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CHANGING THE GUARD FROM THE O.A.U. TO THE A.U.: FIFTY YEARS OF CHANGE

By

Ali A. Mazrui

Director, Institute of Global Cultural Studies and Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities Binghamton University State University of New York at Binghamton, New York, U.S.A.

Albert Luthuli Professor-at-Large University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria

Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large Emeritus and Senior Scholar in Africana Studies Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, U.S.A.

Senior Fellow
Prince Alwaleed Bin-Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

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After World War I the League of Nations came into being in 1919. it was succeeded in 1945 by the United Nations Organization after World War II.

In 1960 more than fifteen African countries became members of the United Nations. Three years later all of them, plus other newly independent African countries, along with the older African states, met in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia to form the Organization of African Unity (the O.A.U.).

But just as the League of nations gave way to the United Nations after a quarter of a century, the Organization of African Unity gave way to a new African Union after nearly forty years. The O.A.U. gave way to the A.U. at a summit meeting of African Heads of State in Durban, South Africa, in 2002.

What the Organization of African Unity (the O.A.U.) helped Africa to accomplish and the African Union (A.U.) now has to build upon were the following:

I.

O.A.U.

Maintain the inviolability of the colonial boundaries of African states in the conviction that redrawing them would cause more problems than it would solve.

- O.A.U. on the side of the Nigeria rather than Biafra.
- O.A.U. on the side of the Sudan rather than Anyanya.
- O.A.U. on the side of Ethiopia rather than the separation of Eritrea or the Ogadem.

A.U.

While colonial borders must not be challenged at the sub-state level, they may be changed at the supra-state level.

Regional integration would be enlargement of political scale:

- (a) Continental Common Market;
- (b) Continental Economic Union:

- (c) Continental Single Currency and Monetary Union;
- (d) Continental Parliament and Cost of Human Rights;
- (e) Continental Banking System.

O.A.U.

Commitment to decolonization, the struggle against apartheid and the crusade against white minority governments.

The O.A.U.'s basic platform was of Africa's <u>disengagement</u> from its former colonial masters.

A.U.

The A.U. has virtually adopted NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development) as its inaugural agenda. This is a strategy of Africa's economic <u>reengagement</u> with its former colonial powers – in contrast to the O.A.U strategy of Africa's political disengagement from its former colonial powers.

O.A.U.

The O.A.U. was an organization to moderate tensions between African states – rather than be involved in tensions within African states. On tensions within African states, the O.A.U. was almost inevitably on the side of the government of the day.

In its final decade of existence the O.A.U. was more ready to engage in helping to mediate among domestic contenders, but Salim Ahmed Salim as Secretary-General could at best be a moral influence in domestic tensions rather than a peace-enforcer.

A.U.

Considering having an African Security Council with readiness to be more involved in solving African conflicts, both intra-state and inter-state. A.U.'s South Africa led peacekeepers in Burundi.

Some of us have presumed to recommend that on the issue of security the African Union should have a vanguard peace-making group of states, the equivalent of the U.N. Security Council's Permanent Members:

South Africa to represent Southern Africa Nigeria to represent West Africa Egypt to represent North Africa Ethiopia to represent Eastern Africa?? Or should it be a smaller state like Uganda or Kenya? Central Africa: if Democratic Republic of Congo survives, this should be the permanent member on the African Union's Security Council

O.A.U.

The O.A.U. was an almost exclusively <u>political</u> organization – leaving the bulk of problems of economic development in Africa to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The O.A.U. had neither the relevant expertise nor the resources to be engaged in issues and strategies of Africa's economic development.

A.U.

The A.U. has a more interdisciplinary vision of Africa's future: political integration, economic integration, monetary union, parliamentary aspirations, shared judicial ambitions.

Muammar Qaddafy's language policy for Africa – Euro-imperial, indigenous and Arabic plus the most relevant African language of each country. Should the A.U. be a vanguard of cultural integration?

O.A.U.

Born out of the dreams of a West African leader [Kwame Nkrumah] and the pragmatic wisdom of an Eastern African monarch [Emperor Haile Selassie]. Nkrumah had helped to sustain the enthusiasm for African unity. Haile Selassie provided the practical headquarters for institutionalized Pan Africanism.

