

Origins of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS) as a pro-Africa voice among American Scholars

David Wiley (Michigan State University)

The major U.S. scholarly caucuses for “Third World” regions emerged on the national stage in the 1960s and 1970s at the height of the Cold War. Under the cover of a liberal ideology of “democracy and freedom,” the hidden, and sometimes not so disguised, hand of U.S. and other Western intelligence agencies eventually was comprehended by the scholarly community. The result was significant movements to mobilize scholarly opinion and action with the work of area specialists to oppose much of U.S. Cold War foreign policy toward Latin and Central America, Asia, the Middle East, and, beginning in 1977, Africa.

Founded in 1977-78, the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS) was the fourth and last of the pro-Third World movements of scholars specific to world regions. Born in the scholarly and broader progressive social movements of the U.S. of the 1960s and 1970s ACAS sought to end to U.S. support for apartheid and minority rule in Southern Africa and then for a more pro-Africa U.S. foreign policy more broadly. ACAS represented the scholarly side of the most successful people's movement in the U.S. that achieved a change in the foreign policy of a U.S. President, marked in 1986 by the passage over the Reagan veto of the *Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986* signalling the end of U.S. support of white South Africa.

Founded in 1977, the ACAS is a group of scholars and students of Africa dedicated to formulating alternative analyses of U.S. government policy toward Africa. ACAS seeks to develop communication and action networks between the peoples and scholars in Africa and the United States

and to mobilize support in the United States on critical, current issues related to Africa.¹

Stirred by the leak in 1976 of the National Security Memorandum (NSSM) #39 of 1969, ACAS organized to support extant African activist organizations (especially the American Committee on Africa, Africa Fund, Washington Office on Africa, and Africa News) and to mobilize scholars, students, and the public to oppose the U.S. support of apartheid and racist governments in Africa.²

NACLA, CCAS, and MERIP

In the post-WW II era, the U.S. left Africa largely to the rule and interests of the Western European colonial powers, especially as NATO allies, while stronger U.S. commercial and military interests were being pursued more avidly in the “U.S. sphere of influence” in Central and South America.

North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA)

In 1946, the U.S. Army School of the Americas opened in Panama as a hemisphere-wide military academy to “control internal subversion” as well as the 1957 Office of Public Safety. That doctrine of fending off communist organization and presence in Latin America was pursued in Costa Rica in 1948, Guatemala in the 1950s, Cuba in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as providing support for the dictatorships in Brazil, Argentina, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Chile, and Central America, often with support or guidance from the CIA and the Green Berets. Perhaps the most open symbol of that U.S. policy was in the support of the dictatorship of the Somosas in Nicaragua. In that

¹ See the current website <http://concernedafricascholars.org>

² El-Khawas, Mohamed A. and Barry Cohen, eds. *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa: National Security Study Memorandum 39 (Secret)*, Westport, Conn., Lawrence Hill & Company, 1976; and Lake, Anthony, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option: American policy toward Southern Rhodesia* by New York, Columbia University Press, 1976.

context in 1967, the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) was organized by “a contemporary group of civil rights, antiwar and labor activists who came together to challenge elite conceptions of the ‘national interest’ as fundamentally opposed to the real interests of the majority of the American people.” NACLA activists sought “...a world in which the nations and peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean are free from oppression and injustice, and enjoy a relationship with the United States based on mutual respect, free from economic and political subordination.” Like so many of these pro-Third World scholarly movements, in a period of a great vacuum in media coverage of the region, the initial focus was on “information” through a newsletter that viewed policy and events “through a Latin American lens.”³

“...our mission is to provide information and analysis on the region, and on its complex and changing relationship with the United States, as tools for education and advocacy - to foster knowledge beyond borders.”⁴

NACLA has flourished in the intervening years with a bi-monthly magazine, an active website, and a continuing flow of analysis and campaigns for justice in Latin and Central America. Currently, these include a focus in Latin America on “Guns: The Small Arms Trade in the Americas,” HIV/AIDS, “Immigrants and the Homeland Security State,” and a new campaign on “Not Just Change, But Justice: Taking on Policy in the Obama Era,” seeking specific foreign policy changes beginning with the taking on the economic blockade and political isolation of Cuba, the U.S.-sponsored drug war, border security, and the continued functioning of the re-named School of the Americas at Ft. Benning in Georgia.

The Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS)

CCAS was first organized in 1967 and formalized with an annual meeting in 1969 in response to the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia. With headquarters first at University of California-Berkeley, CCAS had affiliated chapters in 16 universities and four outside the U.S. with participation by Asianist scholars especially in the large Title VI National Resource Centers for East, South, and Southeast Asian Studies. The CCAS quickly focused on identifying U.S. AID and State Department initiatives on campuses in support of the Vietnam war as well as publications such as the substantial and peer-reviewed *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* and monographs and reports such as *The Indochina Story* (1970) and *China! Inside the People's Republic* (1972). Some were activist publications such as the *Indochina War Information Packet*, prepared by CCAS Committee at Cornell University in 1970.

As Mark Selden, professor of Asian Studies at SUNY Binghamton noted,

“For Asianists of my generation, the Vietnam War was the decisive moment defining the context of Asian scholarship and, for some, of American politics, at least until 9 /11 and the Iraq War. Questioning the relationship between thought and action led me to interrogate dominant state ideologies as reflected in scholarship. It also led me to aspire to find ways to stop illegitimate violence and contribute to social justice.”⁵

The presence of the Vietnam conflict daily on the evening news and the pressure on campus and on college students of the draft and draft resistance across the country increased the urgency for scholarly response in 1967. As with ACAS, the first arena for action of CCAS was the annual meeting of the regional scholarly association in 1968 (Ibid., p. 251). In 2009, the major presence of

³ <http://nacla.org/history>, Accessed 2/1/2009

⁴ <http://nacla.org/history>, Accessed 2/2/2009

⁵ Tani E. Barlow, “Responsibility and Politics: An Interview with Mark Selden,” *Positions* 12:1, 2004, Duke University Press, p 249.

the CCAS is through the Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars.

Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)

The third of the pro-Third World scholarly organizations was the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), which produced copious publications in its *MERIP Reports* serial. Begun in 1971 by anti-Vietnam activists, the project, like NACLA, initially sought to provide information and critical analysis on the Middle East that would be picked up by the existing media.⁶ Substantively, MERIP sought “to connect U.S. policy of Southeast Asia with U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.” (Ibid.) MERIP has remained highly critical of those U.S. foreign policies.

“US foreign policy exacerbates the disastrous state of affairs in the contemporary Middle East. Although the political contours of the world have changed radically since the collapse of the USSR and the Gulf War of 1991, US goals in the region have remained remarkable consistent: to control the flow of oil, to prevent the growth of Arab nationalist and leftist movements and to protect Israel.”⁷

Over the years 1971-85, *MERIP Reports* (later *MERIP Middle East Report 1986-88*, then *Middle East Report 1988-*) gained authority, though establishment representatives saw it as too pro-Palestine. MERIP remained committed “to provide the most considered and accurate information and analysis on the Middle East and US policy there...”⁸ By 1981, it had published 100 issues over 10 years and became widely used and acclaimed in the Middle East where, West Bank Palestinians, for

⁶ <http://www.merip.org/misc/about.html>, Accessed 2/2/2009

⁷ *Middle East Report*.

<http://web.archive.org/web/19981206091952/http://www.merip.org/>, Accessed 2/2/2009.

⁸ Johnson, Peter and Joe Stork, *MERIP Reports*, No. 100/101, Special Anniversary Issue (Oct. - Dec., 1981), p 55, Published by: Middle East Research and Information Project, Accessed 2.2.2009, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3012380>

instance, said it was their only reliable source of information on Iran.

In 2009, MERIP maintains a very active program with a lively website of *MERIP Reports Online*, an program of placing op-eds in many U.S. newspapers, and the Middle East Report, and a print quarterly with recent topics of Empire's Eastern Reach (2008), Displaced (2007), The War Economy of Iraq (2007), and The Shi'a in the Arab World (2007).

