on a possible Cuban military incursion into Namibia. Weighing in on the controversial claims of South African military apologists that the battle of protracted campaign at Cuito Carnavale was a victory, Gleijeses presents compelling evidence that all parties understood that, whatever their interpretation of the specific event, it was a harbinger of a strategic shift in the overall nature of the conflict against apartheid South African interests. The South African Defence Forces' (SADF) hubris, reflected in the official statements and local media reports at the time, disguised deep disquiet at the loss of air superiority, spiralling costs in white soldiers' lives and equipment that a robust defence of northern Namibia would require. Cuba's willingness, however, to engage in a posture of strategic ambiguity as to whether it would instigate an invasion mirrored growing alarm in Pretoria

and Washington as well as Moscow as to the implications of such action.

The building of an airport 125 kilometres from the Namibian border by 250 Cuban construction workers in June 1988 laid the major South African military facilities open to air strikes. In fact, Castro told his generals: 'We do not intend to cross the border with troops... we may cross it with special forces, with scouts and so on, but an invasion of Namibia with ground units would be something else... In this war... we will cross the border more than once, but by air' (p. 454). SWAPO, the Namibian liberation movement, was ecstatic as the possibility of deploying force without fear of South African aircraft or helicopter. Pairing this assessment with public disclosures in the South African media that the key reason Havana did not order pressing the military campaign further was the fear that the South Africans would be compelled to use their nuclear device to halt the drive, makes for sobering reflection.

There are unanswered questions and analytical inferences that come out of this study. For instance, the trial and execution of the senior Cuban General Arnaldo Ochoa in the immediate aftermath of the draw down of Cuba's military presence in Angola, is perplexing. As Gleijeses himself notes, the actual reported acts of corruption he was accused of were relatively minor in scale and would imply a less drastic official reaction to someone who was a national war hero. Were there other reasons that Castro had to undermine Ochoa?

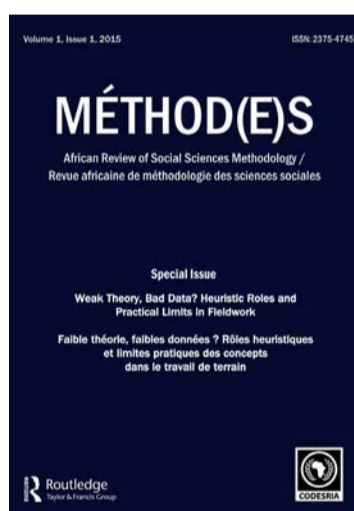
Another intriguing fact that Gleijeses hints at is that the withdrawal of Cuban

advisors in Angola corresponded with the rise of rent-seeking conduct on the part of the MPLA elite. Was this a necessary step to remove Cubans (and other outsiders) in order to assert national control over policy making and implementation or was the glimmering of financial opportunities the more important impulse? It would be interesting to explore this transitional moment in greater detail to see just how decision making at the top may have laid the foundation for the corrupted Angolan petro-state. Finally, as the commentary above implies, the author's decision to focus on external powers (plus South Africa's National Party government) inevitably serves to diminish the significance of African agency in this context.

There is another dimension worth mentioning with respect to Gleijeses's book. In the contemporary technology-induced narcissistic climate that celebrates the uncritical use of the internet as a self-sufficient research resource, there are worrying signs that academia's next generation of students appear to be fast losing the skills and drive necessary to do genuine archival research. Gleijeses reminds us that the hard work of trawling the archives and corroborating perspectives and events through interviews is a requisite process needed to make tangible gains in our understanding of history. The author even goes so far as to supplement his key sources with an examination of archives in countries as diverse as Zambia and Canada, effectively triangulating evidence and opening up other perspectives on the ongoing struggle in the region. (The latter source contained, in Gleijeses's succinct judgment, 'little of relevance to this book', but the point is he took the

trouble to find out). This determination to get to the 'truths' as understood by the protagonists allows the reader to hear, in their own words, the contemporary assessment of challenges and possibilities for action, and it should be applauded.

Finally, as the actual participants of that transformative period die and their experiences fade for the Southern African public, the supplanting of historical memory by official liberation narratives in Angola, Namibia and South Africa, which elevate the role of the party and liberation icons in the transformation of regional politics, is underway. Gleijeses's account reminds us that the liberation movements, not only the MPLA but also the military wings of SWAPO and the ANC, were highly dependent on financial and logistical support from foreign backers. Indeed, the conclusion one is left with after reading *Visions of Freedom* is that they would not have succeeded without the sustained military involvement of Cuba and its leader. If one considers that the South Africa's destabilisation campaign in the early 1980s was successful in neutralising the ANC in Mozambique (and to a large degree in Zimbabwe), it would not be stretching the imagination too far to think that, without Cuban military support, Angola too would have gone the way of compromise with Pretoria. How this would have affected the eventual outcome of South Africa's liberation struggle is interesting to speculate. In all these respects, Gleijeses's monograph makes a serious and lasting contribution to our understanding of this period in Southern African history and his findings stand out as a testimony to the vital necessity of such work.



MÉTHOD(E)S

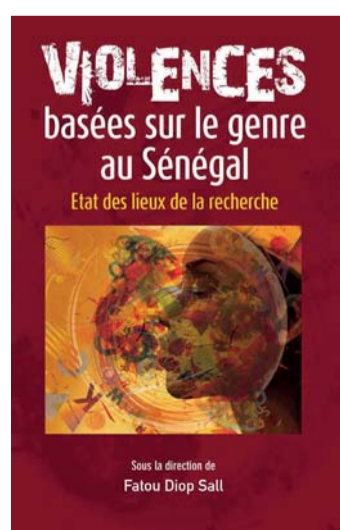
African Review of Social Sciences Methodology / Revue africaine de méthodologie des sciences sociales

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Violences basées sur le genre

Etat des lieux de la recherche

Sous la direction de Fatou Diop Sall

Les mécanismes de lutte contre les VBG sont plus basés sur des principes que sur des pratiques. Il y a peu d'actions et plus de théories sur la vulnérabilité, le genre, les rôles sociaux et économiques des femmes, les systèmes de protection sociale, la promotion de la femme, entre autres axes d'intervention, etc. Actuellement, les VBG et les stratégies déployées de part et d'autre pour y faire face apparaissent sous des formes multiples. Si les stratégies pour contrer les VBG ont connu des évolutions, c'est parce que les types et formes de violences n'ont cessé de proliférer. Certaines catégories de VBG remontent à des périodes historiques parfois très lointaines. Face à l'ampleur et à la recrudescence des VBG, relatée presque chaque jour dans les médias, la communauté internationale s'est mobilisée ces dernières années contre ce phénomène. Il faut également noter la mise en place d'un dispositif juridique et réglementaire au niveau international et des Etats pour combattre le fléau. Parallèlement aux cas évoqués quotidiennement par les médias, des études ont aussi révélé la recrudescence des VBG au Sénégal comme partout ailleurs. C'est autour de ce paradoxe que s'interroge ce rapport qui décrit les violences basées sur le genre et les dynamiques qui les favorisent. En outre, il identifie les principaux leviers et les acteurs sur lesquels on peut s'appuyer pour mieux combattre ces violences dans la sauvegarde de la dignité et de la personne humaine.

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