A.U.

Born out of a possible rivalry between a South African leader [Thabo Mbeki] and a North African leader [Muammar Qaddafy]. Nelson Mandela had regarded Qaddafy as one of the great allies in the struggle against apartheid. Refused to criticize Qaddafy in a major town meeting TV with Ted Koppel. Qaddafy as ally of Mandela and rival of Mbeki. Both have ideas about the O.A.U. as a future mechanism of cultural integration.

Mbeki has his mission of the African Renaissance: skill revolution, gender revolution and value revolution.

Qaddafy's vision of a multilingual Africa: French, Arabic, English, and the most relevant indigenous language of each country.

"A man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for."

The curse of the partition of Africa relegated the continent to the bottom of the global heap, with the Western world at the top. Africa has the largest percentage of poor people, the largest number of low income countries, the least developed economies, the lowest life expectancy, the most fragile political systems, and is the most vulnerable continent to HIV and AIDS (whatever relationship there might be between HIV and the collapse of immunity systems in Africa). Berlin continues to cast its ominous shadow on a fragmented population.

The Western world, on the other hand, is triumphant at the top of the global caste system. What is more, the Western world after Bismarck created the international caste system which reduced Africans to the "Untouchables" or Harijans of global injustice.

Borders can be hierarchical and not just horizontal.

Africa since its partition has had mineral wealth which is exploited for the benefit of others, fertile land which is undercultivated, rich cultures which are being destroyed, and brain-power which is being "drained" to other parts of the world.

At the centre of this calamity is the role of the West in creating an international system which reduced proud Africans to the lowest caste of the twentieth century. How will postcolonial Africans get out of this condition in the twenty-first century?

In Search of Pan-African Solutions

Conflict prevention requires greater and greater sophistication in diagnosing conflict-prone situations. Unfortunately Africa is full of contradictions—conflict generated by too much government versus conflict generated by too little; conflict generated by too many ethnic groups, as distinct from conflict ignited by too few ethnic

groups. It is dark outside. Africa is waiting for her real dawn. It is to be hoped that the wait is not too long.

What is the solution in situations of acute state-failure or political collapse? The state before total collapse may be the equivalent of a political refugee—desperate, bewildered, sometimes destructive, but fundamentally moaning to be rescued from a nightmare which may in part be of its own making. Are post-Berlin national borders to remain sacrosanct?

- 1. One option is <u>unilateral intervention by a single neighbouring power</u> in order to restore order. There is the precedent of Tanzania's invasion of Uganda in 1979, with troops marching all the way to Kampala. Tanzania then put Uganda virtually under military occupation for a brief period. The Ugandan state was temporarily a refugee camp. Tanzania's intervention was very similar to Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia to overthrow Pol Pot—except that the Vietnamese stayed on in Cambodia much longer. The question arises whether Yoweri Museveni's Uganda should have intervened more directly in Rwanda in April 1994 the way Julius Nyerere's Tanzania intervened in Uganda fifteen years earlier. Have Uganda and Rwanda also intervened in Zaire/Congo?
- 2. Another scenario of cross-border intervention is that <u>by a single power but with the blessing of a Pan-African regional organization</u>. For a while there was no real African precedent but there was an Arab one—Syria's intervention in the Lebanese civil war with the blessing of the League of Arab States. ii De facto, the

Lebanese state was a refugee camp with Syria as a sentry. Later Nigeria's intervention in Sierra Leone and Liberia had wider ECOWAS blessing.

- 3. A third scenario of cross-border intervention is inter-African colonization and annexation. In a sense this is a kind of Pan-African self-colonization. One precedent is Tanganyika's annexation of Zanzibar in 1964, partly under pressure from Lyndon B. Johnson of the USA and Sir Alec Douglas-Home of Great Britain. The West wanted to avert the danger of a Marxist Cuba on the clove island off the East African coast. Nyerere was persuaded that an unstable or subversive Zanzibar would be a threat to the mainland. He got the dictator of Zanzibar at the time, Abeid Karume, to agree to a treaty of union—very much like the British used to convince African chiefs to "accept" treaties by which they ceased to be sovereign. Nobody held a referendum in Zanzibar to check if the people in the country wanted to cease being a separate independent nation. But the annexation of Zanzibar was the most daring case of what became, de facto, Pax Tanzaniana. Ironically, Tanganyika had once been Bismarck's proudest African possession.
- 4. The fourth cross-border scenario as a solution to political collapse is Pan-African regional integration. This is when the state as a political refugee is integrated with its host country. In the longer run, one solution to Rwanda and Burundi may well be a federation with Tanzania so that Hutus and Tutsis stop having *de facto* ethnic armies of their own, but have those soldiers retrained as part of the federal army of

