

United States and Africa: Starting Points for a New Policy Framework

By William Minter

President Clinton's 12-day trip to Africa in spring 1998 was the most extensive ever by an American president. Boosters of the trip inside the administration hoped that it would dramatically signal a constructive U.S. engagement with the continent—a new policy for a new Africa. In the months before the trip, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Susan Rice laid out a “new vision for Africa” and called for a “new partnership” with partners who “listen to one another, learn from one another, and compromise with one another.”¹

Many critical observers, probably exaggerating the level of U.S. interest in Africa that the trip represented, viewed Clinton's tour as an aggressive assertion of rivalry with Europe for economic predominance in the continent. Cynics saw it as driven by White House concerns to throw a symbolic bone to the African-American electorate and to divert attention from the then-infant Lewinsky scandal.

U.S. policy toward Africa has long been plagued by marginalization and pervasive negative stereotypes. To President Clinton's credit, the trip was shaped in large part by the need to address this crippling policy context. Selection of five of the six countries on the tour—Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, Botswana, and Senegal—was intended to highlight the continent's success stories. Rwanda was added at the insistence of officials who recognized that it would be unconscionable to ignore the failure of the international response to the 1994 genocide in that country.

In speeches during the trip, President Clinton acknowledged the damage to Africa from the slave trade, colonialism, and the cold war, and he even apologized for the failure of his own administration to respond to the Rwandan genocide, in which more than a half million people were slaughtered. A symbolic visit to the slave

depot at Goree Island in Senegal underscored the roots of the U.S. connection to Africa, and the presidential entourage was reported to be the most racially diverse ever for a presidential trip.

Despite these encouraging signals, Clinton's tour also reflected fundamental problems with the administration's policy. In keeping with the dominant policy climate in Washington, the trip was characterized by pervasive promotion of free-market fundamentalism as the solution to Africa's economic woes. The message of U.S. support for democracy was ambivalent and muffled by clear disarray within the administration about what stance to take toward the military dictatorship of Sani Abacha in Nigeria. The apology for international failure to respond to the Rwandan genocide was accompanied by no coherent policy or commitment for responding to violent conflicts in Congo (Kinshasa), Algeria, Burundi, Sudan, Liberia, and elsewhere. And the acknowledgment of historical responsibility both for the slave trade and for cold war destruction was a momentary blip rather than the beginning of a serious debate. In reaction to the flurry of U.S. commentators who argued that the U.S. had nothing to apologize for, the theme vanished from administration statements for the rest of the trip.

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Events in the months following Clinton's tour made it clear that the "new start" would be slow to take off. Despite the efforts of Africa-focused officials within the administration, Africa quickly resumed its place near the bottom of the agendas of the highest officials—and not only because of the president's growing domestic problems. The outbreak of the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the eruption of a new war in Congo (Kinshasa), and the resumption of fighting in Angola had profound regional implications but apparently caught the administration without contingency plans. None led to more than a minute fraction of the high-level attention given to the crises in the former Yugoslavia.

Meanwhile, Washington's response to the terrorist attack in August 1998 on U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi exposed the "partnership" theme as empty rhetoric. The instinctive focus by U.S. officials on U.S. casualties, though they were far less numerous than Kenyan and Tanzanian victims, provoked immediate resentment. And the U.S. retaliatory strike on a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan as well as a guerrilla training camp in Afghanistan was not only unilateral but also almost certainly counterproductive to its stated aims of reducing the terrorist threat. For instance, it undermined opponents of the abusive fundamentalist regime in Sudan by allowing that regime to present itself as a victim and thus gain international sympathy. And the Clinton administration was eventually forced to concede that the Khartoum factory had no tie to terrorists.

Those within the administration who were trying to get top Cabinet members and their staff to focus on Africa did persist, and their efforts bore fruit in the Conference on U.S.-Africa Partnership in the 21st Century held in Washington in March 1999. Although some early plans had projected a meeting confined to Washington's favorite "reformers," the invitation list was broadened at African insistence; cabinet-level representatives from 50 African countries participated in the meeting with their U.S. counterparts. At the conference, one could see the beginnings of more substantive dialogue between U.S. and African officials.

In practice, however, Washington's legacies of neglect and of inappropriate policies toward Africa have remained largely in place with the same overall guidelines. On the one hand, there is promotion of doctrinaire free-market prescriptions—including foreign

trade and investment, production for export, elimination of trade barriers, and privatization of state enterprises—as a panacea. On the other hand, we see endorsement of democracy, human rights, and conflict resolution, though implementation of this policy is primarily by ad-hoc response to crises without sustained high-level attention.

This harsh judgment is admittedly a caricature of a far more complex policy picture regarding specific issues and countries. Those in the government dealing with Africa on a day-to-day basis, many of whom are struggling to implement programs and policies that do respond to specific African needs, will most likely see it as unfair. As an overall assessment of results rather than intentions, however, it is unfortunately more accurate than the lofty rhetoric accompanying the president's trip.

The failure, however, is not unique to the Clinton administration's Africa policy-makers. Though the "Africa advocacy" and "progressive" foreign policy communities have been vocal on selected issues, and at times effective, they have failed to build consensus around convincing and coherent policy frameworks, have not adequately addressed the complex issues at stake, and have emphasized criticism rather than offering alternative perspectives to guide what should be done. Unlike the period of clear-focused campaigns against colonialism and apartheid, there is no clear overall framework being advanced collectively by African states and nonstate movements.

This report does not claim to fill that gap. It is also stronger on critique than on charting out a comprehensive alternative policy framework. It does, however, offer starting points for such a framework as well as suggested prerequisites for moving toward greater clarity. Such a framework, if it is to be authentic and convincing, must emerge from a sustained and systematic dialogue with a range of diverse voices in the distinct regional contexts of the continent. Such a dialogue is just beginning. As state-to-state and business-to-business contacts accelerate, progressives must also ensure that their contributions to the debate reflect real encounters with diverse African voices and not just the assumptions we bring from other periods and political arenas.

In the post-cold war world, the stated general goals of U.S. foreign policy are, in fact, congruent with those of African peoples. Salih Booker, a long-time Africa activist

and leading spokesperson on Africa at the Council on Foreign Relations, argues that “it is in the U.S. interest that, within each African region, as elsewhere in the world,

countries and peoples should be able to advance the common goals of achieving security, democracy and development.”² When one asks how best to achieve those

widely endorsed goals, however, there is a veritable chasm between perspectives crafted purely in the U.S. foreign policy arena and those rooted in African realities.



AFRICA’S “SECOND INDEPENDENCE”

Like the rest of the world, African countries are struggling to find direction in the post-cold war era. Yet debates about the structure of African societies and states are less fundamentally related to the aftermath of that East-West conflict than to the legacies of the colonial era and the failures of the first post-colonial generation. Africa is, of course, caught up in the worldwide trend toward globalization, but its niche is still largely shaped by its particular history of slavery, colonialism, and racism.

From the 15th into the 19th century, Africa’s primary link with the world was through the export of slaves. In the 19th and 20th centuries, export of raw materials became the dominant link. This role as commodity supplier—whether of high-valued ivory, gold, diamonds, and oil or of precariously priced crops such as coffee and cocoa—largely excluded Africa from the more dynamic sectors of manufacturing, financial services, and information technology.

Political independence beginning in the 1960s did not change this fundamental reality. Today Africa’s primary exports remain

unprocessed agricultural products and, for a handful of countries, minerals and oil. Even South Africa’s relatively developed economy is extremely vulnerable to the fluctuating price of gold. And though Ghana, one of the World Bank’s “success stories,” increased its income from nontraditional commodities to 18% of total export earnings by 1996, most export revenue still came from cocoa (32%) and gold (45%). Countries that depend almost exclusively on agricultural exports, such as Rwanda and Burundi, are most vulnerable. Oil producers, such as Nigeria and Angola, may be better off in comparison, but they endure boom and bust cycles as the world oil price shifts.

