

Africa Policy Outlook 2004

By Salih Booker & Ann-Louise Colgan | January 2004

In 2004, despite the fact that two African-Americans occupy both of the major foreign policy posts in the U.S. government, Washington will not give Africa the attention it deserves and requires. The U.S.' Africa policy will continue to be characterized by a duplicity that has emerged as the principal hallmark of the Bush administration approach to the continent. On the one hand, Africa's priorities are being marginalized and undermined by a U.S. foreign policy preoccupied with other parts of the world. On the other hand, the Bush White House is callously manipulating Africa, claiming to champion the continent's needs with its compassionate conservative agenda.

In the past year, the Bush administration's foreign policy priorities have negatively impacted upon Africa, both directly and indirectly. The U.S. preoccupation with the "war on terrorism," alleged weapons of mass destruction, and Washington's military misadventure in Iraq, has hurt Africa directly in economic and political terms. The White House has also turned Africa into geo-strategic real estate, defining the continent's value in terms of oil and access to military bases, and describing U.S.-Africa relations once more in a cold war era model.

More broadly, to the extent that U.S. actions undermine the very notion of multilateralism, they are directly at odds with Africa's interests. Africa's priorities—the fight against HIV/AIDS and poverty—are being ignored, as U.S. unilateralism threatens the principle of international cooperation.

At the same time, in the past year, the Bush administration has sought to place Africa at the center of its compassionate conservative agenda. Starting with the 2003 State of the Union promise on AIDS, and continuing with the President's first trip to Africa in July, this Administration has misled the people of the U.S., and the people of Africa. It claims to be taking action on African priorities, while in reality it is demonstrating the most negative leadership, masking broken promises and harmful policies with high-sounding rhetoric.

Even the few new initiatives announced by the President, on foreign aid and HIV/AIDS, are not only under-funded; they are fundamentally flawed in their approach. The Bush administration prefers to take a selective approach to Africa policy, choosing a few African countries as eligible for such initiatives, and thereby rewarding those whom the U.S. unilaterally deems "worthy." This strategy risks neglecting those countries in most need of assistance. Moreover, it blocks the emergence of a more comprehensive and coherent response to Africa's challenges that are rooted in specific regional realities. Such an approach is essential to addressing crises such as HIV/AIDS and poverty.

These trends will continue to drive U.S. relations with Africa in the year ahead. They will shape both the priorities that emerge in the policies of the Bush administration, and the challenges faced by Africa's people, and by Africa advocates in this country. In this election year, it is clear that foreign policy will be a major issue in the public eye. It remains to be seen to what extent U.S. relations with Africa will feature in the debate, and whether a new approach to today's global challenges can emerge.

HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS pandemic remains the greatest challenge facing Africa, and the greatest global threat to human security of our time. However, despite this



reality, and despite the lip service of the Bush administration, the lack of U.S. leadership on this crisis is set to persist in 2004.

January sees the anniversary of the \$15 billion promise made by President Bush in last year's State of the Union to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa & the Caribbean. This initiative was already undermined by the President's own budget request for 2004—only \$450 million instead of the \$3 billion promised. Though Congress ultimately appropriated more than the President's request, the Bush administration's betrayals on HIV/AIDS policy are likely to continue in 2004.

The President's budget request for U.S. funding for HIV/AIDS in Africa for 2005 should include at least the \$3 billion he promised per year in January 2003 under the "President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief," plus the amount outstanding for the current year. Such an amount would represent the U.S. fair share contribution toward the total funding needed in

Africa, and would fulfill the President's own commitment. This is unlikely to materialize, however.

Almost immediately after the promise was made in January 2003 to provide \$15 billion in AIDS funding over 5 years to Africa and the Caribbean, the White House broke this promise and made it a global initiative. This marginalization of Africa will continue in 2004 with less than the \$3 billion a year promised being stretched to cover more than programs in Africa.