the United Republic of Tanzania. German colonialism before World War I had leaned towards treating Tanganyika and Rwanda-Urundi as one single area of jurisdiction. All three countries had once been Bismarck's legacy to German imperialism.

Union with Tanzania for Rwanda and Burundi would, in the short run, be safer than union with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire, and hereafter DR Congo) in spite of the shared post-World War I Belgian connection with DR Congo and the link with the French language. Tanzania is a less vulnerable society than DR Congo, and a safer haven for Hutus and Tutsis. It is indeed significant that, given a choice, Hutus and Tutsis on the run are more likely to flee to Tanzania than to DR Congo in spite of ethnic ties across the border with DR Congo. Moreover, Hutus and Tutsis are getting partially Swahilized and should be able to get on well with "fellow" Tanzanian citizens. As citizens they would be assimilated in due course; their former refugee state would be integrated. It would be a remarkable way of reversing the Bismarckian partition.

5. A fifth multi-boundary scenario for conflict-resolution is the establishment of a

Pan-African Security Council, complete with permanent members in the style of the

United Nations Security Council. The current Council of the African Union needs

re-conceptualization. The permanent members could be Egypt or Libya from North

Africa, Nigeria from West Africa, Ethiopia or Uganda from eastern Africa, and the

Republic of South Africa from Southern Africa. There should be some non-

permanent members, ranging from three to five. The principle of permanent members would be reviewed every 30 years. For example, in another thirty years it may be necessary to add DR Congo as a permanent member to represent Central Africa. In times of crisis should the African Security Council meet at the level of African heads of state? Should each permanent member have a veto or not? These issues would also have to be addressed.

- 6. The sixth trans-boundary scenario of conflict-resolution in times of political collapse is the establishment of a Pan-African Emergency force—a fire brigade to put out fires from one collapsed state or civil war to another, and teach Africans the art of a Pax Africana. Should this Pan-African Emergency force be independently recruited and trained in a specialized manner? Or should it be drawn from units of the armed forces of member states? And how are the training, maintenance and deployment of the Emergency Force to be paid for? How can Western friends of Africa like the US and the European Union help? Certainly the successes and failures of ECOMOG in Liberia should be studied carefully in preparation for this new venture. There are times when renegade states are basically refugee states. Brutal villains in power are also pathetic casualties of history. The emergency force should be trained to use minimum violence. The US Administration has joined the search for answers.
- Another trans-boundary proposal is a <u>High Commissioner For Refugees and</u>
 Displaced Africans under the African Union. Since Africa has become one of the

biggest concentrations of displaced persons in the world, it is increasingly imperative that Africans should assume responsibility for at least some of the functions of refugee relief. A continent of one tenth of the world's population is rapidly becoming a region of a third of the displaced people of the world. What is demanded is not merely Africa's participation in refugee-relief; it is Africa's leadership which is needed. An A.U. High Commissioner for Refugees and Displaced Africans would be a start, equipped with the necessary resources to coordinate with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

8. The eighth cross-border scenario of conflict management would consist of ad hoc solutions from crisis to crisis—more in the tradition of mediation and search for solutions than in the tradition of the use of force. Such ad hoc efforts are definitely much better than nothing, and could constitute a major part of Africa's search for Pax Africana—an African peace established and maintained by Africans themselves.

In this more modest tradition of intervention is the African Union's revised version of the O.A.U.'s <u>Mechanism on Conflict Prevention</u>, <u>Management and Resolution</u>, which for the first time gives the continental inter-governmental organization a more active role in internal civil conflicts. Modest as the mechanism is, it signifies a qualitative shift in the orientation of African heads of state. All these Pan African strategies would be partial attempts to reverse the post-Berlin partition of Africa. The struggle continues.

