

REVOLUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: THE AFRICAN CASE

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Introduction

In 1974, during the oil crisis, two apparently disconnected events shook the African continent and placed it at the center of the international agenda. A military coup in February in Ethiopia, the long-lived and oldest African empire, ended the monarchy in September, thus marking the beginning of a revolution and of a socialist regime. Meanwhile, in April, the longest fascist regime in Europe was overthrown (in the Carnation Revolution) and the first (and last) maritime empire crumbled. Angola, Mozambique and the Lusitanian enclaves in Africa became independent, under the leadership of national liberation movements of Marxist orientation.

The fifteen years of armed struggle in the former Portuguese colonies gave place, in 1975, to civil wars and to an international conflict in Southern Africa between Cuba and the Warsaw Pact, who supported the new regimes, on one side, and South Africa and the NATO nations alongside the insurgents on the other. Likewise, the Horn of Africa became a hotspot in the Cold War. As always, revolutions became inter-state conflicts fomenting the heated debate between academic internationalists. Finally, what is the place of revolutions in International Relations? Do they comprise of a dysfunction within the world system? Here, we propose to discuss this question, focusing on the African revolutions of the 1970s.

Revolutions: the national and/or world dialectic

According to Hannah Arendt, the 20th century was shaped by wars and revolutions. However, research and teaching of international relations

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have treated both themes differently. There are many courses, specialized centers and journals about the question of war, but the revolution as an international theme has been neglected. As put by Fred Halliday (1999), there are no journals specialized in the matter. Meanwhile, the ‘Late Revolutions’ (1970s-1980s) happened during the crisis and the transformation of the economy and the world system, having important effects but becoming victims of the ‘End of History’ (Fukuyama), as if the end of the Cold War had declared void to their impacts. It is remarkable how few academics know little about the processes that marked these two decades, seeing only China and Vietnam as ‘reformed’ post-revolutionary States, and Iran, Cuba and North Korea as ‘renegade States’.

The historical dimension is widely secondary in the analysis of contemporary international relations and it is necessary to rescue it. Studying the subject it is thus both a historical question as well as a theoretical one. International Relations, as an area dominated by Political Science, has been a field of study marked by loosely based theorization or of instrumental character. Without the international autonomy circumvented by their revolutions, both China and Vietnam would not have acquired the development they now possess. Without the State building, the ruling elites and the social transformation promoted by the revolutionary processes, the situation in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Iran, for instance, would not have allowed their current international protagonism.

Halliday (1983) notes that, during this period, in a little more than a decade, there were fourteen revolutions in the Third World. They obtained a significant impact in the region, generating tendencies and countertendencies, as well as violent internationalized conflicts and civil wars. Due to the power balance then existing and to the transformation by which the world economy was passing through, they eventually affected the international system. In the second half of the 1970s ended the ‘peaceful coexistence’ and began the Second (or New) Cold War in the 1980s. All of this contributed to a profound change in the international relations, which had as a pivot the implosion of the soviet field, and to the power imbalances that followed and that continue to destabilize the world system (Fontaine 1995).

The analysis of these international experiences offers a better understanding of the world after the Cold War. Likewise, the reflection on the impacts of revolutions in the international relations must begin from an analysis of previous experiences, such as the classical bourgeoisie revolutions (the English, the American and the French) and the socialists (the Soviet, the Chinese and the Cuban). Finally, the exercise of empirical research allows us to dialogue with the theoretical currents of the area,

proposing analytical elements in order to relate to the theme of revolutions in international relations.

The theoretical framework of this article is primarily based on an analysis developed in the work *Revolution and world politics: The rise and fall of the sixth great power*², by Fred Halliday, as well from other studies from the same author. Academically, International Relations began as a study of the war as a rational and deliberate act of aggression, not as the internationalization of a social conflict. The UN Charter itself addresses the world order as if it were separate from the States' domestic situation. Along the same line, Anglo-American Political Science considers revolution as a break from regular processes. Until the publication of Theda Skocpol's work (which in a way updates Barrington Moore Jr's classic 'Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy'), revolutions were seen as internal phenomena. Jack Goldstone, in turn, emphasized how international factors (such as fiscal-economic pressures and disruptive policies of alliances) weakened States and provoked revolutions.