The Africa-focused Precursors of ACAS

The context for the formation of ACAS was quite different from its three predecessors with the development in the 1950s to 1970s of other organizations mobilizing support and publishing on African justice and democracy issues. By 1953, only five years after formal apartheid was established, George Houser⁹ and other civil rights activists from the Congress of Racial Equality and Fellowship of Reconciliation had formed the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) in New York among a collection of blacks and whites who sought to support the Defiance Campaign in South Africa. They were able to build on the earlier mobilization of the International Committee on African Affairs (formed in 1937 and later renamed the Council on African Affairs). In the late 1950s, ACOA brought a number of young African leaders, e.g. Kenneth Kaunda from Zambia, to the United Nations and U.S. in preparation for African independence in the 1960s. ACOA also built cooperation with the U.N. Unit on Apartheid and with the Southern African liberation movements. In the 1960s-1980s, ACOA, and the Africa Fund after 1966, became the main organizing agency for the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S., providing focus on apartheid policies in South Africa and Namibia, on Rhodesia, and on the Portuguese territories of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Houser

During the 1970s, the Washington Office on Africa (WOA) and the WOA Education Fund (later changed to the Africa Policy Information Center (APIC in the mid-1990s) were founded in Washington, DC to lobby Congress on African issues and to produce research, analysis, and education materials on the U.S. role in Africa and on a variety of African issues, including global and African economic policy, HIV/AIDS and treatment, democracy and elections in various countries, trade wars, oil, human rights, and peacekeeping.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the University Christian Movement's magazine in New York, *Southern Africa*, provided news and organizing bulletins for the growing anti-apartheid movement across the U.S. News about Africa and struggles for independence on the continent increasingly were provided by *Africa News*, initiated in 1972 in Durham, NC and now incorporated into allAfrica.com. (By the late 1990s, allAfrica.com was posting more than 1,000 stories daily from 130 African news organizations with an online archive of more than 900,000 articles.) These and other African liberation initiatives were supported by various civil rights and global justice agencies from the Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, Disciples, Lutheran, and Methodist churches and the National and World Councils of Churches. Many of the founders of these initiatives came from overseas experience in Africa supported by these churches and from the Peace Corps. The latter were organized in the Committee of Return Volunteers, which was quite active in protesting the Vietnam War in 1967 and 1970s.

Also in the 1960s and 1970s, a number of anti-apartheid committees and organizations were being founded across the country in Madison, East Lansing, Ann Arbor, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Amherst, Boston, Princeton, Chapel Hill, as well as in churches, unions, and state and local governments. A number of the founders of ACAS had organized or participated in these local Southern Africa-focused organizations and movements for sanctions and divestiture. These

committees actively drew on the research and publications of ACOA, WOA, and the International Defense and Aid Fund (IDAFSA) based in London.

The combination of these African activist national news and information sources created a very different context for the formation of ACAS in the late 1970s because a broad national source of news on Africa and on activism on U.S. Africa policy was not needed so urgently as for Latin America and the Middle East. What was needed was critical content and analysis on the issues from legitimate scholars, which ACAS sought to provide.

Finally, a number of the Africanists who formed ACAS were participating in a marked change in the theories of area studies. Rather than ethnographic studies that were confined to a particular language or ethnic group, beginning in the late 1960s, younger scholars brought a new conceptualization of Africa as part of the "political economy of the world system." Such a perspective naturally looked at the global parameters of economic systems and world politics as the context for understanding Africa, for which U.S. and other Western foreign policies were a major force.

ACAS and U.S. Policy in the 1970s

In addition to these national and local African activist and anti-apartheid organizations of the 1960s and 1970s, three other developments shaped the beginnings of ACAS in 1977-78: 1) the mounting protest and violent armed struggle in Southern Africa, 2) the racial cleavages in the U.S. African studies community which made collaboration among scholars across racial lines difficult, and 3) the mounting role of U.S. security agencies in U.S. foreign policy toward Africa.

First, the Western support for the Southern African regimes was juxtaposed with the mounting uprisings in South Africa, the apartheid state's repression, and the armed struggle in Southern Rhodesia, Namibia, South Africa, and Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique. In 1976 a non-

violent march by 15,000 students in Soweto, resulted in days of rioting. The apartheid police opened fire on the crowd and killed 566 children, an event resounding around the world. Then in 1977 anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko was killed in police custody. With the mounting news of turbulence across the region and with the growing armed struggle via the military wings of ANC, SWAPO, ZANU, and ZAPU, the possibility of major race conflict across Southern Africa escalated.