Africa’s first post-independence generation—broadly speaking, from the 1960s to the end of political apartheid in South Africa in 1994—made significant advances. Most notably, the newly independent states educated far more of their children than preceding colonial regimes, and many made impressive strides in delivery of basic health care and potable water, expansion of infrastructure, and industrial production for the

domestic market. Africa’s independence struggles also gave impetus to the civil rights movement in the United States, while African culture gained new prominence on the world scene. African states formed significant voting blocs in the United Nations and other international organizations, and African professionals excelled in their fields both at home and abroad.

This generation’s failings were also considerable and painful—repressive, ineffective, and corrupt bureaucracies, military dictatorships, and one-party states; deep indebtedness to international institutions and banks; a stifling of grassroots initiatives, public debate, and other civil liberties. These failings were compounded by an international system that fostered ill-conceived, nonfunctional, and costly development projects, heavy financial borrowing, and cold war-linked civil wars, which left newly independent countries with little economic cushion or political leeway for policy errors.

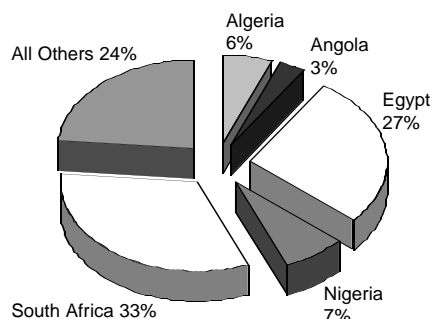
Kofi Annan of Ghana, the first United Nations Secretary-General from sub-Saharan Africa, divides this era into two “waves:” the first, during the 1960s and 1970s, was characterized by post-colonial enthusiasm and economic advance; the second, running from the 1980s to the early 1990s was “too often marked by civil wars, the tyranny of military rule, and economic stagnation.”³ Autocratic leaders, whatever their proclaimed political ideology, turned to police state repression and cold war patrons to stay in power. The worst perpetrated enormous human rights abuses. Even the best failed to deliver on the hopes of independence regarding political liberties, social services, and economic improvement. Thus, much of the economic advance of the 1970s was rolled back in the 1980s and early 1990s as a result both of internal failure and a tougher world economic climate, including the oil crises in the 1970s, a steady fall in world prices for Africa’s leading agricultural exports, and the linking of international assistance to draconian structural adjustment policies (SAPs).

Figure 1

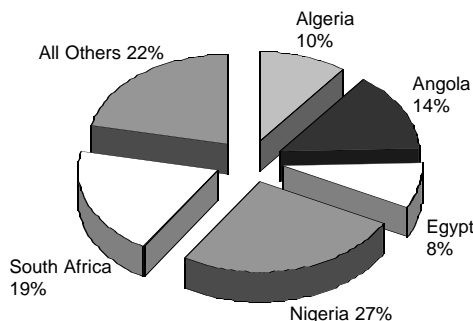
Principal U.S. Trade Partners in Africa

(1998)

Distribution of U.S. Imports in Africa



Source of U.S. Imports from Africa



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, *U.S. Total Exports-Imports to Individual Countries, 1998* (Washington, DC: Department of Commerce, 1999) (preliminary).

Often not acknowledged is the central role the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and various Western bilateral aid agencies—including the Agency for International Development (AID)—played in undermining efforts by the post-independence generation of Africans to improve basic social services. Beginning in the early to mid-1980s, the World Bank, the IMF, and the U.S. began preconditioning aid and loans to many African countries on acceptance of structural adjustment policies, which included slashing government spending. For example, the 1975 Tanzanian budget allocations for education (14%) and health (7%) were cut to just over 5% each in 1996.⁴ As a result, literacy in Tanzania—which had climbed from a low 15% at independence in 1961 to an impressive 91% by 1985, the year before SAPs were introduced—had fallen to 64% by the mid-1990s. “If you ask governments to cut down expenditure, it’s almost an authorization that they cut on health and education, and where education is not for everyone, it is left for the privileged,” former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere told the World Health Organization in outlining the impact of structural adjustment policies.⁵

Yet, at the turn of the millennium, Africa is clearly entering a new political phase,

variously referred to as a “second independence struggle,” a “third wave” of change, or, as popularized by South Africa’s then Deputy President (and in June 1999, President) Thabo Mbeki, an “African Renaissance.” Whatever the terminology, a common theme throughout the continent today is that a critical mass of Africans—including government officials, professionals, business owners, academics, journalists, religious leaders, trade unionists, and small farmers, as well as human rights, women’s movement, and environmental activists—are organizing with new dynamism, new demands, and new expectations. The current generation, which has come of age in the post-cold war, post-apartheid era, is determined to fulfill the promises of widely shared economic progress, democratic rights for all, and security that will enable ordinary people around the continent to pursue their own dreams in peace. Although enormous obstacles remain, Africa has entered a new stage of social transformation.

The primary dynamic in Africa is internal. It should be no surprise that the transformation of African national and state structures, still largely derived from colonial models, remains unfinished. To cite only one reason among many, it is little more than one generation since the first large wave of young

children entered the school systems so rapidly expanded after independence. At Tanzania’s independence in 1961, for example, 85% of adults were illiterate, and less than half the country’s children were in school. Although some countries were better off—Nigeria and Ghana, in particular, had long histories of educational development at home and study abroad—others were even further behind. At Mozambique’s independence in 1975, 93% were illiterate, and less than a third of primary-age children were in school. In their first decades of independence, almost all African countries rapidly expanded primary and secondary education and founded new universities. The sheer number of years it takes for a significant number of students to advance from primary school through professional education and experience partly explains why the 1990s began seeing so large a wave of people with the skills and contacts to speak out at home and abroad on the issues facing the African continent.

Another structural reason for this upsurge is that the capacity to suppress such internal forces decreased as states lost their cold war patronage. And there are other factors, some unique to particular countries or regions, others due to aspects of the changing international environment. What is certain is that there is a new dynamic. Its outcome—for good or evil—is not so certain. The transformation needed for new voices and social forces to make a real impact will not be easy, and it will be uneven. Its chances will depend, above all, on African initiatives, not only by African governments but by groups and individuals in African countries on both national and local levels.

But the chances of success also depend in large part on whether African realities and priorities are recognized in decisionmaking arenas in multinational and rich-country institutions. There are many initiatives, on and off the continent, to promote African demands for human rights, social justice, peace, and economic development leading to sustainable and equitable improvement in the quality of African life. These initiatives, however, are not yet coherent enough or powerful enough to break through the old patterns of how the outside world deals with Africa. Among the common obstacles they face is the pervasiveness of simplistic stereotypes and one-size-fits-all remedies from outside the continent. One indispensable requirement for constructive outside involvement with Africa is greater

Figure 2

U.S. Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa, 1999 - 2000

(millions of \$U.S.)

Program	FY 1999 (actual)	FY 2000 (requested)
Development Fund for Africa	460.1	512.6
Child Survival and Disease Programs	251.2	232.4
Economic Support Fund*	98.2	73.0
African Development Foundation	11.1	14.4
Peace Corps	54.6	56.0
Voluntary Peacekeeping Operations	19.0	28.0
International Military Education and Training	8.1	8.5
Foreign Military Financing	10.0	10.0
Contributions to International Peacekeeping	29.2	57.2
African Development Bank		5.1
African Development Fund	128.0	127.0
Non-food Aid Total	1069.5	1124.2
Food Aid	224.4	134.4
Total	1,293.9	1,258.6

* ESF increased dramatically in 1999 (up from \$26 million in 1998) because of a supplemental appropriation in response to bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Source: Raymond W. Copson, “Africa: U.S. Foreign Assistance Issues,” CRS Issue Brief for Congress, August 19, 1999, posted at: <http://www.cnie.org/nle/econ-51.html>.

sensitivity to the diversity and complexity of African realities.