The United Nations and Fragmented Cultures

But behind all the scenarios and all the search for solutions, behind the pain and the anguish, is the paramount question—are we facing birth-pangs or death-pangs in the present crisis of boundaries of identity? Are we witnessing the real bloody forces of decolonization—as the colonial structures within arbitrary borders are decaying or collapsing? Is the post-Berlin colonial slate being washed clean with the blood of victims, villains and martyrs? Are the refugees victims of a dying order, or are they traumatized witnesses to an epoch- making rebirth? Civilizational, national, ethnic, religious, ideological and other boundaries have been taking their toll.

Is this blood from the womb of history—giving painful birth to a new order? And where does the rest of the world fit in? Africa overlaps with the Muslim world, and both are affected by the United Nations.

But we cannot talk about war and peace under the umbrella of the United Nations without discussing the United Nations' role in matters affecting Africa. The conclusion which has already been draw from experience is that the universalism of states ostensibly achieved by the United Nations is still a creature of the Western World—and the West still views the world partly through the tripartite lenses of medieval Islam duly adapted (by the West).

What to medieval Muslim jurists was Dar el Islam (Abode of Islam) has now become *Dar el Gharb*, the Abode of the West. Westerners are the pre-eminent pioneers. Until the 1990s the Abode of War to Westerners were the lands of communism. Has the Abode of War now become the Muslim world in all its complexity? Indirect warfare by

the West included sanctions against Iraq before the American invasion of 2003 which had killed hundreds of thousands of children prematurely. Sanctions against Libya also caused great suffering.

To some medieval Islamists there was Abode of <u>Ahd</u> and/or <u>Sulh</u>—the home of contractual co-existence in exchange for tribute. Tribute is what the Western world has been receiving from most of the Third world in profits, interest on the debt burden, and the returns on other forms of exploitation. And the United Nations has sometimes unwittingly provided an umbrella for this tripartite division of the world.

But when all is said and done, are there circumstances when the United Nations can be considered an <u>ally</u> of Africa and the Muslim world?

<u>First</u>, the UN is an ally in the <u>humanitarian role</u> of the world body and its agencies—such as crises of refugees or international responses to famine, draught and other catastrophes. In such roles it does not matter whether the immediate beneficiaries are Muslims, as in Somalia and Bangladesh, or non-Muslims, as in Rwanda. The UN is supportive of all such efforts.

Second, the United Nations is an ally when it provides an umbrella for mediation for some of the quarrels between Muslims or between Africans—as in the effort to resolve the destiny of Western Sahara. The UN in such instances helps Africa and the Ummah more directly. The UN helped in the quest for peace between Iran and Iraq in their conflict in the 1980s. The UN has helped Mozambique build peace more recently.

Third, the United Nations is an ally to Muslims when the world body provides peacekeeping troops and peacekeeping auspices in conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims within Africa or outside. Over the years United Nations troops have often been

involved in the often thankless task of trying to keep the peace between the Arabs and the Israelis especially prior to the Oslo peace process. Egypt before its peace treaty with Israel needed UN troops at times. The UN's long-drawn role in Cyprus is another example of attempted mediation between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Fourth, the United Nations is allied to Muslims when the Western world has been divided! Africa and the Muslim world have sometimes had the UN move decisively as an ally in such a situation—as during the Suez war of 1956 when, in spite of the veto by Britain

and France in the Security Council, the mood of the world body was opposed to the invasion of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel. The USA and USSR sometimes voted on the same side against Britain, France and Israel.

When the Western world was divided, the United Nations was also able to play a major decolonizing role. This is the fifth positive role of the UN. The United States was historically opposed to some of the older varieties of European imperialism. By the second half of the twentieth century the United States was often on the same side as the Soviet Union among the critics of old-style European colonialism.

Under these conditions it was indeed easier for the United Nations to become increasingly one of the great arenas for the anti-colonial struggle waged by the peoples of Asia, Africa and the scattered islands of the seas. The anti-colonial role of the United Nations encompassed not only the Trusteeship Council but also the General Assembly, especially from the late 1950s onwards. This anti-colonial role was often a great service to Africa and the Muslim world.