In this context, the arguments that a “liberalized South Africa” and the U.S. companies there could ameliorate raw apartheid rang hollow; it was not a moment of ambiguity but of clarity about conflict across the region. In this context, the publishing of the NSSM #39 of 1969, which was not made public until 1976, with Kissinger’s clear siding with the whites and the defining the African liberation movements as the communist enemy, there remained little middle room for Africanists liberals. Simultaneously, the U.S. corporate sector was banding together to resist both sanctions against South Africa and divestiture from their corporate stock funds by universities, churches, and unions. Already by 1978, two major universities and one college had begun divestment from U.S. companies operating in South Africa,¹⁰ and the companies were mobilizing more actively to offer the Sullivan Principles¹¹ as a means to reduce segregation in the work place, improve worker relations, and, thereby, to justify the corporations remaining in South Africa. The combination of corporate mobilization and the increasing violent repression in South Africa seemed to offer few opportunities for a peaceful transition.

¹⁰ Michigan State University Board of Trustees in East Lansing and Hampshire College trustees in Amherst, MA voted for and accomplished full divestiture in 1977. University of Wisconsin-Madison followed after the State Attorney General advised on the possible illegality of investments in discriminatory corporations abroad.

¹¹ Sullivan, Rev. Leon. The Sullivan Principles, <http://muweb.marshall.edu/revleonsullivan/principled/principles.htm> Accessed February 9, 2009.

Second, the severe racial cleavages in U.S. African Studies had been given voice in the protest at the joint Africans Studies Association (ASA) and Canadian African Studies Association meeting in Montreal in October 1969. Many Black students and scholars disrupted the meeting protesting the exclusion of Black leadership from the association and from the resources and funding of African studies in general. In addition, the protestors also complained that many of the leaders of the ASA were deeply engaged with the U.S. government in the Cold War manipulation of African governments and leaders. Some of the ASA scholars had CIA connections, they alleged, and these were inimical to impartial scholarship and were aimed to undercut African autonomy and independence. (The African Research Group made a similar analysis at that time in its charges about the “U.S. imperialist penetration of Africa.”)

The early leadership of ACAS was committed both to bridging this racial gap in African studies and including African and African-descended researchers in ACAS as well as to advocate strenuously that studies by Africanists no longer should be used to oppress Africans and African states. As a result, ACAS made certain that its Board was inclusive and that one co-chair of the organization always was African-American. Originally, the ACAS leadership planned either to hold all ACAS meetings outside of the ASA or, alternatively, at the annual meetings of both the ASA and the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA). The AHSA was seeking to revive the earlier strong African American study of Africa in the International Committee on African Affairs (formed in 1937 and later renamed the Council on African Affairs), the Association of Negro Life and History, and other organizations and journals of the Black community. These organizations had disseminated information on Africa, provided scholarships to African students, and lobbied for colonial reform.¹² In addition, TransAfrica was

¹² Horne, Gerald and Mary Young, eds. *W.E.B. Du Bois: an encyclopedia*, Abingdon, UK: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001.

formed in 1977 “after the Black Leadership Conference convened by the Congressional Black Caucus ... concluded that the conspicuous absence of African Americans in high-level international affairs positions, and the general neglect of African and Caribbean priorities.”¹³ With several leading African American scholars on its Board of Directors, building this organizational voice for African American advocacy on U.S. Africa policy became a large priority. Holding meetings in both ASA and AHSA proved to be a great challenge, given little enthusiasm on the AHSA side, and ACAS meetings reverted to being held only at ASA annual meetings; however, the principle of multiracial leadership has continued throughout the life of ACAS.