Misleading perceptions affect policy-makers and shape public opinion. And they include not only long-established negative stereotypes about Africa but also simplistic presentations of new trends. The importance of leadership is undeniable, yet the desire to tout success stories—and to identify them with particular leaders, such as those visited by President Clinton in 1998—can easily mask wider issues. In Addis Ababa in December 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright praised Africa's "new leaders" who, she said, "share a common vision of empowerment—for all their citizens, for their nations, and for their continent." The administration provided no comprehensive list of the "new leaders," and interactions by Secretary Albright and President Clinton grouped a very diverse array, from Nelson Mandela in South Africa to Laurent Kabila in the Congo (Kinshasa) to the leaders of Senegal, Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda, Botswana, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and others. To place hope for the future—and to base policy projections—on a new set of rulers is to set oneself up for quick disappointment, when the new leaders also turn out to have feet of clay and prove to be less homogeneous than initially portrayed. The future depends on institutional change at many levels, not just on leaders.

Another dangerous half-truth pursuit is to enshrine open markets as a fundamentalist dogma and to then impose rigid formulas for open economies and macroeconomic adjustment to the neglect of fundamental requirements for development. U.S. policy statements commonly cite the principal goal of "integrating Africa into the world economy" and often praise nations that "adopt sound macroeconomic policies and make the transition to free market economies."⁶ Rarely, if ever, do U.S. officials acknowledge that the policy package they advocate is

sharply criticized by large sectors of African public opinion (and by many government leaders as well, when they feel free to speak back to their "donors"). Achieving economic growth is indeed indispensable for achieving other goals, and it does require greater competitiveness and freedom from inefficient or

along with greater inequality within and between African countries.

For its 40th anniversary conference in April 1998, the Economic Commission for Africa chose the theme "African Women and Economic Development: Investing in Our Future."⁹ The choice reflected the growing

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corrupt bureaucratic restrictions. But growth will be neither sustainable nor fair unless it: 1) is directed toward job creation and poverty reduction, 2) produces for domestic and regional consumers and not only for international markets, 3) is undergirded by public investment in health and education, and 4) is protected from abuse of worker rights and the environment. This is why both the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program now agree that poverty-reducing growth, not just "growth," must be clearly defined as an objective.⁷

Meanwhile, market integration—without other structural changes—leaves Africa still dependent on a small number of export commodities, deeply in debt, and capable of attracting only a small fraction of world investment capital. In 1997, excluding South Africa, the entire continent only attracted \$4.7 billion in global capital, a mere 3% of that year's direct investment in developing countries.⁸ If policy is based on the assumption that wide-open markets will automatically produce other desired results, the most likely outcome is that the promised benefits will accrue only to a favored few. Some countries and some sectors may advance, but at the price of continued growth of poverty

recognition that progress for Africa depends on the advance of women in all spheres of life. Africa's women face particularly great obstacles. Female adult literacy rates are 50% or less in twenty-nine African countries; only the southern Africa region reaches the global developing country average of 61%. Maternal mortality rates for sub-Saharan Africa averaged 980 per 100,000 live births in 1990, as compared with 12 for the U.S. and 470 for all developing countries.¹⁰

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), female education levels are closely correlated with improved family health and reduced infant mortality. In addition, a WHO study found that "women with even a few years of schooling have more self confidence, are better able to assume responsibility, and often enjoy a higher status in the family and community, giving them a greater voice in making decisions."¹¹ Addressing gender disparities is thus not only an imperative in its own right, it is essential for Africa's economic and political advancement.

A prerequisite for Africa's advance on multiple fronts is participation from a wide range of sectors in developing goals and initiatives, implementing them, and monitoring results. A series of global, continent-wide, and regional conferences in the 1990s—sponsored by United Nations agencies, the Economic Commission for Africa, regional African organizations, and a variety of nongovernmental coalitions—made considerable progress in defining objectives: advances in health, education, sustainable economic development, security, democratic participation, and gender equality. Implementation of such goals will require maximizing collaboration both within and across national and continental boundaries.

Figure 3

Causes of Soil Degradation
(in % of regional totals)

Region	Deforestation	Fuel Wood Exploitation	Overgrazing	Agricultural Activities	Industrial Activities
Africa	14	13	49	24	*
N. America	4	*	30	66	*
World	30	7	35	28	1

* Less than 1%

Source: L.R. Oldeman, et al., *Causes of Soil Degradation*, International Soil Reference and Information Centre (Wageningen, The Netherlands: 1990).



FREE MARKET FUNDAMENTALISM OR PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT?

During the cold war, U.S. policy toward Africa, including aid and economic relationships, was shaped overwhelmingly by competition with the Soviet Union. The leading recipients of U.S. aid between 1962 and 1988 were Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, and Zaire—not at all the list one would choose on the basis of development goals or even in terms of prospects for trade and investment. In 1987, in an effort to define congressional goals for development assistance and in reaction to President Ronald Reagan's earlier efforts to divert money from African aid, Congress established the Development Fund for Africa (DFA) with the laudable goal of helping “the poor majority of men and women in sub-Saharan Africa to participate in a process of long-term development through economic growth that is equitable, participatory, environmentally sustainable, and self-reliant.” The act also established a minimum level of funding for Africa each year. The DFA, administered as designated funds within AID, began by disbursing \$562 million in 1988 and reached over \$800 million annually in the early 1990s. However, for FY2000, AID requested only \$513 million for the DFA—a rather paltry sum, given the level of need, DFA's objectives, and the Clinton administration's rhetoric on Africa.¹²

If implemented, the DFA's laudable objectives would have revolutionized U.S. development assistance programs. However, in practice, Washington's cold war allies in Africa, such as Kenya and Zaire, continued

allocation of funds to decisions within AID. For 2000, AID requested a mere \$305 million (for economic support funds and child survival and disease programs) on top of the \$513 million for the DFA.¹⁵

Without a convincing framework justifying U.S. contributions, the case for investment in African development became difficult to make.

to receive much of the assistance.¹³ During the 1990s, with no new strategic framework to replace the cold war mindset, the case for aid lost its anti-Soviet rationale, and supporters of continued or reformed development assistance struggled to find new arguments in a generally skeptical political climate. Curiously, Clinton administration “reformers” within AID chose to drop poverty alleviation (as well as education) as a rationale or “pillar,” arguing that it already underlay what were articulated as the agency's six new central objectives:

- economic growth and agricultural development
- democracy and good governance
- human capacity development (other than basic education)
- health and population
- management of the environment
- providing humanitarian assistance.

The AID administrator declared that Washington's two foreign policy goals in Africa were “to accelerate Africa's integration into the global economy and to combat serious transnational security threats there, including HIV/AIDS and outbreaks of violence.”¹⁴

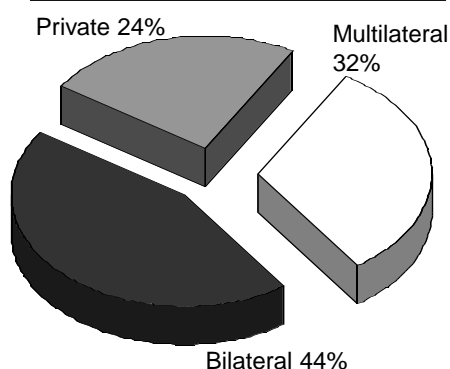
Without a convincing overall framework justifying U.S. contributions to development either worldwide or in Africa, the case for investment in African development became difficult to make. U.S. development aid to Africa declined from \$826 million in 1991 to \$689 million in 1997. Since 1996, Congress has refused to earmark funds specifically for Africa, leaving the regional

During 1997 and 1998, the lion's share of the Washington debate about Africa centered on the congressional Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and the parallel presidential initiative for a “Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa.” The act initially emerged from initiatives by liberal Democratic Representative Jim McDermott from Seattle and members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), who portrayed it as a way of getting Africa its share of U.S. trade and investment. It was then sold as a bipartisan plan and developed in conjunction with conservative Republican Representative Phil Crane. Republicans were comfortable in signing on because of the strong emphasis on support for U.S. exports and corporate investment. Sponsors presented initial versions of the act as a “paradigm shift” from aid to trade. And despite endorsements of aid, debt relief, and human rights inserted into later versions of the legislation, the bill's principal backers continued to assert that their intention was to replace aid with trade and to bring Africa into the mainstream of the world economy by using private capital as the main engine of growth.