Realists and neorealists such as Kenneth Waltz, by not thinking of the internal and external dimensions together, ignored most alliances goals of stopping revolutions within member-states. Certainly, revolutions cannot escape the already existing system, but they force its changes and represent moments of transition to a new world, although International Relations sees them as a 'collapse' (or a negative rupture, anti-systemic).

It should be noted that every revolution tries to internationalize itself in the same way as every counterrevolution (by seeking homogeneity), although usually without success. Therefore, the limitations of 'exporting the revolution' (or the counterrevolution) create truces, less ideological rhetoric and a more diplomatic posture. However, this does not mean revolutions have been 'socialized' because according to Halliday (1999, 187),

while their internal post-revolutionary orders remain intact, they continue to pose a challenge to the system in other states.

To historical sociology, the 'international' created the State and not the other way around, while regarding the revolutionary processes here studied in their international dimension, it is worth noting wars create revolutions and vice versa. In the cases analyzed here, for instance, it is noteworthy that the revolutions from the 1970s led to conventional wars in the periphery (with indirect involvement from the great powers) and for which the international community was not prepared. Besides this, in the

² HALLIDAY, Fred. *Revolution and world politics: The rise and fall of the sixth great power*. London: Macmillan Press, 1999.

regional level the greatest impact is not as much from deliberate action but the example it sets, which serves as a catalyst against the established order.

Although it is allegedly able to explain the revolutions it creates, even Marxism produces limited explanations. One of those comes from having few elements to analyze the differences between several revolutions and the persistence of the national question. An exception is found in Brucan (1974). Another one is the emphasis on 'infrastructural' elements that lead to an analysis that favors the systemic capitalist relations in a global scale. For example, Wallerstein bets on anti-systemic social movements, while Arrighi navigates through economic cycles without encountering revolutions nor properly dealing with post-revolutionary states such as China. They consider the international system as a (capitalist) global socioeconomic system overlapping the secondary political structures.

Methodologically, Halliday suggests four instruments that might be used as research elements: a) **cause**: to what extent the 'international' produces the revolution; b) **foreign policy**: how revolutionary states lead their relations with other nations; c) **answers**: what is the reaction of other States; d) **formation**: in a longer period, how the international factors and the world system constrain the post-revolutionary internal development of States and influence their political, social and economic evolution.

Revolutions, the missing dimension in the history of international relations

A more profound and objective historical analysis shows us the 20th century was marked by several ruptures and revolutionary experiences in all continents, with accomplishments and remarkable intrinsic and diverse characteristics. Moreover, they marked the international agenda deeply and conditioned the world history and capitalism itself. Along with the defeats that marked the soviet regimes or by them supported, during the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, it was instituted a silence, covered by some journalistic clichés.

From the revolutionary experiences in the bourgeoisie world which emerged around the North Atlantic (the English Revolution from 1642, the American Revolution from 1776, and the French Revolution from 1789), arises the contemporary notion of revolution. It constitutes both the instrument for taking the political power, usually short-term, and a political, social and economic process of societal change, including the transformation of the power bloc, usually long-term. The English Revolution was premature and the American was peripheral (although affecting Latin America). However, the French introduced a social and ideological element

in international relations of profound systemic impacts, and quickly turned into an internationalized revolution (and a counterrevolution) (Chan & Williams 1994).

Revolutions and their regimes

For the theoretical and methodological purpose of this article, revolution means an abrupt political change, usually violent (but not always), with the overthrow of a regime and the fight to build a new one. This rupture in the prevailing order aims to cause structural changes in the legal-political and socio-economic orders. The triggering element of such event could be a popular uprising, an armed insurrection, a coup d'état or even a relatively peaceful political transition. However, in order for these conjuncture elements to be effective it is necessary to have favorable and objective political conditions, both domestic and foreign (Richards 2004).

