

Africa are characterized by a common colonial past, an identical official language, and the same type of relations in most cases with the former colonial power, and although they all have the same underdeveloped, dependent status, this does not mean that *francophone* Africa forms a homogeneous international sub-system capable of formulating and implementing a common foreign policy. Nor does it mean that its states should be expected to act in unison to solve major political problems at a time when no alliance of countries in the world is capable of doing so.

It is true that there is agreement on a number of essential problems, and to some degree this permits a certain harmonization of policies (in the United Nations, for example) — certainly no mean feat! But, too often, divergent and even conflicting interests either paralyse international organizations like the OAU (Organization for African Unity) or provoke serious conflicts between member countries. There is no real organization grouping the countries of French-speaking Africa, in spite of several attempts to create one, but only regional organizations whose primary function is economic, such as the Council of the *Entente*, customs unions, economic communities and so on. These organizations have had their ups and downs. The scars borne by the OCAMM (African, Malagasy and Mauritian Common Organization), which was losing its members one by one and was unable to achieve any political pre-eminence, bear witness to this; in August 1974, this organization had to agree to be “depoliticized” in the hope that it could form an “instrument for economic, cultural and social co-operation”.

More pronounced

The disagreements are, naturally, much more pronounced over specifically African problems (such as the question of the liberation of southern Africa), conflicts between states (such as those arising over boundaries) or conflicts within states (such as those concerning political entities resulting from colonialism) and questions of implementing development policies. On all these problems, national attitudes often touch or overlap, but no consensus seems to emerge. It is often difficult to explain the stance taken by an African state in terms of its position within the existing ideological, political and economic alignments. Ivory Coast was the only country of the five-member Council of the *Entente* to recognize Biafra, following Tanzania, which ranks among the progressive African nations. Ivory Coast and Senegal had a

moderating influence on the other states with respect to southern Africa. Mauritania and Guinea, long-time partners in what is known as the African revolutionary group, do not see eye to eye on the future of the former Spanish Sahara, and Mauritania has aligned itself with Morocco (in the words of President Ould Daddah, “you do not choose your allies”) against Algeria and they are sharing this territory in disregard of the previously unbroken rule that former colonial boundaries are to be maintained — a rule made by the OAU. Other, and equally significant, divergences would become evident if we were to turn our attention from the states of West Africa to those of *francophone* East Africa.

It is important, however, to define the level of the discrepancies of attitude with respect to southern Africa in order to avoid oversimplification or the type of political Manichaeism that disregards the complexities of foreign policy. The fundamental objectives are clear and have never varied. On behalf of the whole of Africa, the goal of eliminating all forms of colonialism was solemnly proclaimed when the OAU was formed in 1963. The heads of state recognized what the OAU charter refers to as the pressing and urgent need to co-ordinate and intensify the efforts of its members to expedite the unconditional achievement of national independence for all territories still under foreign domination. They also pledged to help colonial peoples achieve independence. They were equally categorical in their condemnation of *apartheid*, denouncing it as a “criminal policy”, and of all other policies of racial discrimination.

Unquestioned

No African government, whether it be classed as revolutionary, progressive, reformist or moderate, has ever questioned these common goals. Ivory Coast is no less firm than Guinea or Mali and Niger in this respect: “No human being worthy of the name could approve of the racial laws governing the relationships between the various communities in South Africa.” These words, spoken by the Ivory Coast Minister of Information on his return from an official mission to South Africa in October 1975, could, with others like them, form a veritable anthology on the topic. The same is true of the numerous statements stigmatizing Prime Minister Ian Smith’s unilateral proclamation of independence for Rhodesia and his desire to perpetuate the total dominance of the 4 percent white minority in that country.

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