Though the act suggested the possibility of future “free-trade” pacts with Africa, its operational provisions were in fact very limited: a regular forum for U.S. cabinet-level officials to meet with their counterparts from selected African countries; \$650 million in investment funds allotted by the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), which provides insurance for U.S. foreign investments; extending duty-free entry for many African products, including primarily

Figure 4

Composition of Long-term Debt in Sub-Saharan Africa (1998)



Source: World Bank, *Global Development Finance 1999, Analysis and Summary Tables* (Washington DC: The World Bank Group, March 30, 1999).

minerals and agricultural products; and elimination of import quotas for African textiles entering the United States. Those African countries and companies already well-placed to compete in a market economy would be given greater access to the U.S. market, and U.S. business with Africa would be facilitated by new contacts and subsidies.

During the 1998 legislative session, U.S. companies with interests in Africa joined with African ambassadors, the Clinton administration, and congressional backers in lobbying passionately for the bill. But resistance also grew both from critics who opposed the bill's simplistic pro-market bias and from textile-state representatives who argued that import quota reductions would hurt U.S. manufacturers. Both the Congressional Black Caucus and nongovernmental Africa advocacy groups were split roughly into three camps in response to the bill, with views ranging from passionate support to adamant opposition to more nuanced positions that offered several amendments. Many of those who supported the bill did so because they hoped it would help Africa get a larger slice of the global market by promoting "equal opportunity" among exporting nations. Opponents saw little benefit for ordinary Africans in the bill and feared considerable damage from its emphasis on strict free market macroeconomic policies.

The vehemence of the debate can only be understood as contention related to broader symbolic issues. For many proponents, the main intent was to counter Africa's marginalization by rejecting the "aid seen as welfare" model and insisting on Africa's incorporation into the current economic mainstream through expanded trade and investment. But most opponents rejected that mainstream model as damaging to African grassroots

interests and long-term development prospects. "Structural adjustment" packages imposing similar policies have a mixed record at best in promoting economic growth, and they exact a high price from ordinary citizens in the form of cutbacks of government programs and a rising cost of living. Yet the critique, for the most part,

and World Bank cancel Africa's multilateral debts without any linkage to structural adjustment programs. It therefore provides a positive vehicle behind which critics of the Growth and Opportunity Act can rally. Still the fact that there continues to be division within the Congressional Black Caucus and within the Africa advocacy community has

Private capital is not going to make the necessary investments in education, health care, clean and accessible water, electricity, roads, ports, airports, etc.; such infrastructure requires government planning and development cooperation from international agencies.

failed to acknowledge that passage of this particular bill would add little to the pressures already felt by African countries from internationally imposed structural adjustment programs, the conditionality of bilateral aid programs, and Africa's lack of competitive clout in the world marketplace. As CBC Chairperson Maxine Waters commented in floor debate, both proponents and opponents should recognize that this bill is neither "the best thing" nor "the worst thing" that could happen to Africa.

In 1999, the level of debate advanced somewhat with the introduction of the alternate HOPE for Africa Act by Representative Jesse Jackson, Jr. This act calls on the U.S. to cancel all its bilateral debt with sub-Saharan African countries and to urge that the IMF

left the fate of both bills in limbo. Neither bill provides a viable comprehensive framework for expansion of mutually beneficial U.S.-African economic relations. Thus, although congressional support for additional debt reduction is growing in response to public pressure, the chance of successful action even on this unifying issue has been reduced by the lack of coordination between different congressional initiatives.

Although Africa clearly does need more trade and investment, the real issues are what type of trade and what actions are needed to attract capital. The recipe prescribed by free market fundamentalism is simple: remove trade barriers, offer incentives to foreign investors, and greatly reduce the role of government in regulating the economy, and economic growth will follow. Critics, however, argue that sustainable and equitable economic growth requires that production be geared for local and regional consumption, not simply for overseas export markets; that locally-owned industries and enterprises must be supported; and that substantial new investments are needed in both human and physical infrastructure. The reality is that private capital is not going to make the necessary investments in education, health care, clean and accessible water, electricity, roads, ports, airports, etc.; such infrastructure requires government planning and development cooperation from international agencies.

Figure 5

Trends in U.S. Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa

- U.S. assistance to sub-Saharan Africa reached a peak in 1985 when global competition with the Soviet Union was at a high point.
- Bilateral economic assistance for the region in 1999-2000 is close to the 1990 low.
- The United States, once the second-leading development aid donor to sub-Saharan Africa after France, has fallen to fourth place, behind France, Germany, and Japan.

Source: Raymond W. Copson, "Africa: U.S. Foreign Assistance Issues," CRS Issue Brief for Congress, August 19, 1999, posted at: <http://www.cnie.org/nle/econ-51.html>.

Instead of debating “trade versus aid,” those concerned with building a prosperous and stable Africa should be debating what mix of public and private investment in which sectors can best build an economic environment for sustainable and equitable growth. In order to change its situation, Africa must be able to build physical and institutional infrastructure, invest in its human resources, and break out of dependence on unprocessed exports. International investments, hungry for the highest and quickest profit margins, are not well-matched for such long-term objectives, but they can—if carefully screened—help African governments raise revenue to finance some public efforts.

The urgent need for public investment in health, education, and the advancement of women in Africa—by international as well as African institutions—is not a question of “aid/welfare.” These are not only goals of development but also essential prerequisites for economic advance. Drastic cuts in African government budgets, such as cut-backs in free public health services, not only impose suffering but also delay the building of social capital, which is one of the requirements for a productive work force. HIV/AIDS alone, a December 1998 UN report estimated, affects more than 10% of the adult population in nine African countries. Malaria, WHO estimates, can retard income growth by as much as 12% in many African countries. Such issues, it is clear, will not be addressed by the economic marketplace. With a focus squarely on such substantive issues, one could debate whether

the U.S. is contributing its fair share of investment, what policies are most appropriate to advance the goals of improved health, education, and gender equality, and what roles U.S. public and private institutions might play.

The U.S. does, through AID’s six main objectives (cited above), address many of these issues not only with rhetoric but also in programs. But there are legitimate issues concerning the quality and size of American aid. Among developed countries, the U.S. provides the lowest percentage of its central

for massive increases in funding and would broadly publicize that 67% of people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS are in Africa and 83% of global deaths from AIDS are in Africa. Not only is AIDS damaging the continent’s prospects for development but as these statistics reveal a disproportionate number of Africans are dying from AIDS—an indication that treatment remains woefully inadequate.

Many issues need to be considered in order to develop guidelines for U.S. economic relations with Africa that transcend

A disproportionate number of Africans are dying from AIDS—an indication that treatment remains woefully inadequate.

government budget for development assistance (0.81% in 1996) and the lowest as a percentage of GNP (0.08%).¹⁶ AID, for instance, provides over \$200 million annually to assist with African health issues, as well as additional sums through the Center for Disease Control, WHO, and other agencies. The total, however, falls far short of what would constitute a contribution commensurate with U.S. resources and mutual interests. If Washington were serious about responding to the scale of Africa’s various health crises and addressing the handicap that health problems pose for development, top U.S. officials would lobby

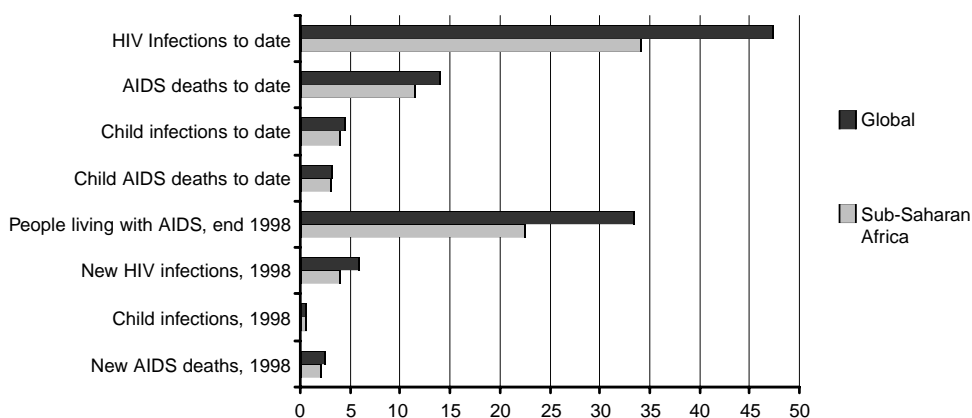
private sector boosterism. The following three starting points illustrate how to shift the debate away from the pros and cons of private financing to the more substantive issues of investment (public and private) in what activities, on what terms, and for whose benefit.