2004 also sees the launch of the new U.S. Global AIDS Initiative, the new bureaucracy created by the President's plan. This initiative, to be headed by former pharmaceutical executive Randall Tobias, will compete with, and may duplicate, the efforts of other much more important vehicles such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS. It is likely to pose a challenge in its approach, favoring prevention over treatment, and its close ties with the pharmaceutical industry raise serious questions about its commitment to ensuring

low cost access to treatment for HIV/AIDS programs in Africa. Although President Bush has acknowledged that antiretroviral drugs are necessary, U.S. policies continue to block African countries' efforts to acquire such drugs at the lowest cost for their people.

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, now almost three years old, still faces huge financial challenges, due in large part to the inadequate support of the Bush administration. The U.S. has promised only \$200 million per year over the next five years—this is less than one-tenth of what would represent the U.S.' fair share. The Global Fund hopes to announce its 4th round of grants in

the summer of 2004, though its ability to fund effective HIV/AIDS programs in Africa and other poor regions will depend on its financial stability. The Global Fund has the potential to increase access to treatment in Africa tenfold in the next several years. But the U.S. prefers to undermine this crucial vehicle, creating a duplicative bureaucracy of its own to protect its unilateral bias.

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In 2004, the broken promises of the Bush administration on AIDS will likely continue. Meanwhile, shocking new statistics on the impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa and globally reveal how completely inadequate the response is. Popular pressure in this country succeeded in forcing President Bush and Congress to do more on HIV/AIDS in 2003. This pressure will increase in 2004, particularly if the Bush White House attempts to further backtrack on the commitments it has made to fund efforts to fight this crisis.

The Bush administration has already signaled its opposition to the "3 by 5" plan of the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO's groundbreaking initiation to increase HIV/AIDS treatment for those requiring it was announced on World AIDS Day, December 1st, 2003. It seeks to provide medicines to (and save the lives of) 3 million people living with HIV/AIDS who are not currently on treatment by 2005. Central to this effort will be the distribution of

drugs that provide a cheaper and easier to use combination of three anti-retroviral drugs in one pill, called fixed dose combinations. So far, Washington has refused to support this approach.

Human Development

Africa faces huge human development challenges, but the U.S. remains unwilling to make a real commitment to support African efforts in this area. African countries are striving to meet the Millennium Development Goals—seeking to reduce hunger and poverty, and promote health and education, in order to achieve the benchmarks set by the United Nations in 2000. But the U.S.’ failure to provide adequate levels of development assistance undermines the ability of African countries to meet these goals and to achieve a better life for future generations.

In 2004, the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) will be launched. This U.S. initiative, run by the newly created Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), is intended to increase U.S. foreign aid over the next three years, so that by 2006 an annual doubling of current levels will be achieved. In 2004, \$1 billion has been appropriated for the MCA, which is slightly less than what the President requested. Overall, however, this initiative still proposes a far smaller increase in assistance than the U.S. can and should provide. The U.S. currently ranks at the bottom of all donor countries, with only 0.1% of GNP, or just over \$10 billion, going to foreign aid worldwide (roughly half or \$5 billion for just the 2 countries of Israel and Egypt). Only 1/100th of 1% of the U.S. budget (\$1 billion) is spent on aid to sub-Saharan Africa. In this context, when the U.S. is the wealthiest country in human history, the MCA increase can only be seen as relatively meager.

Moreover, aid through the MCA will be dealt out in a highly selective manner. Only a handful of countries meeting certain economic and political criteria,

defined by Washington, will be eligible to receive aid through the MCA, and only three of these are projected to be in Africa (Uganda, Ghana, and Senegal). The eligibility criteria dictated by the U.S. create relationships with poor countries reminiscent of old-style imperialism. They also create competition among poor countries for a portion of the relatively meager MCA funds. This selective approach to development assistance risks punishing those countries whose people are the worst off and in greatest need of international support.

