

**GASBARRI, FLAVIA. 2020. *US FOREIGN POLICY AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR IN AFRICA: A BRIDGE BETWEEN GLOBAL CONFLICT AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER, 1988-1994*. ABINGDON, OXON; NEW YORK, NY: ROUTLEDGE.**



Research on the Cold War has been moving towards a global narrative for the past two decades and that is why it is surprising that the end of this conflict in Africa has received only a minimal attention. Dr Flavia Gasbarri tries to fill these gaps in the contemporary historiography of the Cold War in her book “*The United States and the end of Cold War in Africa, A Bridge between Global Conflict and the New World Order, 1988-1994*”. The book was published in 2020 and is based on her dissertation project of the same name, thanks to which she completed her PhD at King’s College London in 2014. In recent years Gasbarri has worked as a Teaching Fellow at the Department of War Studies (KCL) and later at the Defence Studies Department at the Joint Services Command and Staff College in Shrivenham. She focuses her research and expertise on the United States during and after the end of the Cold War in Africa, with a deeper focus on sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa.

In the reviewed work, the author does not focus on the development of the African continent, but she especially deals with the history of American engagement during the Cold War emphasising its end at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. The work fits into the now rich historiography dealing with the non-European dimension of the conflict and fills the aforementioned gaps. In the introduction, Gasbarri presents her basic theses, which she later develops and supports with an interpretation of events based largely on American sources, in corresponding passages partly supplemented by Cuban and Soviet sources. It is the one-sidedness of the sources that can be identified as one of the weaknesses of the whole work, however it is an understandable weakness since local African sources are either non-existent or very difficult to obtain. Given that the work is an analysis of American foreign policy in the region, the absence of a large amount of archival material from the former Soviet Union or Eastern Bloc countries is not a major problem. Yet, those would be a relevant addition to the complete picture. The historical community however will probably have to wait for a broader analysis covering the issue from both sides. The description of the events is presented in a readable, detailed and clear manner, even though the whole issue is very complex and has a large number of actors involved. The author was able to achieve that thanks to an appropriate geographical framework — her book covers mainly the Horn of Africa and South-West Africa regions. Although at first glance those regions might seem like fragmented areas, Dr Gasbarri demonstrates in the very first chapter that the two territories, or rather the events taking place in them, were closely related from the US Cold War perspective. The main questions answered in the work are the periodisation of the end of the Cold War in the region, and the American foreign policy transformation of that time in the light of the international paradigm change with the bipolar rivalry weakening and the shift to powers’ cooperation.

In the first chapter, Gasbarri was able to achieve mainly two things — she set the geographical framework and gave an introduction to the American Cold War engagement in the regions. It would be almost impossible to cover the whole sub-Saharan



Africa in a relatively short book, so defining fields of interest is the first step towards successful research on such a complex phenomenon. From the US point of view, the Cold War in sub-Saharan Africa began with the decolonisation, which led to a higher level of engagement of both powers in the region. The rivalry then intensified in the mid-1970s with the Soviet Union and more importantly Cuba taking part in the Angolan civil war. This armed conflict jeopardized the stability of the entire region and two main US allies in the region were directly linked to the conflict — Mobutu's Zaire and apartheid South Africa. After 1977 and after the Ogaden War started, the Horn of Africa, or more precisely, Ethiopia and Somalia, became the second cross-current and the second field of interest. In the next chapter, Gasbarri transparently introduces both conflicts from the African perspective, but more importantly she presents convincing arguments for a broader Cold War perspective approach. According to her, the whole conflict was not influenced only by arms supplies and Cuban troops on the battlefield, but also by *détente* and American public opinion, which in connection to human rights movement at the end of the 1960s weakened US support of the apartheid regime. Gasbarri illustrates that the Cold War and regional conflicts were indeed interwoven, and they influenced one another. That is why she blames, among other things, the Angolan and Ethiopian-Somali conflicts, along with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan for putting an end to 1970s' *détente*, and thus she supports the broader thesis of the importance of the Third World periphery for the development of the international politics of powers. The interconnection of regional conflicts and the Cold War did not disappear even in the 1980s, because, according to Gasbarri, the USSR's withdrawal from Africa and the end of the conflicts in Angola and the Ogaden were important components of US policymakers' negotiations with Gorbachev until the end of the decade, also due to the earlier *détente* failure "shadow" caused by the question of involvement in conflicts in the periphery.

Gasbarri describes 1988 as the beginning of the end of the Cold War in Africa. The Soviet Union clearly began to withdraw from peripheral conflicts. Besides, the solution of peripheral conflicts meant a possibility of deepening the cooperation with the USA and became an important part of broader American-Soviet negotiations at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. The United States insisted on three main issues in the region of South Africa — end of the conflict in Angola, political stabilisation of South Africa together with the end of apartheid, and resolution of an increasingly complex relationship with President Mobutu of Zaire, who had stirred controversy by violating human rights and economic destabilisation of his state. However, Gasbarri claims, that since 1991 the solution of these issues had not been determined by the Cold War interests, but by efforts to create a new market for the US economy. The issue of Ethiopia and Somalia underwent a similar "de-ideologization" in the late 1980s and early 1990s. US and UN humanitarian aid during and after the Ethiopian famine played a major role, as well as the end of military conflict due to internal problems of both Ethiopia and Somalia. According to Gasbarri, after 1991 the region lost its strategic importance for the United States and thus the USA did not intervene to support the dictator Siad Barre. The USA focused more on development of democracy and free market in Ethiopia and later on humanitarian aid in Somalia, instead of keeping supporting the allied dictator. Gasbarri thus illustrates that at that time, the Cold War dimension had already disappeared from US foreign policy

in the region as well as in South Africa, and by 1994 the “end of the Cold War” had come to its end.

Gasbarri’s book is a lucid and rather readable contribution to the research of the Cold War global dimension, and especially the complex era of transformation at the end of the War, when the USA found itself in an unprecedented position of the world’s superpower without an obvious rival. The main thesis of the book is dating the end of the Cold War in Africa to the period between 1988 and 1994. At that time the diplomatic paradigm transformed and because of that the United States had to adapt its goals and methods in the region — the USA did not support dictators anymore, as those were no longer needed after the Marxist threat had disappeared, and on the contrary the USA started to support the development of democracy and economy recovery in sub-Saharan countries. The second major outcome of Gasbarri’s research is the analysis of the US foreign policy transformation. The great merit of the whole work is its accessibility and clarity, even for a reader who has no profound knowledge of situation in the sub-Saharan region. Let us thus hope that in the near future we will see a similarly successful analysis of Soviet policy in the region.

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