Investment: Africa needs more diversified investment beyond the traditional concentration in the extractive industries. Moreover, investments in those sectors must become more environmentally sustainable. All investments need to be managed/regulated by African institutions and governments accountable to their people.

Currently, with the exception of a more diversified relationship with South Africa, U.S. imports from Africa and U.S. investments are both heavily concentrated in the oil sector. In 1996, 71% of U.S. imports from sub-Saharan Africa were energy-related. That same year, oil producers Nigeria and Angola ranked 26th and 34th worldwide in the value of their total imports to the U.S. (ahead of South Africa at 38th) while oil producers Algeria and Gabon ranked 40th and 44th respectively. In certain cases, environmental groups and prodemocracy activists have succeeded in raising questions about the behavior of international oil corporations—for example, their support for the military dictatorship in Nigeria, their responsibility for environmental damage, and the proposed investment by a consortium including Exxon in the new Chad/Cameroon project. But neither the

Figure 6

HIV/AIDS Estimates, Global and Sub-Saharan Africa (millions of people)



Source: *AIDS Epidemic Update: December 1998* (Geneva: UNAIDS and World Health Organization, 1999), p. 4.

general issue of social responsibility in the oil industry nor the development implications of investment revenues accruing to unaccountable governments has been systematically addressed in any policy forum.

Communications: The U.S. should promote telecommunications expansion (not simply privatization) and should support creative initiatives for serving disadvantaged communities.

The expansion of telecommunications—and internet connections in particular—provides a significant opportunity for Africa to reduce its disadvantages in the world economy. At the simplest level, a telephone connection from a remote village to the national capital may enable a farmer to keep up with crop prices and improve her bargaining position with traders. Yet Africa still lags far behind in terms of telecommunications links. Outside South Africa, most countries in the continent have less than one main telephone line per hundred people, as compared to over 50 in most advanced industrial countries. Telephone connections and even internet connectivity are growing very

rapidly, however. Almost all African countries have some internet email connection, and the number of internet host computers on the continent is growing at more than 85% a year.

It does not take a free market enthusiast to see that bureaucratic government monopolies with years-long waiting lists for access to phone service are one obstacle to faster growth in the telecommunications sector. Yet

debt burden, which cripples the continent's chances for significant economic growth. Beginning shortly after World War II, the allies lowered Germany's debt payments to less than 3.5% of export earnings, which was deemed to be the maximum sustainable level for that war-torn country. Yet even after Mozambique's debt relief plan goes into effect in 1999, the country will still pay more than 11% (or \$100 million) of its annual

Outside South Africa, most countries in the continent have less than one main telephone line per hundred people, as compared to over 50 in most advanced industrial countries.

unregulated privatization would certainly lead to foreign companies serving only the most profitable markets and accelerating inequality of access. The upcountry peasant farmer would still not have a phone connection to the capital. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU), meeting at Africa Telecom 1998 in Johannesburg, cited the need to include universal access as a goal in the regulatory framework. Citing the South African experience, the ITU noted that companies can be required to provide public telephones and to serve disadvantaged communities and rural areas.¹⁷

Even with the limited investments to date, new electronic technologies are creating new opportunities for collaboration, both within Africa's regions and at a continental level, by lowering the cost of long-distance communication. This trend also facilitates more direct communication and collaboration between Africa and the rest of the world. With strategic thinking about the best ways to make such tools serve grassroots African advancement, these new technologies may enable Africa to leapfrog some barriers to advancement.

Debt Cancellation: The U.S. should move toward acceptance of African demands for debt cancellation, including delinking of such cancellation programs from onerous structural adjustment programs.

After several years of the World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, which includes 31 African countries, it is clear that the program is having only a marginal impact in reducing Africa's

export earnings to service its debt. Debt service-to-export ratios for Africa's regions range from a high of 30% in West Africa to 12.1% in southern Africa.¹⁸

Sub-Saharan Africa's debt includes about \$4.5 billion in bilateral debt to the U.S. out of a total long-term debt of \$179.1 billion; another \$54.8 billion is owed to multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. Yet only \$8.2 billion is being spent on the entire HIPC debt reduction program, a figure dwarfed by the \$50 billion in bailout packages given by the World Bank and the IMF in 1998 alone for Russia, Brazil, and several other countries.¹⁹

More generally, over the last few years, voices both inside and outside the African continent have begun to articulate alternatives to the U.S. model of free market fundamentalism. Rather than a single alternative perspective, there are now many proposals with different starting points than the vaunted "Washington Consensus." Some World Bank officials, for example, advocate poverty-reduction as a coequal goal with economic growth. Many grassroots and other more radical critics call for an end to structural adjustment conditionalities, for debt cancellation for the poorest countries, and for bottom-up development projects. In a variety of international forums, there are active debates about what policies and what mix of private, state, and nongovernmental actions can best promote development. The U.S. should join these debates rather than assuming that it has all the answers.

Figure 7

Health Care in Sub-Saharan Africa

Region	Health Care as % of GDP	Per Capita Health Spending (\$U.S.)
United States	14.2	3,801
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.9	87

Source: The World Bank., *World Development Indicators 1998*.

Figure 8

Life Expectancy and Infant Mortality

Region	Life Expectancy	Infant Mortality (deaths per thousand)
North America	76.2	9
Sub-Saharan Africa	49.9	97

Source: United Nations Commission on Population and Development, *World Demographic Trends 1990-1995*, as reported by the Secretary-General, February 1997.



WHAT ROAD TO DEMOCRACY?

In contrast to the serious gap between Washington discourse and African public opinion about the best road to economic progress, there is much more consensus on the desirability of fundamental political rights, including democracy, the rule of law, human rights, citizen participation, a free press, and accountable governments with minimal corruption. In the eloquent words of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's 1997 address to the Organization of African Unity (OAU):

The success of Africa's third wave depends on respect for fundamental human rights. I am aware of the fact that some view this concern as a luxury of the rich countries for which Africa is not ready. I know that others treat it as an imposition, if not a plot, by the industrialized West. I find these thoughts truly demeaning, demeaning of the yearning for human dignity that resides in every African heart.

Do not African mothers weep when their sons or daughters are killed or maimed by agents of repressive rule? Are not African fathers saddened when their children are unjustly jailed or tortured? Is not Africa as a whole impoverished when even one of its brilliant voices is silenced? So I say this to you, my brothers and sisters, that human rights are African rights, and I call upon you to ensure that all Africans are able fully to enjoy them.

As Annan stressed, post-colonial governments in Africa, irrespective of ideology or proclaimed goals, have rarely lived up to these goals. Many of the worst offenders survived by serving their cold war patrons, paying lip service to one global ideology or another while pursuing their agendas of control and aggrandizement. As President

Clinton cautiously acknowledged during his trip, much to the annoyance of officials of previous administrations who argued that the U.S. had no need to apologize, "very often we dealt with countries in Africa based more on how they stood in the struggle between the United States and the Soviet

resource for holding governments accountable, complementing the efforts of local human rights groups and established multilateral organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

The president's 1998 trip, however, highlighted abundant inconsistencies in

The U.S. State Department human rights report has become valuable for holding governments accountable, complementing the efforts of local human rights groups and established multilateral organizations.

Union than how they stood in the struggle for their own people's aspirations."