Besides the bourgeoisie revolutions, the democratic-bourgeoisie revolutions (with active participation of the population) and the socialist revolutions themselves, during the second half of the 20th century the democratic-popular revolution was also developed, especially in peripheral countries. These are revolutions of national liberation, democracy, anti-imperialism and 'antifeudal' of the Third World, usually connected to decolonization and nationalisms. In these, the triggering elements were popular uprisings, reformists mobilizations, coup d'état (including military) and guerrilla fights such as those theorized and promoted by Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel and Raúl Castro and Che Guevara, Amílcar Cabral, among others (Silva 2004). Therein, there was an alliance between sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry, besides sections of the working class.

Theories of revolution and socialism still are strongly focused in European cases, being limited by the knowledge and observation of Third World experiences, usually more recent and less documented. Often, they stress that these peripheral nations 'wouldn't be prepared' for a revolution and for socialism, according to a narrow interpretation. During the era of European imperialism, the more acute social contradictions shifted from the center to the periphery, where the process of proletarianization was becoming more pronounced, with the rural exodus and the implementation of market-turned agriculture. It is important to highlight the international dimension, already significant in the classical revolutions, and which becomes even more decisive in the context of growing internationalization deepened by peripheral capitalism (Davis 1985).

Unlike capitalism, the political dimension is the prevailing instance and so the economy is organized based on the principle of central-economic planning (instead of market planning) with collective ownership of the larger means of production and nationalization of banks and of external trade. Society tends to be incorporated in a single organism, with policies in search of gradually ending inequalities and universalizing social policies such as education, health, housing, public transport, labor and leisure. In a situation of extreme tension, this process was historically embodied through authoritarian and repressive mechanism, although socially paternalistic.

Revolutions and international relations

Revolutions are always associated to factors both domestic and foreign, and following their concretion, they necessarily generate an international impact to the extent they affect the internal rules on which the (capitalist) international order is based on. 'Revolutions are international events in their causes and effects', as recalls Fred Halliday (1999, 148). In this sense, they inspire political forces from other nations, both sympathizers and opposing. Usually these revolutions give rise to foreign wars, typically associated to internal civil wars or resulted from them.

So it happened in Russia (where the Revolution happened during the First World War) and in China, both countries of great relevance in the international order. In these, occurred foreign invasions, civil wars and other global effects, such as the creation of the Third (Communist) International and, further on, the more fluid existence of the International Communist Movement. It was also the case in Korea, Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua, being smaller nations in the periphery of the world system. However, the first two acquired strategic meaning for being in the border with China, an area where socialism wasn't consolidated.

The last two cases implied changes inside the area of direct influence of the United States, as in Cuba, which also had a large worldwide participation in the Third World, especially through the Non-Aligned Movement. Meanwhile, North Korea on the Chinese border and next to Japan, is a strategic zone for Washington, and so the war from 1950-1951 had global repercussion. On the other hand, in the Islamic world and the African continent this aspect became rather more complex, coated up in the structure of the national State in its early days and, in the first case, located in a geopolitical zone with oil.

Similarly, in the African case, revolutions happened during the initial phase of the birth of the nation-state, in the wake of the collapse

of the repressive and bureaucratic colonial machinery. The exception was Ethiopia, where it occurred a conquest of the state apparatus, then transformed and reinforced. Therefore, African revolutions altered the already weak balance being established between the young and fragile states, creating a vast destabilizing effect. On itself, the Iranian Revolution had distinct characteristics since the winning side did not support a Marxist vision, representing a nationalist, anti-imperialist movement, and a cultural reaction to the West. However, its impacts were similar.

Periodization of the 20th century revolutions

During the 20th century, Marxist-oriented socialism managed to promote a series of victorious revolutions in consecutive waves. The first one of them was in the wake of the First World War, with the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the building of socialism in the USSR. The Revolution in Mongolia, for specific circumstances, is part of this period. The second victory, due to the antifascist movements and outcomes of the Second World War, affected Eastern Europe, not only through the ‘revolutions from above’, backed by Moscow and which constituted the Popular Democracies, but also through autonomous revolutions in Yugoslavia and Albania. It is important to highlight that nations such as Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria, at the end of the war (1918-23) staged revolutions and even (brief) socialist regimes, with the posterior defeat of the left wing sometimes due to outside intervention.

