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**U.S. AFRICA POLICY:  
SOME POSSIBLE COURSE ADJUSTMENT**

Ambassador Daniel H. Simpson

August 15, 1994

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The author wrote this article while serving as the Deputy Commandant for International Affairs at the U.S. Army War College and before his assignment to the U.S. Liaison Office in Mogadishu. The views and opinions expressed are entirely his own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of State, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050. Comments also may be conveyed directly to the Director of Research by calling commercial (717) 245-3234 or DSN 242-3234.

## FOREWORD

U.S. relations with Africa have always come low on the list of overall U.S. foreign policy interests, after Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas. This prioritization is logical in terms of overall global U.S. strategic, political, and economic interests. At the same time, in a striking anomaly, during 1993 nearly 30,000 members of the U.S. armed forces were deployed in Africa at one time or another. Army and Marine units were primarily involved in operations in Somalia that ended March 31, 1994. Within a few months, U.S. forces were involved in a desperate attempt to provide humanitarian support to war-torn Rwanda. Africa remains a minefield of issues with the potential of involving the United States, either bilaterally or through the United Nations or regional organizations.

Ambassador Daniel H. Simpson addresses the question of U.S. interests in Africa and past, present, and future U.S. policy toward that continent of more than 50 countries and 800 million people on an analytic basis, followed by clear recommendations. His presentation of U.S. strategic interests in Africa permits clear analysis of the present and logical planning of future policy and actions.

His message, in addition to being an introspective examination of U.S. policy, is forward-looking. He seeks to lay the basis for a long-term, sustainable U.S. policy toward Africa based on both solid economic and commercial concerns--Africa as a supplier and a market--and on the real cultural ties that link what is core to America and the people of the African continent.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this study in hopes that it may be of assistance to those involved in the development and implementation of U.S. policy toward Africa.

JOHN W. MOUNTCASTLE  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Director, Strategic Studies Institute

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

DANIEL H. SIMPSON served as Deputy Commandant for International Affairs of the U.S. Army War College from February 1993 until June 1994. His assignment came in recognition of his long and distinguished service to the United States. He first went to Africa following college graduation in 1961 as a teacher at the Eghosa Anglican Boys' School in Benin City, Nigeria. After another teaching assignment at the Libyan Army Military College in Benghazi, Libya, Mr. Simpson joined the U.S. Foreign Service and has had subsequent overseas assignments in Africa in Burundi, South Africa, Zaire twice, and as Ambassador to the Central African Republic, as well as Washington assignments in African affairs and other overseas assignments in Bulgaria, Iceland, and Lebanon. Mr. Simpson studied English literature at Yale University and African Studies at Northwestern University. He continues to serve the Nation as the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia.

## **U.S. AFRICA POLICY: SOME POSSIBLE COURSE ADJUSTMENT**

### **Introduction.**

Given the enormous diversity of the African continent, and the especially daunting economic, social and political problems its 53 countries and 800 million people present to a policymaker, it has always been a challenge for the United States to develop and implement a cogent policy towards Africa. It has always seemed somehow easier to formulate policy toward Europe, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East. Given the complexity that the multi-piece African mosaic presents, the difficulty in defining strategic interests on the continent after the Cold War, and the economic weakness of most of its nations, there has also been over the years a tendency sometimes to give it a lower policy priority among regions. I can remember in previous years scanning hungrily Presidents' State-of-the-Union and foreign policy speeches and press conferences for reference to and guidance on African issues. Frequently it was slim pickings. It was with great interest that I noted that new Presidential National Security Adviser Anthony Lake made his first public speech in his new position on the subject of Africa (at Brookings, May 3, 1993), followed quickly by Secretary of State Warren Christopher, addressing the African-American Institute May 21, 1993, only four months into the new Administration.

### **History and Evolution of Current Policy.**

It is beyond the scope of this analysis to discuss U.S. policy toward Africa prior to the 20th century "independence" period of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Nonetheless, efforts to make sense of the pre-independence period have not ceased. The continued primary intention of these efforts is to try to explain what is going on in Africa now--more precisely usually, what is going so badly in Africa now--in terms of pre-colonial and colonial African history. The most recent of these efforts is Basil Davidson's provocative book, *The Black Man's Burden*, which suggests that Africa has been a victim of the framework of the nation-state, imposed during the colonial period; in Davidson's view a distinctly un-African and constricting form of organization of society. This has led, according to Davidson, to many of the problems that have followed.

It could also be said that the nation-state structure that Africa inherited from colonial "organization" of the continent flowed too easily into the Cold War tendency of the rest of the world to divide nation-states into piles--ours and yours, the Monrovia group and the Casablanca group, the Marxist-Leninist states and the "moderates"--characterizations which the Africans themselves may even have believed to apply, but which unfortunately also fed an ultimately dangerous tendency on the part of African states to try to play the West and the East

against each other for aid. It was dangerous in the sense that the end of the Cold War meant the end of the game and a sense of relief on the part of those who had been squeezed that the game was over.