Remembering the decades-long support for military dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in the former Zaire, U.S. collaboration with the apartheid regime, and numerous other cases, most of those familiar with African history will find the apology enormously understated. But it did serve to indicate that the stated goals in Washington and those among African democracy advocates are much more compatible today than during the cold war period. There is a high degree of overlap of statements of desirable objectives, whether they come from U.S. policymakers, international conferences, or prodemocracy groups in particular African countries. The congressionally mandated annual U.S. State Department human rights report, though not entirely free of bias in its approach to different countries, has become a valuable

Washington's advocacy of democratic political goals. The currents of opinion within the administration that saw human rights in practice as dirty words to be avoided, whether out of traditional diplomatic expediency or in the belief that prioritizing economic advance would automatically bring progress in other areas, remained highly influential. Calls for Clinton to speak out and act clearly for democracy in Africa's most populous country—Nigeria—fell on deaf ears, for example, and the celebration of Africa's "new leaders" in South Africa, Uganda (where political parties are banned), and elsewhere eclipsed the need to advance democracy on multiple fronts.

Particularly troubling are the assumptions that economic progress (as defined by market-friendly policies and macroeconomic growth) is automatically correlated with political freedom or that it should take priority when the two clash. In fact, imposition of strict structural adjustment policies is likely to undermine a democratic leader's popular base by imposing immediate burdens, while supposed benefits are often postponed indefinitely or awarded to a privileged elite. The road toward greater democracy is not always obvious and is certainly not the same in different countries. The degree of democracy, as measured by participation and open debate, is not necessarily matched with the number of political parties. But the

Figure 9

Population Figures (millions of people)

	1950	1998	2050
World Total	2,521	5,901	8,909
Northern America	172	305	392
Africa	221	749	1,766

Source: United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 1998 Revision*, forthcoming.

tendency of many U.S. officials to downplay democratic failings among favorite governments and leaders as long as their economic policies please Washington repeatedly blurs the clarity of the prodemocracy message.

This double-standard is particularly obvious, of course, in the case of countries with major resources of interest to Washington. Over the years since the military regime canceled Nigeria's 1993 election, the United States has joined others around the world in criticizing the lack of democracy in Nigeria. But although the Clinton administration protested with a few concrete steps—stopping Nigerian airline flights and denying visas to top military leaders—the surging flow of money sent a different message: U.S. investments in Nigeria, predominantly in the oil sector, grew from around \$4 billion to as much as \$7 billion in the five years from 1992 to 1997, and bilateral trade increased from \$4.9 billion in 1994 to \$6.7 billion in 1996.²⁰

While policy reviews within the Clinton administration dragged on, Washington officials were dispatched to oppose citizen campaigns to enact state and local sanctions against Nigeria. And when President Clinton signaled in Cape Town that it might be acceptable for the dictator Sani Abacha to run as a civilian candidate, administration officials scrambled to explain the contradiction with earlier State Department assertions that the U.S. would stand firm against military rule in civilian clothing.

Abacha's death in June 1998 and the subsequent death in prison of Moshood Abiola, winner of the 1993 presidential election and a focal point of pro-democracy proponents, altered the political situation in Nigeria. Opponents of the military regime differed regarding how much trust to place in Abacha's successor, General Abdusalam Abubakar, who released some political prisoners and promised a return to civilian rule in 1999. When President-elect Olusegun

Obasanjo assumed authority in place of the military regime in June 1999, many predicted that the transition to "civilian rule" in Nigeria was now complete. But the basic issues related to promoting broad-based and lasting democracy in Nigeria continue to fester. Particularly explosive are the failures to address regional and ethnic inequalities, the division of powers between the federal government and other units, and the distribution of oil wealth, currently concentrated in the country's delta region. Both the Nigerian military government and international oil companies that exploit the region's wealth (Shell, Mobil, Chevron, and others) are being challenged as never before. Questions

than on more fundamental institutional change. While the success story of Nelson Mandela's leadership in South Africa was matched by high-level attention to bilateral relations, U.S. policymakers at middle levels were and are divided on how precisely to deal with democratic issues in countries as diverse as Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, not to mention those with deep internal conflicts such as Rwanda and Congo (Kinshasa). One common policy element is Washington's priority on stability and economic cooperation; another is its flexibility regarding the compliance of African regimes with human rights and democratic standards.

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raised about the fairness of the election—as well as President Obasanjo's military background and his apparent initial assumption that input from prodemocracy, human rights, and other grassroots groups is no longer necessary—suggest that durable solutions may be long in coming. The temptation to rely primarily on repression rather than dialogue is still a major threat.

Although the ambivalence of U.S. policy regarding Nigeria rests above all on the priority given to economic interests, Washington's rhetoric about "new leaders" derives partly from trying to find simple slogans to justify and orient policy and partly from focusing on the leadership level rather

Critics of this framework are convincing when they say that standards of human rights should be applied across the board. They are less convincing, however, in laying out strategies for ensuring that such rights are implemented in practice. Expedient diplomatic silence on major abuses is not justifiable. Public exposure of those abuses, by both domestic and international agencies, is needed. But it is insufficient. Regarding further action, no "one-size-fits-all" approach will work, whether it be sanctions, aid conditionality, high-profile diplomatic statements, financial support for prodemocracy groups, or "quiet diplomacy."



A STARTING POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

What might serve as an alternative to ad-hoc expediency or generalized prescriptions? Clearly, policymakers and citizen groups need to develop guiding principles for when to impose sanctions, aid cutoffs, military embargoes, and

other measures designed to strengthen democracy and equitable growth. The following is not a complete framework, but perhaps it can serve as a starting point.

- There should be no blanket endorsement of leaders, however admirable. The quick

collapse of the "new leader" paradigm—with Ethiopia and Eritrea at war and with different leaders taking sides in the complex conflict in Congo (Kinshasa)—should be a warning to both policymakers and analysts. It is also not advisable to

simply widen the paradigm by including selected “civil society” leaders in addition to the political ones.

- Priority should be given to identifying the worst and most consistently abusive regimes (and rebel groups) and concentrating the most intense negative pressures on those cases.
- Freedoms of expression and organization for civil society, as well as opposition political groups, are prerequisites for democratic advance.
- Whatever the form of the electoral system, participation, transparency of government operations, and the rule of law are just as important as, if not more significant than, the conduct of elections.

- Support for prodemocracy forces should take a regional perspective within Africa.²¹ Priority should be given to networking across national boundaries within Africa’s regions—West, East, Central, Southern, and North—and to developing contacts with a broad range of civil society and political groups in key countries in each region. Regional networks can often support each other and help maintain the momentum of prodemocracy campaigns even when conflict or repression in a particular country makes it impossible for democratic elements to operate openly there. Among many examples, one can point to the increasing contact among

independent media in southern Africa in particular. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have coordinated campaigns on landmines, debt cancellation, structural adjustment policies, and other issues, working most effectively when they have developed strong links among countries within particular regions of the continent.

- Judging what action to take in particular national contexts cannot possibly be done responsibly without regular consultation with a range of nongovernmental as well as political actors in each country. This is essential not just for U.S. diplomatic representatives but for NGOs and analysts critical of U.S. policy.



THE SECURITY GAP

From the 1960s to 1990, superpower competition dominated U.S. security interests in Africa, from interventions in the Congo and Angola to shifting alliances in the Horn of Africa. The anti-apartheid struggle succeeded in imposing an additional dynamic, with international sanctions against South Africa in the last years of apartheid contributing to the successful transition to majority rule.

Some think they see a replacement framework emerging by defining the new goal as protecting the U.S. from African-derived threats such as “weapons proliferation, state-sponsored terrorism, narcotics flows, the growing influence of rogue states, international crime, environmental degradation, and disease.”²² In fact, such formulations of threats give policymakers little specific guidance (good or bad) for determining either friends and enemies or appropriate policies for dealing with conflict.