The third victory was already being developed in parallel with the previous one, having as an epicenter the Chinese Revolution, which started in the 1920s, and characterized the peasant question. After a quarter of a century of guerrillas and wars, the most populated nation in the world became a socialist regime. The Korean Revolution and the first part of the Indochinese’s are also from this period. The Marxist revolutions and engendered regimes of the first half of the 20th century happened ‘in the center’s periphery’, this meaning that the industrial capitalist powers, which controlled the center of the system, got into an open conflict (imperialist competition, First and Second World War) while fighting to redefine the world system and, within it, their hegemonic position. Therefore, the victory of two revolutions was possible as well as structural regimes of a new world reality, the Soviet and the Chinese, found in the periphery of the geopolitical space, which was affected by a giant confrontation and transformation, as well as from some member countries.

Finally, the fourth and last, the decolonization movement and

nationalism of the Third World were the protagonists of several successful revolutions with socialist orientation, such as the Cuban, the Vietnamese, Afghan, South Yemenite and the Africans from the 1970s. They happened in the second half of the 20th century ‘in the center of the periphery’, meaning it was in the southern region of the world not yet industrialized and where it took place an expansion of an uneven and combined development of capitalism (Westad 2007; Davis 1985).

Among these, despite limited resources, two eventually became paradigmatic and had systemic effects all around the world, the Cuban and the Vietnamese. Evidently, they were connected and depended on two great founding revolutions, but developed their own dynamic. The case of the Iranian Revolution can be fit into this category, although its deployment has been different as a post-revolutionary project. Anyway, ‘Islamization’ of the revolutionary process does not void its republican, modernizer, antiimperialist (but no anticapitalistic) and internationalist base (Haghighat 1985). Also in this phase, can be found the cases of Algeria and other revolutions from the 1950s-1960s.

The African revolutions and their regional and systemic impacts

The African decolonization in the beginning of the 1960s left out the so-called *white bastions* in the southern part of the continent. Portugal, still harboring transnational economic interests, refused to concede independence to Angola and Mozambique. South Africa, ruled by a white minority (20% of the population) was controlling Namibia and in Rhodesia (current Zimbabwe), the white settlers (5% of the population) supported Ian Smith in the proclamation of independence in 1965, unacknowledged by London. South Africa, where the racial segregation of the *apartheid* was enshrined in the Constitution, held great economic power and was associated with foreign capital and transnational companies. Southern Africa, as a whole, had massive reserves of strategic minerals besides agricultural potential, also holding a strategic geopolitical position in the route between the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans.

The impossibility of anticolonial movements in achieving independence, a government with a black majority or even the right to political participation, due to the intransigence from Lisbon e from the white minorities, led these colonies to initiate a process of armed fighting. The African National Congress (ANC) abandoned its moderate positions after the massacre of black protesters in Sharpeville (1960), teamed up with

the South African Communist Party and began a guerrilla of extremely difficult conditions. In 1966, the same also happened with the South West Africa's People Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia, after South Africa refused to return to the UN this territory it was running in *fideicommissum* (provisional duty of administration granted by the League of Nations); and with the ZAPU and ZANU (respectively the Zimbabwe African People's Union and National Union), following the declaration of independence of Rhodesia by the whites.

Angola and Mozambique

Amilcar Cabral, an ideologue of the armed struggle of Marxist tendencies in the Portuguese colonies, launched the guerrilla in Guinea-Bissau while several movements joined the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) also starting the fight. In Angola, several organizations equally triggered a war against the Portuguese. These groups clumped later in three movements, the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) – moderates strands and pro-West with an ethnic base from the North and the South, respectively; and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), of a revolutionary socialist tendency with an urban and interethnic base (Chabal 2002).