Assassinations and coups across the 30 years until 1990 are the more dramatic and visible political tracks on the road; more profound and basically unexamined (if not incapable of study) are the "what might have been" questions: Would Nkrumah have achieved greater African unity if it had not been determined that his "non-aligned" meant "anti-Western" and thus "pro-Soviet"? Of course, the Soviets played the definitive down-and-dirty trick on the Africans across the board in exporting their economic system there, poisoning some African economic wells perhaps for decades to come.

American policy toward post-independence Africa can be divided roughly into stages, the last of which are the present and the future, which is where we will focus. The first of these took place in the springtime of the early 1960s. The United States recognized Western Europe's asserted preeminence in Africa, but, nonetheless, insisted on carrying out President Roosevelt's and Prime Minister Churchill's pledge in the (1941) Atlantic Charter to "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live." The two leaders sounded the death knell of colonialism with that unequivocal affirmation of the right of self-determination. President Kennedy, a particular hero in Africa, determined to continue to pursue President Eisenhower's policy of extending diplomatic recognition to and establishing embassies in the new African states. And, starting in the fall of 1961, we sent off our own new Peace Corps volunteers to help the new African countries cope with their colonial heritage, part of which was a lack of trained personnel in education, health, and all the basic services, including governance in general.

This approach to Africa reflected Cold War antagonisms. The U.N. intervention in the Congo (now Zaire) was the first U.N. peacekeeping effort in Africa, designed to keep the Soviets out. Probably the first dose of really cold water was administered to us by Africans themselves when, on January 13, 1963, Togolese troops under the leadership of then Sergeant and even now hardy dictator Gnassingbe Eyadema, cornered independence President Sylvanus Olympio, despite his efforts to take refuge in the American Embassy compound, and killed him. Much more of this sort of unpleasantness was to follow for years, until the end of the Cold War. The new beginning freed us to begin to determine our approach to African countries to a much greater degree in terms of *American* supported principles of democracy, market economies, and sensitivity to environmental and human rights concerns.

**Current Policy.**

These principles are the foundation and framework of the U.S. African policy in place now. This policy includes active support of democratization, aid directed toward sustainable economic development, the building of free market economies, attention to environmental concerns, respect for human rights, and an active role for us and others in conflict resolution, when needed. We seek to strengthen and to work with and through international and regional political, economic, and financial institutions. We promote democracy, not just as a system that has worked for us, but also as a system that encourages the development of the element of economic accountability that has been so often missing from governance in Africa. We promote this approach as an alternative to systems that have failed in Africa and elsewhere: the one-party state, the military dictatorship, African or any other socialism, even Empire. It is a decent policy; it is an *American* policy.

Nonetheless, problems and some relevant, troubling facts still remain. Competing interests have translated into generally decreasing aid levels. In my view, a shift in the level of U.S. commitment to dealing with the problems of Africa's ever-increasing number of "failed states" in the face of the U.S. experience in Somalia is a present fact in looking at immediate future U.S. relations with African countries. Although in terms of impact on our population the losses incurred in Somalia October 3, 1993, were not in the range of the impact of Vietnam two decades ago, we felt real pain watching what occurred in the streets of Mogadishu.

#### **Real Premises: A Sound Basis for Policy.**

So, U.S. African policy must now, post-Somalia, be based on more prosaic, but nonetheless real premises, as opposed to the idea that we have to feed everyone everywhere, that everyone has the right to live under a democratically-chosen government, one which is carrying out "sustainable economic development," one which is sensitive to its national environmental responsibilities, and interested in conflict resolution in its own country and elsewhere. This is not to say that we should not differentiate, or not show preference to countries that take an approach to governance consistent with our own. We *will* do that because we are Americans, in any case. But clearly for now we are ready to spend much less money, and no American blood, in implementation of such policy objectives.

#### **Clear Away the Myths.**

So what are sound bases for a sustainable U.S. African policy? One to consider is U.S. strategic interests in Africa. Conventional wisdom is now that there are none. To examine that hypothesis, it may first serve some purpose to dispose of a few myths. (We can always continue to hope slyly that it is no longer necessary to dispel myths.) Some of these "interests" always were



myths; others were creatures of the Cold War; some others were used as shorthand by those who liked to believe that the *apartheid* regime in South Africa really had "the right approach" to governing that country.

*Geostrategy*. One of these myths was the "Cape sea route" argument, as part of an overall strategic lines of communication (SLOC) concern. The "Cape sea route" argument was underpinning for the idea that we needed to cozy up to the white government in South Africa because otherwise a hostile majority rule government in South Africa, controlled by Moscow, would install itself on the Cape of Good Hope and interdict shipping at the intersection of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The valid part of that argument was that the Cape of Good Hope did provide a good spot from which one could possibly *track* shipping around the Cape, if one wished to. The really weak part of the "Cape sea route" interdiction argument was that it conveniently ignored the fact that some 2,450 miles of blue water lie between the Cape and Antarctica. Secretary Christopher pronounced the final benediction on that line of argument in his May 21, 1993 speech: "Thankfully, we have moved beyond the point of adopting policies based on how they might affect the shipping lines *next* to Africa rather than the people *in* Africa."