It is also too simplistic to interpret U.S. policies of support for particular clients—such as Uganda, Rwanda, or Ethiopia—as a coherent U.S. strategy for competing with Europe (particularly with France) or with South Africa either in the security field or in regional geopolitical arenas. The different policies advocated and pursued in response to particular crises reveal widely divergent and shifting views within the U.S. government, the State Department, the White House, the Pentagon, and among ambas-

sadors or special representatives in the field. To craft consistent policies in response to rapidly changing crises requires far greater attention from high-level officials than has so far been the case.

in Rwanda, a desire to “leave it to Mandela,” and mixed signals in response to successive crises in Congo (Kinshasa) in 1997 and 1998. The global antiterrorism theme has ensured a focus on Sudan, but the decision

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Media coverage of humanitarian crises compels such attention only momentarily, and Africa-focused officials within the U.S. government have little clout to persuade their superiors to expend political capital to issues regarded as marginal and remote. Crafting a consistent response to a complex crisis is difficult enough when it is high-profile; it can be even more difficult when attention from the top is intermittent or when existing policy guidelines are quickly outpaced by events.

Thus the record shows a lurching from one approach to another: intervention (as in Somalia), indifference to looming genocide

to bomb the commercial factory in Khartoum without a terrorist link was based on bad intelligence and was formulated without input from officials knowledgeable about Africa.²³

In terms of military assistance, the U.S. has provided some \$10 million to the Organization of African Unity to support its conflict resolution capability, essentially to establish a management center and to supply equipment to enable the OAU to send military observers on short notice to crisis areas. Washington has also played key roles in supporting the UN peacekeeping mission in Angola and in encouraging regional con-

ciliation efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Yet the centerpiece of recent administration policy has been the Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), providing for training of battalions from selected African countries for participation in peacekeeping missions. The most concrete result of the initiative has been a series of short-term training exercises, each lasting about 60 days and costing about \$3 million. The U.S. has also provided financial support for a similar exercise in April 1999, sponsored by the Southern

African Development Community, which brought 3,000 troops from 12 nations to South Africa.²⁴

ACRI was slow to get started and is a scaled-down version of Washington's 1996 proposal for an African Crisis Response Force (ACRF), which would have involved a permanent force capable of intervention. Given the serious concerns raised by African and European governments as well as U.S. legislators about the ACRF proposal, the ACRI has focused only on training. Yet

doubts remain about its impact and the use to which the training might be put. Two of the countries receiving training (Senegal and Uganda) are themselves involved in conflict. The scale of the program, in comparison either to the potential African needs for peacekeeping or to Washington's unpaid dues for UN peacekeeping operations, is not great.

Another obscure but substantial initiative is the Pentagon's Africa Center for Strategic Studies, for which Congress has appropriated \$42 million. According to Pentagon planners, the center is not modeled after the notorious School of the Americas (which has trained many Latin American dictators and human rights abusers) but is rather one of a string of "Regional Centers for Security Studies," the first of which—the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany—was founded in 1993. Its curriculum, designed for executive-level military officers and civilian counterparts, stresses democratic civil-military relations, national security decision-making, and management tools. The center's mission statement says it will "encourage an appreciation of appropriate civil-military relationships and an understanding of effective defense resource management across African governments."²⁵

Whatever the content of the curriculum, an important effect of these and other training programs will be to build closer ties between the U.S. military establishment and African military and civilian defense officials. The assumptions that these ties are purely technical and will automatically contribute to accountability and respect for human rights are highly dubious. It is a step forward that African as well as U.S. civilians have been invited to participate in early curriculum planning for the center, but this falls far short of the public scrutiny necessary for accountability.

Nevertheless, there is general agreement between official U.S. positions and African public opinion regarding peace and security goals, just as there is on issues related to democracy and civil rights. Though many Africans deplore the unilateral U.S. response to terrorist bombings, there is little popular support for terrorist strategies even in countries where these armed groups are active in internal conflict, such as Algeria and Egypt. Despite the persistence of conflict in a score of countries, the overwhelming demand of civil society groups, when they are free to speak, is for peace. Women's groups, church

Figure 10

Civil Conflicts and Hotspots



African Countries in Conflict

Interstate conflicts

Eritrea and Ethiopia

Civil conflicts

Algeria
Angola
Burundi
Chad
Comoro Islands
Djibouti
Egypt
Sierra Leone
Somalia
Sudan
Uganda

Civil conflicts that entail military intervention by other African countries

Congo-Brazzaville
Democratic Republic of Congo
Guinea-Bissau
Rwanda
Senegal
Western Sahara

Countries where civil conflicts could easily start up again

Central African Republic
Liberia
Mali
Nigeria
Niger

groups, human rights organizations and conflict resolution groups advocate negotiation, understanding, and compromise. Disgust with leaders who find ideological or ethnic excuses for continuing or reigniting conflicts is a powerful sentiment in almost all African countries.

The end of the cold war generated significant progress in negotiating the end to a series of African conflicts. The thirty-year regional war associated with the apartheid regime's struggle to survive ended with the emergence of a democratic South Africa and the end of conflicts in Mozambique, Namibia, and, at least temporarily, Angola. The overthrow of the Mengistu

dictatorship in Ethiopia in 1991 led to the successful conclusion of Eritrea's struggle for independence.

Yet the 1990s have also seen a bewildering profusion of old and new internal conflicts, most notably in Angola, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Rwanda, Congo (Brazzaville), and Congo (Kinshasa), including not only the genocide of more than a half million people in the space of a few months in Rwanda but also massive abuses against civilians in each country mentioned. In 1998, the specter of more conventional interstate conflict emerged as well, with the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea as well as the danger that the

Congo (Kinshasa) maelstrom would continue to suck its neighbors into deeper confrontation with each other.

This is one arena in which modesty is particularly appropriate for critics of administration policies, given the intractable, complex, and diverse causes of ongoing conflicts and the disagreement among international agencies, civil society groups, and progressive analysts about what is to be done in particular cases. Anyone who does not admit to being uncertain about analysis and prescription applying to the range of conflicts mentioned above is either dishonest or uninformed.



STARTING POINTS FOR CONFLICT CONTROL

In formulating conflict control policies, the following suggestions are, therefore, offered as starting points rather than conclusions.

Arms Control Efforts: While important, arms control efforts are insufficient to halt Africa's conflicts. Measures such as the international treaty to ban landmines, new efforts to monitor and restrict the flow of small arms, and international bans on weapon sales to parties guilty of gross human rights abuses against civilians are important. The U.S. failure to sign the Ottawa landmine treaty is a blatant example of U.S. indifference to the emerging international consensus on this issue. Continued progress in these arenas is worth campaigning for, despite foot-dragging by the U.S. and other major global weapons suppliers. However, such international arms control efforts are likely to have little short-term effect on particular conflicts, unless they are vigorously and deliberately employed to weaken the military position of a particularly recalcitrant party to the conflict, such as UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), the right-wing rebel army which has waged a 25-year war against the Angolan government.

Economic and Political Context for Conflict: Economic problems both lead to and result from armed conflicts. They are also often closely tied to the absence of democratic institutions and processes for managing the distribution of national—and often scarce—resources.

The “vicious circle” phenomenon applies with a vengeance to the two-way interaction between conflict and economic development. For example, competition for scarce land and vulnerability to dropping coffee prices in Rwanda and Burundi is one factor contributing to the escalation and intractability of conflict in those countries. Meanwhile in Angola, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, the supply of arms has often been dependent on smug-

effects within African regions and for the continent as a whole.

Individual country success stories, however significant, cannot be isolated from the impact of conflict in their region and even across regional boundaries. The U.S. strategy of countering Afro-pessimist stereotypes and promoting development by concentrating on a handful of “successful” countries is dangerously shortsighted and incomplete.

The U.S. strategy of countering Afro-pessimist stereotypes and promoting development by concentrating on a handful of “successful” countries is dangerously shortsighted and incomplete.

gling in diamonds and other commodities. Conflict, moreover, is one of the major factors impeding African economic development not only by disrupting directly affected countries but by eroding general business confidence, given the tendency of outside observers to lump the entire continent south of the Sahara into one amalgam.