The third major force shaping ACAS was the steadily increasing role of the Central Intelligence Agency and Department of Defense in U.S. relations with Africa during the Cold War, an issue that was to dominate much of the political action within ACAS for its history. As many African nations became independent in the early 1960s, John Kennedy’s U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, G. Mennen Williams (former Governor of Michigan 1948-60), made speeches in Africa about the U.S. siding with Africa, that “Africa was for the Africans,” and that the U.S. was the “first new and anti-colonial nation” and identified with Africa’s aspirations for independence and democracy. Many promises were made for supporting African development with experts, education, and U.S. economic assistance. Simultaneously, Western and Israeli intelligence agencies became more active in subverting African leaders and governments. In the mid-1970s, just before ACAS was organized, President Nixon (1969-74) and Secretary of State Kissinger (1969-77) with strong conservative support brought the U.S. to side with and arm Portugal with planes, herbicides, and napalm to use against the liberation movements in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and

Mozambique. When the Portuguese colonial government collapsed in 1974, the CIA, provided active support for the FNLA and UNITA through Zaire (D.R.Congo) while South Africa, China, and Israel worked in various ways to support a civil war against the MPLA government in Luanda led by Agostinho Neto and the Cuban allies. Also clear was the direct attempt to subvert ZANU and ZAPU from coming to power in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the delaying of the independence of Namibia from South Africa, and the covert support by government and corporations for South Africa itself.

The founding of ACAS

In this tumultuous period in spring 1977, a number of scholars met for two conferences on Southern Africa at Michigan State University (MSU) and University of Minnesota. The combined conference papers, published as *Southern Africa: Society, Economy and Liberation*,¹⁴ voiced the support of scholars for the liberation struggle in Southern Africa and provided the *raison d’être* for founding ACAS. Many of those attending the conferences were the first members of ACAS, beginning with an informal assembly at the MSU Kellogg Center following the conference in April 1977, where the organization of ACAS was proposed. The formalization of ACAS as an organization then followed at the annual meeting of the ASA in November, 1978 at Houston, TX.

Over the years, ACAS dealt with dozens of political issues in its *ACAS Newsletter* (later becoming the *ACAS Bulletin*), supplemented in recent years with the ACAS website. In the first decade, the focus was almost exclusively on Southern Africa issues. Afterwards, the Political Action Committee and officers pursued: U.S. foreign policy across Africa, health, women’s issues especially women and war, AIDS, the debate over U.S. aid to Africa, the problems of Zimbabwe and Kenya, defending

¹³ “TransAfrica Forum: Our History”
<http://www.transafricaforum.org/about-us/our-history>,
consulted 3/10/2009.

¹⁴ Wiley, David and Isaacman, Allen, eds. *Southern Africa: Society, Economy, and Liberation*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1981.

intellectual freedom and individual scholars under attack, children under apartheid, the geopolitics of oil, divestment and other sanctions on South Africa, the “ghettoization of African studies” debate, U.S. corporations and African economies, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, cancellation of African debt, political agendas for U.S. scholars of Africa, drought and water issues, democratization and civil society, World Bank and IMF policies, and civil conflict across Africa.

One issue moved to the center of ACAS concern in its first decade – the disorganization of African post-independence societies by foreign military and intelligence agencies. In a series of developments, ACAS learned early about the insinuation of the CIA and DOD into U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. The first of these cases, appearing in the first issue of the newsletter as “Why We Said No to U.S. AID” was authored by several of the inaugural leaders of ACAS, explaining how they had been invited to prepare for Zimbabwean independence by another ACAS member who had been appointed as head of U.S. AID’s Africa Desk in the Carter Administration. After they began to plan to participate, they discovered that the U.S. AID plan was being used by the CIA to engineer an Ian Smith government with Methodist Bishop Abel Muzorewa, an “internal settlement” that would bypass the ZANU and ZAPU liberation movements.¹⁵ In addition, the U.S. intelligence operations in Africa included the CIA-organized civil war in Angola,¹⁶ the revelations in *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa*,¹⁷ the U.S. intelligence identifying Nelson Mandela’s hiding place to the apartheid police,¹⁸ and the more open U.S. linkages with South Africa under the “Constructive