The United Nations continues to emphasize that African countries will be unable to meet the Millennium Development Goals without a significant increase in assistance from rich countries. In June 2004, the G-8 group of leaders from the world’s wealthiest countries will hold its annual meeting here in the U.S. At the top of the agenda should be a renewed commitment to support Africa’s efforts to fight HIV/AIDS and poverty. But this is unlikely. Instead, the G-8 meeting will focus on the priorities of the G-8 countries—military security and economic growth—emphasizing the huge inequalities in access to wealth and power in the world today, and the continued neglect of the global majority by the rich elites that constitute the ruling minority in this system of global apartheid.

Economic Relations

Total trade between the U.S. and sub-Saharan Africa dropped considerably in 2002 (the year for which the most recent figures are available), with a decline in both imports and exports. Two-way trade totaled about \$24 billion, about 15% less than the previous year. While the 2003 figures are not yet available, it is clear that Africa has been negatively impacted by the worldwide economic downturn, as well as by the war in Iraq, and the continent’s economic prospects will remain unstable in 2004.

By 2003, thirty-eight African countries had been declared eligible for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), though only slightly more than half of these had exported goods under the program by mid-2002. In fact, AGOA benefits are highly concentrated in a few countries and in the petroleum and mining sector, and U.S. imports from AGOA have been predominantly energy-related products. This trend will only increase now that Angola has been added to the eligible countries list at the end of 2003. While the Bush administration continues to promote AGOA as the engine of Africa's economic growth, this is increasingly contradicted by the reality of the U.S.-Africa trade profile.

The U.S.-Africa Economic Cooperation Forum, required under the AGOA legislation, was held twice in 2003—once in January in Mauritius, after the 2002 Forum there had been postponed, and once again in December in Washington, DC. In 2003 also, the U.S. began negotiations on a free trade agreement with the Southern African Custom Union (SACU). These negotiations will continue in 2004. Despite such high-level consultations and new trade arrangements, the current framework of U.S. economic relations with Africa has brought little benefit to a few countries, and has failed to promote sustainable economic growth. Restrictions on African access to U.S. markets, and agricultural subsidies to U.S. agribusinesses, continue to undermine Africa's competitiveness and constrict the continent's trade-related development.

Meanwhile, African countries continue to struggle under the crippling burden of some \$300 billion of unpayable and illegitimate debt. In 2004, the World Bank and IMF will mark their 60th anniversary, yet no new initiative on debt cancellation is likely, and no major reform of these institutions is planned. The U.S. is the single largest shareholder in both the World Bank and IMF, to whom most of Africa's debts are owed, and it could use its power to support the call for debt cancellation for Africa. This is a mat-

ter of justice, but also a matter of common sense. At the moment, most African countries are required to spend more on debt service to these institutions each year than they can spend on the fight against poverty and HIV/AIDS. As major mobilizations and protests are planned around the World Bank IMF anniversary this year, the pressure on the Bush administration to support debt cancellation for Africa will be greater than ever. This is particularly true in light of the White House's exceptional efforts to gain the cancellation of Iraq's foreign debts of some \$120 billion.

War, Peace, & Human Rights

In 2003, the crisis in Liberia provided a clear metaphor for official U.S. disdain for Africa. Despite unique historic ties and important national interests,

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President Bush stalled on this crisis during his visit to Africa, and was ultimately unwilling to make a commitment to stabilizing Liberia and supporting its people. In 2004, as Liberia struggles to find its feet, and as West African countries attempt to counteract insecurity in the broader region, the U.S. can play a crucial role; though a

real commitment appears unlikely. Congress did succeed in appropriating \$200 million for Liberia in a supplemental for 2004. But what is needed most from the U.S. is the political will to vigorously support West African efforts to stabilize that country and the larger West Africa region.

Elsewhere in Africa in 2003, the U.S. played a minor role in supporting some of the peacemaking initiatives of African leaders, including in Sudan. But in negotiations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and elsewhere, the U.S. was largely invisible. The Bush administration remains unwilling to make a commitment to provide sustained diplomatic and financial support to African efforts to promote peace and security. In 2004, this "hands off" approach of U.S. policy is likely to continue. African-led initiatives to address the continent's conflicts are making important progress below the radar. U.S.

support could do much to bolster these crucial efforts.