Difficult to Isolate Conflicts: Conflicts not only threaten the countries directly involved but also generate powerful ripple

Ongoing conflicts even within Senegal and Uganda, for example, tie into instability across their borders. Within a given region, the spillover impact of refugees and border insecurity even from conflicts in small countries can be significant. When a giant such as Congo (Kinshasa) in central Africa dissolves into an arena of shifting battlefields, the divisive shock waves extend even to east and southern Africa. If the unresolved struggles for democracy in Nigeria or Kenya were to

lead to a similar downward spiral, the impact on their regions and beyond would be similarly dramatic.

U.S. Influence to Encourage Compromise: In most current African conflicts, the U.S. should add its influence, whether by direct mediation or by supporting the efforts by others, to the encouragement of all-party negotiations aimed at compromise solutions. However, there may be exceptions in which taking sides is appropriate. And inadequately planned diplomatic involvement may sometimes be worse than no involvement at all.

There is no guarantee of success nor any magical formula for international facilitation of peace accords, despite a burgeoning of the conflict resolution industry in the post-cold war period. Nevertheless, what influence the U.S. has should be directed toward seeking compromise solutions. It is important to avoid encouraging intransigence by supporting favored governments or leaders. In Africa's current conflicts, there are few plausible candidates for "good guy" status deserving of unconditional military support, much less military aid or exemption from criticism for human rights abuses. And it may sometimes be necessary to include in negotiations even forces that are responsible for horrific abuses of human rights—if they retain significant capacity to cause military damage or enjoy the adherence (voluntary or involuntary) of major population groupings.

There are two major qualifications to this rule that need to be noted, however. Peace talks with a military leader with a demonstrated history of sabotaging peace agreements may create the illusion of progress toward peace, while in reality serving as a recipe for repeated failure. In such cases, most prominently UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi in Angola, negotiations in bad faith—and international willingness to promote them—contribute to continuing war, not to peace. The other proviso is that negotiations encompassing only military leaders with questionable political legitimacy, without some mechanism for involving unarmed opposition political groups and civil society, are unlikely to promote sustainable solutions to conflict. Although predictions are perilous, this seems to be a fatal flaw in efforts to stem the fighting in Congo (Kinshasa).

Cautious Foreign Involvement: International involvement in major crises—exceeding diplomacy and including the delivery of humanitarian aid, provision of

peacekeeping forces, or, in the worst instance, military intervention to block or limit genocidal assaults on civilians—is often necessary. But no intervention is neutral, and the chances of prolonging a conflict or making it worse are significant. One case in point is the enormous humanitarian intervention to aid refugees after the Rwandan genocide, which served in large part to strengthen those forces with primary responsibility for the killings.

A blanket "no external intervention" guideline with respect to internal conflicts should be recognized as de facto support

It is therefore unlikely that any formula for determining a justifiable intervention will be adequate. There is no avoiding political judgments about particular situations, which are linked to one's evaluation of: 1) the relative merits (and demerits) of the internal parties in conflict, 2) the relative merits (and demerits) of the potential interveners, and 3) the likely de facto, unintended, and long-term consequences of an intervention as well as its announced goals and short-term, life-saving potential.

It does make sense to be very cautious in supporting external intervention in internal

Countries and groups of countries are now likely to intervene in conflicts based on varying definitions of their own interests.

for the strongest "internal" party. The Organization of African Unity's post-independence consensus on nonintervention in internal conflicts may have decreased the chances for interstate conflict, but it also reinforced existent regimes. This longstanding consensus is now eroding rapidly.

In recent years, there is increasing recognition, including at the OAU, that massive abuses of human rights in internal conflicts—most particularly those reaching the scale of genocide—may justify external intervention. But there seems to be no emerging consensus—and there is very unlikely to be one—on who should intervene and who should decide when abuses are massive enough to justify intervention. As a result, countries and groups of countries are now likely to intervene in conflicts based on varying definitions of their own interests.

The concept of a purely humanitarian intervention, intended merely to aid innocent civilians and devoid of political or military implications, is a fraud. An intervention with a limited mandate—e.g., to protect corridors or relief supplies—may or may not be justified in a particular case. But it will have political consequences; it will weaken some forces and strengthen others. Armed parties who gain access to relief supplies because they control access to civilians, whether in Somalia, Sudan, or other conflicts, quite accurately regard this humanitarian relief as one of the factors affecting their military prospects.

conflicts, whether by neighbors or by multilateral forces. Even if innocents can be saved or the "good guys" (or more likely, the "less-bad guys") can be aided to win by outside forces, the sustainability of such an outcome is questionable once the outside party's interest wanes. But the exceptions are numerous enough to make a blanket prohibition unwise—interventions can in fact save lives, tip a military balance toward one side, or enhance the possibility of negotiation. Decisive action to reinforce and expand the mandate of the UN force in Rwanda as the genocide was beginning in early 1994 might have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. Other examples are more ambiguous. Leading Congolese scholar and democracy activist Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, for example, is a strong critic both of Laurent Kabila's government that succeeded Mobutu and of later Rwandan intervention in 1998 against Kabila. However, he argues that the original military intervention by other African countries to overthrow Mobutu in 1997 was justified.²⁶

Peacekeeping Support: The U.S. should contribute to peacemaking in Africa's conflicts, but successes are likely only if U.S. involvement is coordinated with engagement by African and international mediators. Support for peacekeeping by UN or regional organizations should take priority over support for bilateral partners.

The presence or absence of U.S. involvement—whether in the form of diplomatic

pressures, financing to bolster peacekeeping and conflict-resolution at the UN and regional organizations, or logistical support for relief operations—is a key factor in sustaining outside intervention. Though the Clinton administration has provided some such support, e.g., for UN forces in Angola and West African forces in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the glaring U.S. default in payment of UN dues undermines Washington's credibility as well as any effective international capacity to respond to crises.

Meanwhile, U.S. training missions for African armed forces are expanding without open accountability or civilian review. According to a *Washington Post* investigation,²⁷ special forces have been engaged in training exercises in 31 of 54 African countries, including many currently engaged in conflict, such as Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda. The scale of the operations, known as the J-CET program, is probably not yet large enough to have much influence on military balances. Some activities carried out under J-CET or other Pentagon programs, such as training in de-mining, specific support for African peacekeeping, or humanitarian relief, are likely justified. But training programs can also send signals of partisan support or

approval for military forces involved in conflict or human rights abuses. They build unexamined links between the U.S. military and African armies. There is little evidence that they contribute to their stated objectives of promoting the values of democracy among trainees, and their contribution to peacekeeping capability is unproven. Without full provision for transparency and monitoring by civilians outside the Pentagon—including African human rights groups—such bilateral programs should not continue.

The proliferation of bilateral U.S.-African military ties is disturbing not necessarily because of the weight of any one program or involvement nor because of the existence of a grand plan for U.S. engagement, but because the scale of the financial resources available to the Pentagon makes accountability problematic even for the congressional committees responsible for oversight and for U.S. diplomatic representatives, much less for civil society either in the U.S. or in African countries. It is particularly disturbing that the standard J-CET mission includes instruction in FID (foreign internal defense), defined in training manuals as attempting “to organize, train, advise and assist” a foreign military so that it can “free

and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.”²⁸ Not only are such internal functions more appropriately the responsibility of police, not militaries, but army and police units involved in similar U.S. training in Latin America, Indonesia, and elsewhere have been responsible for widespread human rights abuses.

Whether the issues are economic ties, democracy, or conflict resolution, the quest for a constructive policy framework for U.S. relations with Africa will be abortive unless it is built on an extensive and continuing dialogue. That dialogue must involve not only official government representatives and the private for-profit sector but also diverse political and nongovernmental sectors both in the U.S. and in Africa's different regions.

This is the essential prerequisite for the emergence of a genuine “new partnership” with partners who “listen to one another, learn from one another, and compromise with one another.”²⁹ Despite the fact that the Clinton administration has taken more steps toward dialogue with Africa than have previous administrations, neither the level of dialogue nor the substantive frameworks for policy resemble an Africa policy that is genuinely reciprocal and mutually beneficial.



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