Engagement” policy articulated by Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Chester Crocker after the Reagan election in the 1980s.¹⁹ Previously in the 1960s, both the CIA involvement in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and installation of Gen. Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire/Congo had been evident, as was the support for the Israeli installation of Idi Amin in Uganda, displacing President Milton Obote, and a later-revealed attempt to unseat and assassinate Ghana President Kwame Nkrumah.²⁰ After Reagan’s election in 1980, the U.S. opposition to the African liberation movements (including their representatives in the U.S.) was clear. ACAS had pushed through the ASA’s Committee on Current Issues, several of whose chairpersons had been ACAS member, to give a platform in the ASA annual meetings to the representatives of the ANC, PAC, FRELIMO, SWAPO, MPLA, ZANU, and ZAPU; representatives of COREMO and RENAMO in Mozambique and SWANU and FNLA had also come to meetings. In addition in 1984, Chester Crocker was greeted with a hostile reception by many in ACAS when he spoke at the ASA annual meeting. Since its founding, therefore, ACAS opposed the militarization of U.S. policy and the engagement of the CIA in operations against the independence and autonomy of African governments.

In this context, ACAS put a great deal of effort into building a consensus in the African studies community to oppose military and intelligence funding and sponsorship in any activities of African

¹⁵ See Gervasi, Sean, Ann Seidman, Immanuel Wallerstein, David Wiley, "Why We Said 'No' to U.S. A.I.D.," *ACAS Newsletter*, No. 1, 1978, p.7-9.

¹⁶ Stockwell, John. *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story*, NY: W.W. Norton, 1978.

¹⁷ Ray, Ellen, et al, eds. *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa*, Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart, c1979.

¹⁸ South African History Online, “Nelson Mandela,” http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/special/projects/mandela/bio_4.htm, consulted 3/3/2009.

¹⁹ Bell, Coral “The Reagan Paradox” Edward Elgar publishing page 117 (1989); Crocker, Chester A., *An update of constructive engagement in South Africa*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Public Communication, Editorial Division, [September 26, 1984.]; Davies, J.E., *Constructive Engagement?: Chester Crocker & American Policy in South Africa, Namibia & Angola*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007.

²⁰ Curtis, Adam, "Interview with John Stockwell on 'Black Power,'" *BBC Two Series, "Pandora's Box,"* (22 June 1992); and Gaines, Kevin *American Africans in Ghana, Black expatriates and the Civil Rights Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2006.

studies. In 1982, several officers of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) approached four Title VI African centers to explore their willingness to receive large annual budget supplements in exchange for being “on call” to develop unspecified reports and undefined services. The directors of the four centers, including several ACAS members, consulted and agreed to not accept the funding and that they should consult with the wider Africanist community about these policies. After that consultation, they concluded that it was not in U.S. interests to link with the DIA which could compromise their partnership collaborations and linkages in Africa with African institutions and scholars as well as potentially provide scholarly legitimacy to the broader CIA/DIA/DOD/NSA hostilities to progressive African governments. ACAS concurred with the decision and since then has opposed any mixing of military or intelligence funding with African studies. In 2001, the Title VI African center directors reaffirmed that stand:

...to oppose the application for and acceptance of military and intelligence funding of area and language programs, projects, and research in African studies. ... We believe that the long-term interests of the people of the United States are best served by this separation between academic and military and defense establishments. Indeed, in the climate of the post-Cold War years in Africa and the security concerns after September 11, 2001, we believe that it is a patriotic policy to make this separation.²¹

With a number of ACAS members and directors in the Association of African Studies Programs (AASP), that organization of more than 50 African programs in universities and colleges across the

country also passed motions in the 1980s, which in 1993 and 2002 reaffirmed,

... our conviction that scholars and programs conducting research in Africa, teaching about Africa, and conducting exchange programs with Africa should not accept research, fellowship, travel, programmatic, and other funding from military and intelligence agencies or their contractual representatives - for work in the United States or abroad.²²

In 2006 and 2008, the AASP membership decided not to reconsider or change those policies. Finally, after substantial ACAS lobbying within the African Studies Association (ASA), the Board of Directors of the Association voted to support the stance of the Title VI directors and the AASP with a resolution renewed in 2001 and 2009.