The "interdiction," "strategic lines of communication" arguments are slightly more valid for the Straits of Gibraltar, if we consider that passage an African question since one side is Morocco. There are also the two ends of the Red Sea, accessible from Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. It is true that the African continent abuts upon and provides possible points of interdiction to the Red Sea, with the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean Sea at the northern end, and with the Bab el Mandeb at the southern end, with access to the Gulf of Aden and then the Indian Ocean.

At the same time, these are scarcely "African" questions, in the sense that our relations with African governments seriously impact upon them. The Suez, access to which and use thereof is very old, well-trodden history, is only slightly an African issue. As for the shores and the other end of the Red Sea at the Bab el Mandeb, in the wake of the scalded cat reaction of the world to Iraq's move against Kuwait and its oil and the massive power so visibly employed against Iraq in the event, it is very difficult to imagine that the government of a weak African nation would undertake to levy ransom on or to threaten interdiction of the Red Sea route. That would have to be the work of a much more formidable potential adversary. The Red Sea littoral African states--with the exception of Egypt, which wouldn't--lack the means now. If the means were acquired, it is hard to imagine that the world's hand would be stayed for long from simply removing the means of interdiction quickly and neatly.

A fact of world "choke point" geostrategy, whether it be with respect to Straits of Gibraltar, the Bab el Mandeb, or any

other geographic feature, is that if a serious enemy were likely to sink an American ship or a ship of one of our major allies in one of those places, it would presumably also be willing to sink one in the North Atlantic or the Western Pacific. And if it did that, we would have on our hands a completely different strategic problem, one which would make "control" of an African passage a marginal issue, if it ever were not.

The only other geographic pieces of possible U. S. strategic interest in Africa are port access and overflight clearance. But, in fact, lots of ports up and down the coasts compete for traffic. The problem there is rather one of infrastructure, efficiency, and economic interest--a *commercial* matter post-Cold War. Overflight clearance is sought, and available, from courtesy and responsiveness to international practice. What states have the means to deny it in any case if it were necessary to have? U.S. Africa policy in any case should have a more solid base than the transient existence of U.S. "global adversaries," which, after all, come and go, be they World War I's Central Powers, World War II's Axis powers, or the Soviet Union. Whatever geostrategic interests remain after the Cold War, they are much less relevant than other enduring interests that are a better basis for continuing American engagement in Africa.

*Minerals or Commodities.* Then there is the strategic mineral argument. It is trite but true to say that Africa is a treasure house of strategic minerals. It has chromium, platinum, cobalt, copper, zinc, manganese, and oil. In my view, this, however, is not a "strategic" interest; it is a commercial opportunity. Africa also has diamonds and gold. It has coffee and cocoa.

At one time a lot of time and energy was devoted by the U.S. Government and some members of Congress to developing and maintaining the position that U. S. relations with Africa, especially with parts of then white-ruled southern Africa--Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa--should be driven by our need for access to strategic minerals. For years we defied a U.N. trading ban on Ian Smith's white minority-ruled Rhodesia because of its chromium production. One reason we helped Zaire's President Mobutu keep rebels out of Zaire's Shaba (ex-Katanga) Province was because of its cobalt production. The idea was, basically, that if we were denied those sources of those minerals, we either couldn't get the needed minerals or the Soviets might tie up the other sources and it would be curtains for the Western world.

This, too, seems to me to be more of a commercial argument than a geostrategic one, or, in the case of Rhodesian chrome, a "code" U.S. politico-racial dispute. That approach reached its limits of tragicomic potential in Angola, where, for years, Cuban troops guarded American oil production installations on behalf of an African Marxist government. A lot of Angola's oil was exported to the United States; the U.S. companies involved made money. The Cuban troops were paid for by the American oil revenues. The

Marxist government was kept in power by Soviet and Cuban forces, which were fighting the ostensibly pro-Western guerrilla movement, UNITA. UNITA, by the way, at the same time was being supported in its effort to defeat Cuban, Soviet, and government forces by the United States and South Africa. It would have made a good Alec Guinness movie except that so many people got killed or starved. That one is still going on, of course, even though the Cold War foundation of it is now long gone.

The bottom line on commodities--and chromium and cobalt are basically commodities, just like pork bellies and orange juice, even though they are used for aircraft engines and the like--is that they are fundamentally a commercial and investment trading matter. That was probably true even during the Cold War. It is definitely true now. Zaire's mineral-rich Shaba province was invaded twice in the late 1970s. Both invasions were very low-budget operations--guerrillas numbering only in the hundreds, low-tech armed, badly trained, of unclear genesis, with lots of reports of money going into the external bank accounts of the "leadership." Both times the price of cobalt went through the roof on world markets, in 1978 from \$6 to \$30 a pound, and those holding stocks of it or futures in it made a lot of money.