Sixth, the United Nations can be an ally of the Muslim world when it takes seriously the idea of prosecuting war criminals and those who have committed crimes against humanity. Especially relevant for the Muslim world would be the prosecution of war criminals in Bosnia and some Serbs in Serbia and many Serbs in Bosnia who have committed crimes against humanity as in the current proceedings at the Hague involving war crimes committed in Bosnia in the 1990s. The UN Tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania, genocide in Rwanda and ethnic cleansing in Darfur are also relevant. The United Nations has done well to appoint the relevant tribunal for these tasks, but has fallen far short of providing the resources for this complicated task.

Seventh, the United Nations has been an ally when Africa and the Muslim world were united. It has at times been possible to pass through the General Assembly highly contentious points of principle. The state of Israel is based on an ideology which says that a Russian who claims to be descended from Jews, and whose family has had no connection with the Middle East for the last two thousand years, has more right to go and settle in Israel than a Palestinian who ran away from Israel during the 1948 war. Was such discrimination racist? When Africans and Muslims were united in 1975, they managed to persuade the UN General Assembly to pass a resolution affirming that Zionism was a form of racism. But when Africans and Muslims were divided in 1991, that resolution was repealed by an overwhelming majority.

When Africans and Muslims were united they could persuade the General
Assembly not only to defy the United States but move the Assembly itself out of New
York in further defiance. Thus when in 1988 the United States refused to grant a visa to
Yasser Arafat, thereby preventing him from coming to New York to address the UN

General Assembly on his recent declaration of an independent Palestinian state, the General Assembly denounced Washington's action as a violation of the host country's legal obligations under the 1947 Headquarters Agreement. The General Assembly then shifted this December 13–15 session to Geneva, Switzerland, to make it possible to listen to Chairman Arafat. It was the first and only such move in the history of the United Nations. The unity of the African and Muslim members of the UN helped to persuade others to join their ranks.^{vi}

Finally, is the UN an ally or an adversary of either African or Islamic values when the UN promotes such mega-conferences as the one in Beijing, China, in 1995 on the issue of women; the one in Copenhagen on the issues of poverty and development in 1994 and the one in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994 on the issue of population? Africans and Muslims themselves are divided as to whether these UN mega-conferences lead on to the erosion of their values or help Islamic and African values find a new historic setting in the 20th and 21st centuries. For example, are African and Muslim women being helped by new global standards of gender equity which are promoted at these conferences?

These mega-conferences have of course been global and have been part of the United Nations' universalism of nation-states. Some tension has at times been created with Islam's universalism of faith. But it is a tension which can itself be creative; it is a dialectic which can have a human face. At the very minimum, Africa, Islam and the UN have one paramount interest in common—to ensure that <u>Dar el Harb</u>, the Abode of War, shrinks further and further into the oblivion of history, and Planet Earth becomes a House of Peace at long last.

But we have to save the United Nations from being an extension of the State

Department in Washington, DC or being the diplomatic face of the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization. We must save the United Nations from being manipulated by the

Permanent Members of the Security Council, for reasons which have little to do with

either world peace or the welfare of humankind.

We must save the United Nations with all its imperfections. And if the late

Muammar Qaddafy was correct about the impending end of the nation-state, the United

Nations organization will one day become the United <u>Peoples</u> organization, based on new

principles of representation. Peace and the quest for conflict-resolution will remain

paramount imperatives.

CONCLUSION: From Mandela's Legacy to Obama's Vision

More than a century ago a conference opened in Berlin in 1884 to inaugurate the era of competitive white imperialism in Africa. An election occurred in South Africa in 1994 to end the era of white minority rule on the continent. One hundred and ten years had elapsed since Otto von Bismarck had launched the European scramble for Africa. What is the balance sheet of this chapter of African history—from Bismarck playing host to the Berlin conference to Mandela's election as President of post-apartheid South Africa?

There are at least two standards of evaluation. One is the standard of depth of impact of European colonization of Africa. How fundamental are the changes which were triggered across the decades by Europe's penetration of African societies? Were these one hundred and ten years the equivalent of a mere episode in millennia of Africa's

experience? This is the <u>episodic</u> paradigm. Or did the era of European colonization of Africa inaugurate the most far reaching changes in Africa's recorded history? This is the <u>epic</u> paradigm.