Fifteen years after the beginning of the armed fighting, the liberation movements became victorious. In Mozambique, Samora Machel's FRELIMO agglutinated movements of different orientations into a single organization, less solid ideologically and under Chinese influence, controlling part of the country when the Carnation Revolution in Portugal rushed the events. Following the flight of part of the white elite, Mozambique was ruled by a predominantly black movement, which claimed to be Marxist-Leninist. By the borders with Rhodesia and South Africa, countries still controlled by colonial minorities, the support for the guerrillas from these nations was intensified. In the last one, in 1976, the Soweto uprising happened, which was strongly repressed by the white minority government.

However, the independence with the greatest impact from the Portuguese Africa was Angola's, a country with greater economic potentialities (oil, iron, diamonds and strategic minerals) and with a significant white minority. The division and clash between the three groups fighting for the independence was incited with the collapse of the Portuguese fascism. The FNLA (linked to the United States) and troops from Zaire advanced from the north to attack the capital, Luanda, where the MPLA was dominant. The

invasion was defeated by the MPLA with support from Cuban instructors who were just arriving in the country. However, in the south, the groups from UNITA and the South African army unleashed a lightning offensive against Agostinho Neto's MPLA. Then began the airlift between Havana and Luanda, with shipments of weapons and twenty thousand soldiers. In the center of the country, Cuban troops (most descending from former slaves) and the MPLA defeated the South African army, one of the best in the world (Chaliand 1982).

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, punished by misery, by drought and by the Muslim and leftists guerrillas in Eritrea, the old pro-American emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in 1974 by a military coup with popular support. The military junta (DERG) expressed a poorly defined populism, while the opposition, the chaos and the centrifugal tendencies threatened the existence of a new regime. This regime, whilst the struggle between the internal factions of the ruling group grew, increasingly linked itself to left-currents and implemented a comprehensive land reform, mobilizing the population, broke relations with the United States and faced opposition movements (Schwab 1985).

In 1977, rose to the direction of the Derg the colonel Mengistu Haile Marian. While they defined themselves through socialism, the separatist or autonomous rebellions agitated almost all provinces and Somalia attacked Ethiopia. The Somalian initiative was clearly encouraged by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United States, while the USSR and Cuba welcomed the request for aid from Mengistu. Fidel Castro visited both nations in litigation, trying to mediate the conflict through a proposal of forming a confederation, but faced a Somalian refusal, which expelled all Soviet advisers from the country. At that moment, Moscow set up an airlift, sending weapons, Soviet and Eastern Germans advisers, besides the ten thousand Cuban soldiers. The war ended with a victory from Ethiopia, which consolidated its ties with the socialist field, while Somalia allied itself to the United States.

An important point of these African revolutions from the 1970s is that they occurred in a moment when it was possible to search alternative diplomatic-military alliances due to the Cold War, which also deepened the conflicts connected to them. The Cuban, Soviet and East German support was an important element, while the Popular China played a progressive role only in Tanzania, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Revolutions which resulted from long guerrillas, in its turn, had more profound effects, domestic

and/or foreign, as were the cases in Angola and Mozambique (where an archaic colonialism was completely removed), as in Zimbabwe (an outcome agreed upon, but which dismantled the defensive ring of the South African *apartheid*).

Along the same line, the Ethiopian revolution overthrew a millenary empire, allied with the United States in a strategic region. All of these revolutionary processes offered the outbreak of violent and devastating regional wars with the involvement of great powers in Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa. The African revolutions were associated, from their origins, to international networks and altered the face of decolonization, allowing for nations, such as Cuba, to play a relevant role in the continent. In the same way, they decisively contributed to the fall of dictatorships and promoted processes of democratization in Portugal, in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, in Namibia and, finally, in South Africa.

Other revolutions with socializing regimes

Among the coups which produced leftist and anti-imperialist regimes that deserve to be mentioned are, in 1969, Siad Barre's Somalia and Marien N'Gouabi in Congo; in 1972, Mathieu Kérékou in Dahomey/Benin, the military in Madagascar (led by Ratsiraka since 1975); and in 1977, in the Seychelles, where Albert René and his leftist militias took the power without spilling blood, proclaiming a socialist republic, being that all of those would define themselves as Marxist-Leninists (except the Seychelles).