With respect to strategic minerals, as well as to other commodities, it is also true that availability is a function of price. For example, no cobalt was produced in the United States during the period when we were wringing our hands about Zaire and "access" to its cobalt. At that point we had some 13 cobalt deposits in the United States that could have been operated profitably if world cobalt prices had risen to a certain level (25 percent above what they were at that point). A 25 percent price rise in cobalt would have added \$20,000 to the cost of a Boeing 747 engine, which cost \$8.5 million. I am not sorry to see African products valued. In fact, it *is* the trading function in U.S. relations with Africa that I believe should be emphasized, if those relations are to be put on a long-term sustainable basis. But we should be spared (and should have been spared) the hyperbole on African "strategic minerals." I will add parenthetically that I am as guilty as anyone else on that score, having served as U.S. Consul General in Zaire's Shaba Province in the late 1970s and having reached at that time to the right and left for creative arguments to support our continued involvement there.

Pursuing the assault on the "economic denial" argument, international cartels, even the vaunted OPEC, remain notably undisciplined and weak. This is a natural result of member countries' inability not to respond to short-run cash-flow problems. The idea that a poverty-stricken African country, with major legitimate social service and infrastructure needs and, probably, very greedy leadership, would be able to forego exportation of its major foreign-exchange earner or earners either to "stiff" the United States politically or to push up the price to a point damaging to our national security is really a

very difficult case to make. We made it on occasion, faced off across the world with a Soviet Union in full cry. Now, in my view, it is truly a dead letter as an argument. The 1994 version of this old argument is that Russia and South Africa are now going to form a diamond cartel, with forehead-wrinkling consequences "for the world." Consider the state of solvency of the two putative partners as well as the strange bedfellows they would comprise and the argument collapses. These are commercial matters, in the hands of people who need money badly, ready to trade what they have, not even always at a good price.

### **Grounds for a Sustainable Policy.**

So what are the grounds for a solid, interest-based U.S. African policy, if the old geostrategic, strategic minerals, Cold War arguments no longer are, or never were, valid? Why do we concern ourselves with Africa? It is not easy and it is sometimes dangerous as well as expensive to work there. Why should we do it?

There are a variety of good answers to this question. Some of them are positive. One of these is the traditional American interest in economic and financial opportunities. It would be folly for a trading country like the United States to ignore Africa in that regard. Fifteen percent of our imported oil comes from Africa. It is a largely undeveloped commercial market of 800 million potential consumers. How can we *not* go after that market?

A second good answer is heritage. This one sometimes gets hyped and misused. However, it is an indisputable fact that a good solid percentage of Americans hail from Africa, and our culture is profoundly shaped by African influences. It is perfectly legitimate for African-Americans to ask us as a country to take a special interest in Africa.

A third answer to the question of why we should be interested in Africa is the human, emotional and sentimental side to us as a people; us in some ways at our best. We *cannot* do it all everywhere in the world--agreed--but it is a good thing that we still have a heart. I, for one, believe that we were right to go into Somalia in 1992 to create conditions under which children no longer starved because of the folly and cruelty of their elders. (The rest of the Somalia argument is beyond the scope of this essay.) What will we have come to when we can--as we would have had to--work our way through an American holiday season with all its excesses with the spectacle of Somali children starving for want of our action in front of us? That was much more than CNN-driven policy. There is and will be misery in Africa. We can't take care of all of it, or even much of it. But when we can do something that doesn't put American lives at unreasonable risk or cost so much money that our involvement will not be sustainable, we should do so.

There is also another hard, practical reason to be interested in Africa. It is certainly true that a lot of what happens there that is bad does not touch us, even the worst of it. We could thus simply say that Africa's problems are not our concern. Or, to put it more kindly to us, we could say that many of Africa's problems are beyond our means to deal with. But it is also a small world that we live in. Diseases, drugs, terrorists, and even illegal immigrants do not find our borders much of a deterrent to entering our country and putting themselves front-and-center on our agenda.

AIDS is a case for examining the *potential* of U.S.-African cooperation. Parts of Africa are ground-zero for AIDS; Africa is also the place where the origins, pathology, means of prevention, and the quest for a cure have been able to be pursued most thoroughly through effective experimentation. It is a sad truth that the enormity of the tragedy of AIDS in Africa has led in some cases to a very pragmatic, matter-of-fact approach to the problem on the part of African governments and public health authorities.

These are the sorts of reasons why we must be interested in things African, and have an African policy. We cannot responsibly not be concerned by phenomena such as nests of terrorism, uncontrolled immigration, international narcotics trafficking, weapons of mass destruction in irresponsible or hostile hands, and mobile plagues. At the same time, I believe firmly that in the balance of affairs, the positive economic, heritage, and environmental points weigh infinitely more heavily than the "threat" elements as a basis for an enduring, sustainable U.S. African policy.


### **Building Blocks: It's the Economy.**

Let us now consider, in greater detail, some of the positive and defensive building blocks of such a policy. Looking at Africa again and again and now in the mid-1990s, I am given to conclude that, for Africa as for President Clinton's successful 1992 campaign, it's the economy that counts. It is manifestly clear that President Clinton's Administration, consistent with its 1992 electoral mandate, is concentrating its efforts in general primarily on U.S. domestic economic and social policy. Put another way, it could be said that it is seeking to tie our foreign policy more closely to domestic interests.