The other standard of measuring the one hundred and ten years is on the basis of cost-benefit. What repercussions of European colonialism were beneficial for Africa and which ones were detrimental to African interests?

Let us first return to the standard of depth or shallowness of Europe's impact on Africa before evaluating whether the impact was helpful or harmful. There are in fact those two schools of measuring Europe's impact. We have referred to the episodic interpretation, but the epic school would argue that the years 1884 to 1994 were not an ordinary century in Africa's experience. Those years which followed 1884–1885 unleashed unprecedented and wide-ranging changes in Africa—changes of immense implications for the peoples in the continent. Never before Bismarck had any continent been subjected to such fundamental political, economic, cultural and psychological influences as those transmitted by the years 1884 to 1994.

In this overview of the extended century since Bismarck, we have paid special attention to what went wrong in Africa in the aftermath of the European scramble for the continent. We have indeed implied that the colonial changes were both negative and deep. However, on the issues of security and governance we have argued that some of the adverse repercussions of European penetration can indeed be reversed or corrected.

The continent which Bismarck's conference partitioned and racialized has eventually produced historical figures comparable to Bismarck in stature, but more positive in their impact on the human condition. One such figure is Nelson Mandela who

has contributed to the deracialization of the African continent. The other is Barack Obama, who is redefining the racial history of the world. SWAPO was in-between.

But in what ways have Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama been cast by history to help not only reverse the partition of the African continent but also heal the division of the Black world? Nelson Mandela is the most distinguished of the citizens of the African continent. Barack Obama has become the most elevated of the citizens of the African Diaspora. While in prison Mandela united the Black world through his martyrdom. While campaigning Obama united the Black world through his ambition. Mandela became globally famous because of decades of heroic suffering. Obama became globally famous by the rapidity of political triumphs. Mandela made history by refusing to be vanquished and by helping South Africa democratize without racism.

Obama made history by insisting on being victorious. Mandela was part of the vanguard of the struggle against racism in Africa. Obama was the ultimate beneficiary of the civil rights movement in the United States.

For twenty-seven years while he was in detention Mandela was a role model for the Black world as a whole because he stuck to his principles in the face of adversity.

Nelson Mandela has been a role model to Barack Obama, as well as to many others.

There are signs that, like Mandela, Barack Obama has learnt to stick to his principles in the face of massive adversity.

In the context of global Africa as a whole the torch has indeed been passed from an African warrior in his nineties to a Black campaigner in his forties, from a former President in Africa to a new President in America, from an old voice of unity still reverberating from Southern Africa to a younger voice of redemption echoing in the Diaspora.

Mandela is one of the architects of a post-racism age. Obama is helping to foster a post-racial condition. A world without racism is not necessarily a world without race consciousness. Mandela is an abolitionist to end racism as prejudice; Obama seeks to realize a world without race-consciousness as a demographic category.

These are major steps towards reversing the global repercussions of the Berlin conference of 1884–1885. But other ghosts of Bismarck's conference will continue to haunt Africa for a few more generations to come. The struggle against the legacy of Berlin continues.

NOTES

- The new government included both Hutu and Tutsis; see the *New York Times* (July 20, 1994),
 For articles on the Rwanda crisis, see *Africa Today*, Volume 45, No. 1 (January 1998), pp. 3–61.
- 2. A guide to the parties who were involved and rationales may be found in Fracois Misser, "Who Helped Kabila?", *New African* No. 354 (July/August 1997), pp. 9–10.
- 3. For one report on Kabila's victory, see *The New York Times* (May 18, 1997), p. 1.
- 4. From having very bright prospects at independence, Uganda had lost its shine over the intervening decades due to ethnic and political rivalries and tyrannical governments; consult Thomas P. Ofcasky, *Uganda: Tarnished Pearl of Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 59-61.
- 5. See Kenneth L. Cain, "Meanwhile in Africa," *SAIS Review* 20, 1 (Winter/Spring 2000), pp. 153–176.
- 6. An account of the Tanzanian intervention in Uganda may be found in Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin* (Westport, CT: L. Hill, 1982).