In the Dahomey, one of the more extremely poor countries, in 1972 a group of young officers overthrew the corrupt and unstable neocolonial regime, adopting a nationalist line and getting closer to China, North Korea, and Libya. Having consolidated the power in 1974, he declared his regime to be Marxist-Leninist, claiming to pursue the implementation of a socialist State and society, through a People's Revolutionary Party. In the following year, the country was renamed People's Republic of Benin, with a new socialist flag. Benin soon succeeded in achieving political stability; a political and communal system base was created, and nationalized great properties and foreign companies. The oil discovery allowed a certain economic improvement for the population.

In a certain way, Congo-Brazzaville had a distinct pattern, as its urban population was already expressive and highly politicized, with unions and political movements. By 1963, the president Massemba Débat proclaimed a socialist government, although there was a dual power, between a neocolonial army and a youth militia from the revolutionary National Movement. Then,

Marien N’Gouabi, a left-wing military from the army, took power in 1969 and created the Congolese Party of Labor. In 1973, it was enacted a new Constitution, the People’s Republic of Congo was proclaimed, promoted nationalizations and adopted a red flag with the socialist symbols of labor. When a congress was being prepared to radicalize the revolution, in 1977, he was murdered. However, the coup failed and, in 1979, Denis Sassou N’Gesso took over the presidency, continuing the process.

In Madagascar, riots erupted in 1972, which led to the impeachment of the neocolonial government of Tsiranana and to the implementation of a military regime (led by General Ramanantsoa) and to the withdrawal of French troops in the following year. The instability lasted until 1975, when Lt. Cdr. Didier Ratsiraka took power and installed a regime of socialist orientation, supported by a party coalition, the National front for the Defense of the Revolution. The economic crisis, in the end of the 1980s, forced the country to abandon the socialist orientation. The electoral victory of Albert Zafy, in 1992, cemented the adoption of a market economy in the impoverished and isolated country, but in 1997, Ratsiraka would return to power elected.

In the Seychelles, in the Indian Ocean, the British allowed the independence in 1976, with the creation of the Republic of Seychelles, with Mancham, a pro-Britain, as President and Albert René as Prime Minister. A year later, when Mancham was abroad, the Seychelles People’s United Party (SPUP) took the power without bloodshed. It was then instituted the Seychelles People’s Progressive Front (SPPF) as a single party, and it proclaimed a socialist republic, which implemented advanced social policies and declared a vast area of the Indian Ocean as a Peace Zone, forbidding the passage of armed vessels. Albert René was continuously reelected, even after the multiparty system was adopted in the 1990s. He retired in 2004, still in office, and his party remains in power until today.

The Upper Volta, a former French colony, had an unstable and unpopular neocolonial regime since its independence in 1960, which had to tackle poverty, worsened by the great drought in the Sahel in the early 1980s. In 1983, Captain Thomas Sankara, leading a group of young officers came to power through a military coup d’état. The popular Sankara proclaimed a Marxist-Leninist socialist regime, which carried out a land reform and established Committees for the Defense of the Revolution all around the country, following the Cuban model. In 1984, he changed the name of the country to Burkina Faso, a composition of terms that in the local language means ‘Land of upright men’.

In the diplomatic arena, it got closer to Libya the USSR, Cuba, Benin, the People’s Republic of Congo and Ghana. The popular mobilization and

enthusiasm were intense, but in 1987, Sankara was overthrown and executed by Captain Blaise Campaoré and who, at first, gave continuity to the policies of his predecessor. Later on, in a context of economic hardships, he sought help from international financial organizations, keeping an authoritarian regime and a populist discourse (Visentini 2012; 2013).

The Cold War in Africa and its end in the World System

The independences didn't bring peace to the new regimes. On the contrary, Ethiopia had to face separatists and counterrevolutionary movements, and a Somalian invasion, all supported by Saudi Arabia and the United States. The presence of Cuban troops and Cuban cooperative, and Soviet and East German advisors and weapons were decisive for the regime to survive. A great sum of its scarce resources went to defense and security (Coker 1985).