Virtually all African countries are potentially valuable trading partners. Take, for example, the Central African Republic, certainly correctly rated as one of the poorest countries on the face of the earth by all contemporary economic standards. It is also a country that has endured notoriously irresponsible leadership, most notably the Emperor Bokassa. Nonetheless, the Central African Republic is well-watered--no droughts like the Sahel--and fully capable of feeding its

population and producing for agricultural export. It has diamonds for ready cash. The size of Texas, its population numbers fewer than three million. In my view, it is the case that, well-managed, the Central African Republic is capable of providing a very nice living for its population. From our perspective, its population represents a small but real market for American exports. Again, managed well and modernized, its diamond industry is a small but interesting market for American mining equipment, a field in which we excel. This is not to gainsay the country's formidable problems, but most of these are management/governance problems. The management needs work, but that is underway. The country held real democratic, multiparty elections in 1992-93.

One does have to continue to believe that through a functioning democratic process of governance the element of economic accountability is introduced to the equation. If the leadership of the country loots the coffee fund or steals the diamonds, or, perhaps worse, spends all the country's money to the benefit of the urban population, or, even worse, to the benefit of the civil servants, there has to be a means of getting rid of that leadership, short of a coup d'etat or assassination. We have to believe that democratic leaders, knowing that they will face regular elections sooner or later, will behave differently and run the country in a less self-serving way. The donors, bilateral and multilateral, will have increasingly to put teeth into that approach. African leaders must be made to know that "diverting" national or international resources to their own personal or ethnic ends means that the gravy train will simply stop running to their countries. "Donor fatigue" and other competing demands are forcing sharper donor discrimination already; that approach--a demand for sound, honest economic management--must become a principle of economic assistance to African countries.

 It must become the case that an African head-of-state comes to measure his greatness as a leader by the degree of prosperity and well-being that his country enjoys under his leadership, not by the amount of wealth he is able to build up for himself and his extended family in offshore real estate and bank accounts during his reign.

Virtually all African countries do have sufficient land and not so large a population that, again, correctly managed, they could feed themselves and produce for export. Florists' flowers are now Kenya's fourth largest foreign exchange earner. Mangoes, literally falling from the trees all over Africa, sell for 15 French francs (\$2.50) each in Paris. Virtually every African country has some source of ready cash--iron ore, copper, oil, cobalt, diamonds, bauxite, phosphates, cassiterite, nickel, or something. Many African economies are one-product operations, lacking export diversity, thus making them ruinously vulnerable to world market trends far beyond their control. At the same time, the market has an answer to that problem, short-term

painful perhaps, but an answer. That is to diversify. Africans should not moan that no one wants to buy their coffee or cotton or dream of making the importers pay artificially high prices for their produce through a cartel or a commodity agreement. Instead, they should grow something that people do want to buy; or produce, process and sell what they grow now cheaper.

On a continental basis, there are some very important relevant facts in the U.S.-African economic relationship. In general it is fair to say that oil as a commodity catches American attention. Africa provides 15 percent of U.S. oil imports; the United States buys 30 percent of Africa's oil production. The Middle East has 60 percent of the world's oil reserves, but Africa has 10 percent, more than the CIS states, including Kazakhstan, a current apple of our oil eye. A dozen African states produce and export oil; others have unexploited and probably unexplored or underestimated reserves. High production costs and/or weak or nonexistent infrastructure leave these reserves in that state. At the same time, companies and banks also make money building roads and pipelines so there is no insurmountable barrier to development in this area. The United States is a great producer and exporter of oil production and marketing equipment. A pipeline across Chad involves important contracts and exports; exploiting Chad's oil means that the Central African Republic's oil becomes accessible and a potentially viable investment opportunity.

Developing Africa's oil and other resources in a responsible way clearly presents important environmental challenges. I believe that these are challenges that *can* be met; that, in fact, are *better* met. Put another way, better that the environmental challenges of conserving fauna and flora be met head-on, rather than that the challenges remain unmet and finally, simply be finessed as the animals and plants at risk are eliminated from the face of the earth. This will, in fact, otherwise occur, through the results of population pressure or civil war. This is not a chimera; it has happened already in Uganda, Angola, Chad, Zaire, Rwanda, and other countries. At the risk of being pigeonholed as hopelessly sentimental, I will recall that when I first went to Benin City, Nigeria as a teacher, back at the dawn of time (1961), elephants were considered to be omnipresent, evil, hungry, dangerous creatures that rampaged through villages trampling urchins; now there simply aren't any elephants there.

### **South Africa: Current and Critical.**

There is a particularly poignant and urgent element in the present policy need for the United States to concentrate its engagement in Africa in the economic realm. To delve into this issue in what otherwise is a continent-wide approach to U.S. African policy is, in part, to change diskettes in a major way.