In 2003, the elections in Nigeria offered a metaphor for the state of democracy across much of the African continent. While the election was important and in some measure successful—marking the first democratic transfer of power in Nigeria’s history—the practice of democracy was far from perfect. Here, as everywhere, democracy is still a work in progress. Nigeria still faces serious challenges to its political stability in the form of an economic crisis and internal divisions that threaten the country’s future.

In Zimbabwe, the political and economic turmoil continued in 2003, as the Mugabe government came under increasing pressure from the international community. With Zimbabwe’s withdrawal from the Commonwealth in December 2003, amidst continuing state violence against government opponents, it seemed clear that the country’s crisis would continue into 2004, and that the people of Zimbabwe would continue to suffer as a result.

The U.S. and the European Union have imposed sanctions on the Mugabe regime, but have failed to develop a strategy to address the roots of Zimbabwe’s political and economic crisis, and to foster a democratic solution. African states, with South Africa foremost among them, have similarly failed to create momentum for a peaceful solution.

In 2003, at a summit of the Heads of State of the African Union, African leaders adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The adoption of this new instrument strengthened the main African human rights charter with provisions on women’s rights. It was a significant development, reflecting the growing commitment to address the discrimination and human rights violations suffered by women in Africa, and elsewhere.

African women continue to suffer human rights abuses in many parts of the continent, and in 2003

there were increasing reports of rape being used as a weapon of war in conflicts in Africa and other parts of the world. In 2004, it is hoped that the new Protocol on women’s rights in Africa will be ratified quickly by African states. For its part, the U.S. has yet to ratify the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This is a step the U.S. should take immediately to show its support for women’s rights and gender equality.

Oil & Strategic Military Relations

Under the Bush administration, the real priorities in U.S. Africa policy are oil and strategic military relations, and this will continue to be the case in 2004. The Bush administration will continue to deal with Africa on its own terms, and its policies will be driven by its interests in these areas in the context of the “war on terrorism.”

In recent years, the U.S. has become increasingly interested in African oil resources as an alternative to the Middle East, and the U.S. now defines African oil as a strategic national interest. The U.S. preoccupation with “energy security” makes certain African countries—like Nigeria, Angola, and Gabon—important sources of oil. At present, sub-Saharan Africa supplies almost one-fifth of U.S. oil imports. The

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National Intelligence Council projects that U.S. oil supplies from West Africa will increase to 25% by 2015. This would surpass U.S. oil imports from the entire Persian Gulf. Studies indicate that the greatest increase in oil production globally in the next decade is likely to come from West Africa, and the U.S. is following this trend closely. In 2004, U.S. policies will continue to further its plans to secure access to this oil supply.

Increased U.S. interest in projecting military force into the Persian Gulf has led to a massive increase in the U.S. military presence in the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere. The Bush administration is concerned with the counter-terrorism efforts of African coun-

tries, to the extent that they provide security for U.S. interests. In June 2003, Bush announced a new \$100 million initiative to help East African countries increase their counter-terrorism efforts. In 2004, U.S. preoccupation with security in Africa is sure to continue. While it remains uncertain whether or not the U.S. will establish a military base on the island of Sao Tome & Principe, as was rumored last year, it is certain that U.S. relations with Africa will become increasingly militarized, with a focus on energy security and terrorism concerns.

The trend that has become apparent since 2001, with these two agendas—oil security and counter-terrorism—forming the backbone of U.S. Africa policy under the Bush administration, will be further reinforced in 2004.

Conclusion

While the HIV/AIDS crisis remains the most urgent global threat, the current orientation of the Bush administration indicates that little progress will be made here in 2004. As the U.S. presidential election looms at the end of the year, it remains to be seen whether an alternative candidate can successfully articulate a different vision of U.S. global leadership, more responsive to international challenges. Under the current administration, U.S. Africa policy is unlikely to address these most pressing African and global priorities.

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