In Southern Africa, Angola had to face UNITA and South Africa, counting on Cuban and Soviet support in a conventional war where huge battles happened. In the same way, Mozambique was a target for destabilizing actions from South Africa (which backed the insurgence from RENAMO). The support to the guerrilla fighters (and after 1980 to the government) in Zimbabwe led South Africa to a total war with the country. All the southern region of the continent was involved in the conflict (Schmidt 2013).

In the second half of the 1980s, the consequences of the African conflicts, of the New Cold War and of the restructuring of the world economy continued to aggravate the situation in the continent. The Soviet Union and the revolutionary African regimes, their allies, found themselves in an increasingly difficult situation. Therefore, when a reformist Gorbachev rose to power in 1985, he tried to reach an agreement with the USA, as a way of reducing diplomatic tensions and deter the arms race, and the economic corrosion of the USSR itself (González 1987).

However, it is necessary to notice that the biggest problem, despite the then military deadlock in the regional conflicts, was to be found in the strategic position of the USSR. If Ethiopia was unable to defeat the Eritrean guerrillas and others, those didn't have the condition to overthrow the regime either, as it had happened in Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Kampuchea (Cambodia) or Afghanistan. At first, the USA rejected the Soviet negotiation proposals. However, with the growing financial and economic difficulties of the United States itself, they eventually gave in (Halliday 1989).

In exchange for a decrease in the arms race and a resumption of

the nuclear disarmament process, the USSR began to press its regional allies to find a political settlement, while it initiated a reduction of military and economic aid to them. This inflection point, however, was found with resistance from the African allies and from Cuba. In the Horn of Africa, the Ethiopian regime got defensive but remained uncompromising. However, Moscow, as it gave in to Washington, lost more of its capacity of negotiation, up to the point that by the end of the decade, was participating only in the multilateral level of conflict resolution involving its own allies.

In South Africa, the situation was more complex. In 1988, the Cuban-Angolan troops defeated by large the regular South African and UNITA forces in Cuito Cuanavale, in the south of Angola, and the Cuban aviation attacked the dam supplying energy to the north of Namibia. It was clear to South Africa itself - extremely worn down by the war- that it was time to negotiate. The Americans proposed the *Linkage* principle: the Cuban withdrawal in exchange for the independence of Namibia, which Pretoria eventually accepted, even though it was trying to buy time (Gleijeses 2003).

In 1989, the Cubans left Angola (and the rest of Africa), in the same year as the Berlin Wall was open, thus beginning the difficult electoral process in Namibia, under the auspices of the UN. After establishing special prerogatives to the white minority and to the international capital, there were elections, which SWAPO won. In March 1990, Namibia became independent. At the same time the winds of democracy, associated with the reordering of the world, swept Africa. Single party regimes were replaced when faced with domestic and foreign pressure by liberal-democratic multiparty systems, nations in civil war such as Angola (May 1991) and Mozambique (October 1992), signed peace deals, and the other Marxist regimes were defeated, like in Ethiopia, in May 1991. South Africa itself announced in February of that same year, the end of the *Apartheid*, after the liberation of black leader Nelson Mandela in the previous year.

Thus, the end of the Cold War, even though it had brought benefits to Africa, such as ending conventional wars, it represented a certain marginalization of the continent, while globalization became the vector of the international relations. However, the end of the *Apartheid*, the independence of Namibia and the pacification of Mozambique launched the basis for future transformation. The rise of the ANC to power in South Africa, even if through an agreed process, represented a qualitative leap, which was then complemented by its return to the meridional Africa that began a movement for economic integration.

More important is to stress that the 1970s revolutions (African, Central-American and Asians) unbalanced the world order and became prolonged and violent regional conflicts. Among other things, this incited

a change in the world system and the emergence of a counterrevolution in planetary scale. The conjunction of these phenomena weighed on the internal struggle being fought in the summits of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, contributing for its collapse and the end of the Cold War.

To what extent the socialist revolutions and regimes were based on Marxism?