It is, however, necessary, for two reasons. First, South Africa, the issue in question, is at a critical crossroads. Second,

perhaps even more importantly, South Africa's success or failure may constitute the last chance in decades for Africa to profit, rather than suffer, from circumstances. Successful South African negotiation of the difficult transition from apartheid (South African state racism) to majority rule without destroying the country's economy gives Africa as a whole the opportunity to hitch a 20-wheel, fire-belching locomotive to the presently bumpy, creaking, narrow-gauge African economic train.

The most important part of what is happening in South Africa in 1994 is, of course, the first multiracial, one-person one-vote elections ever. Those elections are millennial in their political impact in South Africa and, in fact, on the African continent and the world, relegating apartheid to the boneyard of failed, immoral approaches to human governance. But the hard part starts as newly-elected President Nelson Mandela begins to try to govern. The bad news is that governing the new South Africa will be difficult; the good news is that the changed circumstances that Mandela's taking office will validate in fact contain within them the solution to what will be his main problem, how to meet and fulfill reasonably the economic hopes and aspirations of the South African population.

At least two fundamental barriers to economic development and prosperity existed in pre-majority-rule, post-World War II South Africa. They were, first, the size of the economically active domestic South African market, and, second, the at least partial politically-based isolation of South Africa's economy from the African continental economy. First-class participation in the domestic economy, in terms of buying power and capital-generating capacity, resided almost entirely in the South African white population, at any given time about 15 percent of the population. In addition, the labor/skills market--from top to bottom--was skewed grotesquely by apartheid's "job reservation" laws. (Roughly put, very few blacks, despite their ability, were in supervisory roles; few whites, without respect to their competence, were not in supervisory roles. A black doctor could not supervise a white nurse, for example.) Even the whites were saved from the long-term development consequences of this economically-flawed approach only by the existence under the soil of the country of shocking amounts of gold, diamonds, and other riches.

The second fundamental barrier to what would have been normal South African economic development, and to what would have been normal *Africa-wide* economic development, was the partial economic isolation of South Africa from the rest of Africa. This was the official and basic prevailing state for three critical decades, from independence until 1990. It is certainly true that the various economic sanctions imposed by various parties against trade with and investment in South Africa were always unevenly enforced and respected. The apples we munched in Lubumbashi came from the Cape. Even late in the game, some American firms responded to the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 by



"selling" their assets in South Africa to their local distributors. At the same time, the "lost opportunity" costs to South Africa and to the rest of Africa of the relative economic and commercial isolation of South Africa were formidable. There is no doubt that the sanctions were seriously instrumental in finally bringing about political change in South Africa and, in that sense, were very much worth the candle. On the other hand, the disengagement from the overall African development process of the continent's most powerful national economy was very expensive, to South Africa and to Africa as a whole.

Some of these costs should now be transformed into opportunities, if it isn't too late and if South Africa's economy rides out the ongoing political sea change without structural damage. South African manufactured goods should eventually knock the socks off French and British imported competition in African markets. Building and creating the infrastructure to make that possible should attract and channel investment in South Africa and in the rest of Africa. America should see this as an opportunity. Why should African countries always borrow from international financial institutions or in Europe instead of in Johannesburg? Why shouldn't African companies be listed on an African stock exchange? Why should African politicians and business persons stash their cash in Zurich when it could earn higher interest, and be plowed back into their own national economies, through multiracial participatory South African financial institutions?

The blessing of all this--if it works--is that the possible surge in South African economic prospects will not only help the rest of Africa, it will also help solve the new multiracial South African government's own basic, fundamental problem. That is to meet the economic aspirations of the now participating majority of the South African population. This is a very high stakes wager in that, if it doesn't work this way, the South African economy--the last national African economy capable of pulling the African development train--risks slipping into the sad, hopeless cycle of debt, social decline, and eventual political chaos that prevails in much of the rest of the African continent.

### **The Role of the United States.**

Where do we come into this? The role of the United States Government in this enterprise must be basically that of cheerleader and confidence-builder. We can help with manpower training in South Africa. We can target what bilateral aid we still send to Africa as a whole toward the economic integration of the continent. We can cajole and threaten the international financial institutions through our large participation in them to row in that same direction with us. The real key, however, is American business, American private enterprise, American banking, that hardy band of former Yankee traders who, in their economic approach to Africa, have generally in recent years shown the

derring-do of an 85-year-old figure skater considering a triple axel. There is reason to hope, however, that they will be driven by a nose for profit, if not by heritage or farsightedness, to interest themselves in South Africa and Africa, with equity investments as well as with the normal, sometimes ghoulish concerns with gold and diamonds that fascinate the world economy.