In 1991, continuing this renewed national security focus on area studies, the Congress, with leadership from Senator David Boren (R-OK), passed the *David L. Boren National Security Education Act of 1991* (NSEA, Title VIII of P.L. 102-183) establishing the National Security Education Program (NSEP), providing “...aid for international education and foreign language studies by American undergraduate and graduate students, plus grants to institutions of higher education.” Most of the area studies and several scholarly associations, including the Social Science Research Council, immediately objected to this mixture of military and intelligence programs with academic area studies and urged that federal support for language and area studies be routed through the U.S. Department of Education and its Title VI Higher Education Act programs. In the end, this alternative failed, and Congress adopted the Act to provide DOD Defense Intelligence Agency funding for a) students to study languages abroad with a federal agency service requirement afterwards, b) projects to build U.S.

²¹ Text of Resolution by the Directors of Title VI Africa National Resource Centers, (Passed unanimously November 17, 2001, African Studies Association, Houston, Texas) in “The Africanist Positions on Military and Intelligence Funding and Service in the National Interest in African Research, Service, and Studies,” undated, circa 2008.

²² Text of Resolution by the *Association of African Studies Programs* (1993), in “The Africanist Positions on Military and Intelligence Funding and Service in the National Interest in African Research, Service, and Studies,” undated circa 2008.

educational competence in international affairs, and, in recent years, c) “language flagship” centers to advance U.S. students' study of designated "strategic" less commonly taught languages to the level of advanced proficiency.

After Congress authorized the Act, ACAS led a vigorous campaign to review and oppose the Boren funding, with articles, web announcements, leaflets, and panels at ASA. Africanists, alone among area studies scholars, have continued to decline these fellowships, now administered through the Institute for International Education. A number of university administrators made clear to the African center directors that they disagreed with the Africanist policy and regarded this as bad decision-making to decline federal funding for student overseas study. In one case, an African center director was fired by his university president for joining this consensus position. (Later, he was returned to his position when the university president resigned.) In addition, African centers have been vigorously attacked in Congress by right wing congressmen and by conservative journalists, for their lack of patriotism and using federal funding such as “...some centers plowed the money into bogus ‘outreach’ — university-based programs that siphoned taxpayer money to off-campus radicals, who used it to propagandize K-12 teachers.”²³

In 2008-09, ACAS faces a new struggle to reduce U.S. military and intelligence programs focused on Africa with the establishment in October of the Africa Command (AFRICOM) in Stuttgart.

AFRICOM has almost 1400 employees pursuing U.S. military policy and planning for Africa, in addition to the military personnel stationed at embassies in Africa, in DOD Africa posts in the U.S., and stationed at the U.S. Camp Lemonier Base in Djibouti. This compares with the less than 250 members of the State Department focused on Africa. In articles and panels, various ACAS members have made it clear that the ACAS focus on AFRICOM is based on the great potential for the further militarization of Africa after a century of colonial and Cold War militarization of African societies and a belief that Africa urgently needs a demilitarization, including de-mining and reducing arms sales in Africa, effective peacekeeping in several areas of continuing instability, as well as economic assistance to clean up the wreckage of civil societies destroyed by the proxy wars of the Cold War era.

Undoubtedly, unless the Obama Administration makes a 180° turn away from a foreign policy focused on the Global War on Terror in Africa and the securing of African oil, this focus on U.S. foreign security policy will remain at the center of ACAS concerns for the decade ahead.

About the Author

David Wiley is Professor of Sociology at Michigan State University, where he was African Studies Center director 1977-2008. Previously, he was co-chairperson of ACAS and president of the African Studies Association.

²³ Kramer, Martin, “Title VI: Let the games begin!,” posted Tuesday, 14 February 2006, <http://www.martinkramer.org/>, Consulted 3/10/2009. Stanley Kurtz also commented on the Title VI program that “clearly the program isn’t working, and sad to say, some of this is intentional. Many radical professors actually boycott national security related scholarship programs. Thus, some of the very same academics who benefit from Title VI subsidies are actively trying to undermine the core purpose of the program.” “Taking Sides on Title VI: Middle East Studies reform goes partisan.” By Stanley Kurtz, *National Review Online*, December 12, 2007 7:00 AM, <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=NzI2ZTJjZjk4MjZkZDMwMDhIOWZiMWMzNDZhZTgyZTg=>, consulted 3/10/2009.