Marxism, and later the practice of Marxism-Leninism, represented a doctrine that offered a series of attractive solutions to great challenges in countries, which launched themselves in the path of a revolutionary rupture and in the attempt of building a post-capitalist society (Clapham 1996). Ethiopia, for instance, was an ancient empire, with feudal structures, controlled by the Orthodox Church, which had gone through a period of expansion and led it to control a quite wide territory and with great ethnic diversity.

In this sense, the first appeal that Marxism offered was, obviously, of a *revolutionary doctrine of conquest and maintenance of power*. Unlikely most colonial or semi colonial States – which made the revolution mainly through nationalist and anti-colonialist ideologies, aiming first and foremost for liberation – the revolutionaries who embraced Marxism (with greater or lesser honesty) considered it a radical and progressive alternative to the current *status quo*. This was not only due to the organization of political and/or armed movements to take power and the mobilization with popular support or even after winning power in a mixed picture of balance of forces.

Secondly, Marxism also offered to them a *development doctrine*. This preached the destruction of oligarchic power, which controlled the country until then, seen as an obstruction of the people's welfare, and it was replaced for a more efficient State, combined with a free peasantry. This development strategy searched for alternative paradigms to a type of neocolonial liberalism and to the purely moral and voluntary experience, based then in premises of Marxist development, rooted in a structure of central planning, socialist distribution and, when possible, industrialization.

A third and fourth appeal of Marxism-Leninism to the revolutionary governments was *building a nation*, were it *unified or multiethnic, and State building*. How to deal with internal divisions deriving from a low development level, from a historical legacy and from manipulation by colonizers or foreign agents? It was necessary to forge a nation with new bases. Certainly, the USSR, which combined an effective central government to respecting cultural identities from different nationalities and to a considerable level of

autonomy was an attractive model to follow. In a dialectic relation with this factor, the new governments egressed from colonialism or neocolonialism possessed limited domestic administrative apparatus that were addicted to foreign control, directly or indirectly. It was necessary to organize an apparatus capable of handling an enormous transformation and looming conflicts, a new type of State. Therefore, Marxism-Leninism was also a *state control ideology*.

Finally, the fifth appeal of Marxism-Leninism to a revolutionary government was its use as *source of international support* in a context of Cold War. The USSR, China and the socialist community in general represented, therefore, the only consistent source of military supplies, legitimacy, political and economic support. The need to acquire foreign aid was a necessary condition for many of the Marxist regimes to survive. However, Soviet aid, besides creating certain interdependency, was usually restricted to the military area, leaving a lot to be desired in the economic and financial aspect.

Conclusion

The case of African revolutions is paradigmatic, not only from the practical point of view, but also from the theoretical one. A periphery with no strategic value lived through a series of processes of revolutionary change, which eventually involved even the superpowers. As much as this phenomenon had a great cost to Africans, with deaths and destruction, it certainly repositioned the continent in the World System. If this cycle of revolution ended with the extinction of the Soviet bloc, it does not mean new revolutions will not happen or that socialism will disappear as a political regime. It is necessary merely a look to the Long-Term History, to the tensions accumulating in present days and to the attempts of avoiding even the slightest political change in any nation.

Therefore, what for some theoretical and political strains represented a disturbance of the not only 'current' but also 'natural' order, to other meant a qualitative leap and a renovation. Shock waves were unleashed, proving that both the cause and effect of these revolutions were associated with the international relations. The fact the academy avoids addressing this matter and entering into these themes shows that knowledge has an instrumental political dimension. Little have we done to understand the processes of *change* in the structure of world power, because even the most solid of orders can melt into air.

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the impact of revolutions in the International Relations and the World System as constitutive and renewed elements. Criticizes the stance of theories that consider it a domestic phenomenon that causes a systemic disturbance, focusing in the case of the African Revolutions in the 1970s. Explores the international dimension they possess, considering their impact regarding the end of the Cold War, even though it happened in the periphery of the world.

KEYWORDS

Revolutions and International Relations; African Revolutions; Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia.

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