African nations have breathtaking amounts of foreign debt on the books. African debt constitutes 106 percent of African Gross Domestic Product (GDP); the debt of Latin American countries represents 37 percent of Latin American GDP. What to do about African debt is difficult. Private financial institutions have written it off. Most debt to governments has been forgiven. But *the West* loaned them the money. And sometimes the circumstances of the loans were seamy--bribes, repayment agreements tied to particular revenues, endless "studies" and "consultancies"; in effect, the moral equivalent of taking French, British or American money out of one pocket and putting it into another, the cash having passed only figuratively through country "X" as "development." A loan requires two parties. So just cancel and forget all of it, but loan no more unless the request comes from a creditworthy private investor and not a government, and unless the viability of the investment is crystal clear. There has to be credit available for development to occur, but the track record of the past 30 years makes it painfully clear that "concessional terms" are basically a concession only to our paternalism, their leaders' greed, and our common folly. "Donor fatigue" is real. Africa and we have squandered 30 years worth of good will. We can't afford any more. Africa can't afford any more.

#### **U.S. Policy: Some Course Adjustment Needed.**

So where does this put us exactly in terms of concrete U.S. policy, as it stands at present and what should be done to change it? First of all, with respect to South Africa, we have grasped the picture. Hard on the heels of the removal of sanctions, African National Congress President Nelson Mandela's unequivocal declaration in September 1993 that sanctions were, in fact, no longer necessary, and Mandela's and President De Klerk's plea for full U.S. participation in the South African economy, U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown led an important and highly visible mission to South Africa to try to kick-start U.S. economic involvement in post-apartheid South Africa. *The New York Times* of January 9 proclaimed, "Foreigners Flock Back to Johannesburg" and consumer-vulnerable companies such as Sara Lee, Honeywell, and Proctor & Gamble are back into South Africa. One senses that a lot of the heat in Johannesburg is being generated by speculation, rather than by solid, long-term equity investment, and that there is still quite a bit of "wait and see" about investors' approach to South Africa. At the same time, the main point is that they are there, with a basically positive attitude. The fact that they are there in a tentative mode should have a sobering effect on all political elements in the country. All

South Africans should understand--and I believe that many do--that for the economic dreams of all of them to be realized, for everyone to live well from the very profitable enterprise that South Africa can be, the political transition must occur without leaving broken glass all over the floor.

If we accept that the road of a predominantly economic U.S. involvement in Africa is the right one--in fact, the only one that is viable and sustainable in post-Cold War U.S. political terms--as well as being the approach that is best for Africa itself, in terms of enabling its resources to be engaged in meeting its peoples' needs and aspirations, then the United States needs to pursue it more vigorously. This would significantly complement our interests in peacekeeping, peace-enforcing, peacemaking, and peace operations.

The Somalia problem has so far absorbed by all accounts a good \$2 billion since it started in 1992. Somalia has seven million people. U. S. economic aid to Africa in 1994 will come in under \$800 million. The problem of Liberia, with 2.5 million people, is getting another \$30 million poured on it by us in 1994 under a new program. Africa has 800 million people. There are a number of countries where things are going well, or could be going well. The message that we may be delivering to African countries is, basically, "If you want our attention, and, in particular, our money, fight among yourselves to the point where economic activity becomes no longer possible and your people flee and then starve. Oh, and be sure that CNN knows."

We cannot be blind to suffering. We would not be the people that we are if we were. But Americans' patience is always thin and our attention span short. The American taxpayer's patience is especially thin at a time when we are being asked by our leadership to look at ambitious new approaches to our own social problems.

In my view, purely and simply, the message of U.S. economic assistance to Africa, through bilateral and multilateral means, should be that we help those who take a constructive approach to building their own countries. That approach does *not* mean disengagement from Africa. In fact, some countries are on the right track with respect to economic development and responsible government. Some which come to mind as in decent political health or on the road to it and seriously interested in economic development are Benin, Botswana, Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Mauritius, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Cape Verde, Senegal, Ghana, and, possibly, Nigeria, if one accepts that a country of that size and population with its diverse groups and wealth is difficult to rule cogently. True Africanists will now be able to tear my thesis apart with cases of individual countries either included or excluded, but I would nonetheless maintain that we can differentiate between those roughly on the right track, and those clearly not. In fact, that is what the American taxpayer *pays* Africanists to do. The fact

that we have not always done so skillfully may be part of the eternal problem of trying to hoist Africa higher in the American foreign policy pecking order. We have sometimes succeeded in convincing our people that they *should* pour their money down a particular rat hole. That we have done so may have been a tribute to our eloquence or persuasive powers, but we are now harvesting the reaction in the form of sometimes indifference and resistance to involvement in Africa in general on the part of the American public.

### **U.S. Structural Adjustments Needed.**

While we are hard at work, we should look at a couple of organizational problems, also in the conduct of U.S. relations with Africa, that some have suggested need to be fixed in the name of efficiency, logic, and principle. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Department of State removed the North African countries--Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya--from the jurisdiction of the Bureau of African Affairs and put them into the then Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. Those countries were involved in the Arab/Israel question, a matter of primordial concern to us, as Arab, "Middle Eastern" countries; thus, logic in conducting relations with them was based on that aspect of their nature. Their inclusion with other Arab League states in that Department of State bureau made administrative as well as policy sense at that time.

Twenty years later, it may be that that division of responsibility for countries within the Department of State is now in fact archaic and the North African countries should be "returned" to the African continent in terms of the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. With the forward movement toward success in the Middle East peace negotiations that has been achieved, whether the Maghreb states, firmly on the African continent after all, are lumped with Near Eastern countries or African countries in terms of carrying out U.S. policy is no longer the major question that it was in 1973.

There is another aspect to the matter. The line drawn below North Africa on the State Department map roughly divides "Arab" North Africa from black, "sub-Saharan" Africa. Elsewhere in the Department of State such differentiation does not exist. Australia and New Zealand are part of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. The "Near East" and "South Asia" parts of the old Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs were split into two separate bureaus at Congressional behest in 1993, presumably at least partly in the name of geographic logic. Canada remains part of the Bureau of European Affairs rather than the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, but one wonders how long that will last as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is expanded and Canada itself takes a greater interest and role in the Organization of American States (OAS), linking to a greater degree U.S. relations with Canada to our relations with

Mexico and other countries in the Americas.

I believe that it is now time, with the Middle Eastern question on the way to resolution and with the need to tightly coordinate U.S. relations with all the Arab nations diminished by the end of the Cold War, to consider restoring the geographic logic and integrity of the term "African affairs" by transferring responsibility for the conduct of U.S. relations with the North African nations back to the Bureau of African Affairs. All of this reorganization may seem a bit arcane. At the same time, anyone who has ever worked in an organization knows well that the structure of an organization determines the locus of responsibility and power--in fact, the logic of the body.

Some observers have noted that the same cognitive dissonance exists in the organization of U.S. military relations with Africa. Africa now falls under the purview of several commands, several commanders-in-chief. Part of it belongs to the European Command (EUCOM), part of it belongs to the Central Command (CENTCOM), and part of our activities in Africa fall under the authority of our Special Operations Command (SOCOM). I am not aware that these commands step on each other's feet and I hesitate at the thought of creating another command in the face of budget cuts and "reorganizing government," but it is nonetheless the case that Africa is the sole continent which does not have a U.S. command specifically responsible for coordinating and carrying out U.S. military activities within it. In my view that does not make sense, particularly considering the level of our recent activities in Africa--in Somalia, in Rwanda, in Kenya, and elsewhere. The new Africa Command (AFCOM) should be based in the continental United States, for purposes of economy and because it would not be obvious in any case where in Africa such a headquarters should be based. This would not be unprecedented: CENTCOM is based in Tampa, Florida; the Pacific Command, in Honolulu; and SOUTHCOM, for Central and South America, is presently based in the Canal Zone of Panama, with thought being given to a move to the continental United States as 1999 and the handover of U.S. installations in Panama to the government of Panama draw closer. AFCOM would have a staff, but no specific forces assigned to it.

Thus, I put forward for consideration one major substantive and two organizational course adjustments of current U.S. Africa policy. The substantive one is a shift away from crisis-oriented attention and aid to Africa, to a dollars-and-cents, "Africa as a financial and commercial opportunity" approach to the continent. I believe that such a policy is the only long-term sustainable American approach to Africa. The two structural changes that I suggest we look at include moving the Maghreb states back into the Bureau of African Affairs of the Department of State and mounting a new U.S. military joint command, AFCOM, based in the United States, to coordinate and be responsible for all U.S. military involvement in Africa. I believe that these two structural changes are suggested by logic, efficiency, and

principle in the conduct of U.S. relations with Africa.

### **Vision.**

What should be our long-range vision of Africa and U.S. relations with the countries that together comprise the continent? First, it should be that each African country governs itself in such a way that its people live a decent life from the land and resources available to it. A decent life is hard to define, but its obvious components include education, health, the free exercise of human rights, a functioning system of justice, and distribution of wealth that does not include extremes that polarize, but does provide incentives to achieve. African countries should live at peace inside themselves and with each other. They should cooperate fruitfully in economic and political forums, realizing economies of scale and infrastructure whenever possible, to seek to improve the lot of each of them.

African nations should be responsible citizens of the planet, acting as conscientious conservators of the portion of the environment that they occupy. African nations should be responsible participants in commonly agreed upon international undertakings, including peace operations when necessary. They should take a particular responsibility for maintaining order on the African continent, as much as possible, keeping the peace among themselves. The rest of the world does not have much means for it.

What should Africa be for the United States? It can and should be an interesting and reliable economic partner. We have things we wish to buy from Africa, we have savings to invest in Africa, and we have products we wish to sell to Africa. It should be a place where African-Americans in pursuit of their heritage, American missionaries, scientists, researchers and conservationists interested in Africa, and just plain American tourists wanting to show their children Africa can go and travel in peace and security, as free as is possible of danger from disease or violence. We want Africa and Africans to do well. We want African nations to be strong, healthy, prosperous neighbors and partners in the world. Obviously, a long way remains to go in that regard for that state to prevail across the continent, but despair in the face of disparity between actual circumstances and what one seeks to bring about is never justified; realism *is*, and upon that basis future U.S. policy toward Africa should be constructed. It can be done.

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