Africa, African Americans, and the Avuncular Sam

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This essay investigates U.S. policy toward Africa and highlights the role that African Americans have played in influencing this policy. It is inspired by the need for an urgent dialogue between Africans and African Americans on U.S. policy toward the continent. It begins by briefly assessing the ignominious roots of Africa's relationship with America and pan-Africanist efforts to liberate Africa from alien rule. It then analyzes the destructive effects on Africa of U.S. policies during the era of the Cold War. It criticizes the pernicious effects of stereotypical and simplistic coverage of Africa in the American media, and assesses U.S. policy toward Africa under the administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. It concludes by offering some policy recommendations for a more enlightened U.S. policy toward Africa.

The Ignominious Roots of A Relationship

Four centuries of a sordid trade in human cargo of Africans by American slave masters was followed by a century of colonial enslavement of Africa by European imperialists. These defining historical events have shaped the relationship of African Americans and Africans with the West, and no serious examination of U.S. policy toward Africa can avoid focusing on the blighted legacy of slavery and colonialism, both of which created a bond between African Americans and their ancestral home, resulting in their efforts to influence U.S. policy toward Africa.

Fifteen years after 1885, when European imperial cartographers met in Berlin to carve up Africa among themselves, the Pan-African movement was born, as the Trinidadian lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams organized the first Pan-African Congress in London. Between 1919 and 1945, Pan-African congresses were held in Paris, Brussels, Lisbon, New York, and Manchester. These congresses were at first dominated by African Americans like W. E. B. Du Bois and Afro-Caribbeans like George Padmore, at a time when Liberia and Ethiopia were the only independent African states, and only later did Africans participate in them. The early Pan-Africanists'

demands were mostly limited to trying to secure education, economic development, and racial equality for Africans. Even as the supposedly liberal American president Woodrow Wilson, meeting with European statesmen in Versailles to redraw the map of Europe after World War I, passionately championed the rights of subjugated Central European minorities to national self-determination, Pan-Africanists meeting nearby reminded him of his country's denial of the most fundamental rights to its own African-American citizens.

By the time of the fifth Pan-African congress, in Manchester in 1945, its prophets were boldly demanding African independence from European powers that were exhausted and impoverished by their exertions in repelling Nazi tyranny. Manchester shifted the center of Pan-Africanism from the Diaspora to Africa, as the meeting was dominated by future African leaders, including Nnamdi Azikiwe, Hastings Banda, Jomo Kenyatta, and Kwame Nkrumah. Du Bois effectively handed the torch of Pan-Africanism to Nkrumah at Manchester. Several of Africa's first-generation leaders, like Azikiwe and Nkrumah, had studied in the United States and confronted the racism that then pervaded apartheid America. These experiences would shape their struggle for political independence and leave a lasting desire to use Africa's independence to fight for African Americans' freedom.

Emperors of the Cold War

After World War II ended, in 1945, the United States first portrayed itself as an anticolonial power, urging decolonization in Africa and Asia. With the onset of the Cold War, by the 1950s, Washington changed its anticolonial rhetoric and talked instead of a global struggle for "containment" and "anticommunism." It no longer urged its European allies—Britain, France, Portugal, and Spain—to surrender their African possessions, but came to regard the ubiquitous presence of France in Africa as a useful way of keeping the Soviets out of the continent. France's neocolonialism in Africa included establishing economic, military, and political relations with its former colonies—a strategy that allowed it to send troops to prop up or oust puppet regimes, tied the currencies of these countries to the French franc, and allowed French officials undue influence over the decisions of supposedly sovereign countries. Washington provided military assistance to its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally Portugal—assistance that helped Portugal continue its colonial presence in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau until a military coup in Lisbon in 1974.

By the 1960s, the Cold War's main antagonists were two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. With France, they turned Africa into a strategic playground to conduct their ideological games. They flooded Africa with weapons provided to local proxies in Angola, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Somalia, and elsewhere. U.S. policy often ignored principles as basic as democracy and development, and focused parochially on contain-

ing the "red peril" in Africa through protecting and providing military and financial assistance to often brutal and undemocratic clients in exchange for political support and military bases.

The cases of three American Cold War "emperors" in Africa—Liberia's Samuel Doe, Somalia's Siad Barre, and Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko—are worth studying to illustrate the expediency and cynicism involved in U.S. policy toward Africa during this period. Liberia became a republic in 1847. Since 1822, the American Colonization Society had been transporting black American settlers, largely freed slaves from the antebellum South, to Liberia. Abraham Lincoln and other American politicians who supported the repatriation had naively hoped that this resettlement might resolve their own country's racial problems. An Americo-Liberian oligarchy, constituting only 5 percent of the population, held power by repressing the indigenous Liberian population. Political and educational reforms enacted by Liberian presidents William Tubman and William Tolbert between 1944 and 1980 failed to heal the resentment felt by indigenous people against settler domination. Their spontaneous jubilation following a bloody coup in 1980 by low-ranking soldiers, led by Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe, symbolized the level of hostility that had welled up against the ruling elite. Over the next four years, Doe eliminated potential rivals through exile and assassination. His tactics, typified by blatantly rigged, American-condoned elections in 1985, closed off peaceful avenues for dissent and resulted in several military challenges to his regime, which culminated in a bloody seven-year civil war between 1989 and 1996.

The United States was Doe's strongest external supporter. Largely for strategic Cold War calculations and fears of Liberia's falling into the Soviet camp, it backed Doe, whom it rewarded with a state visit to Washington in 1982. Ronald Reagan described the Liberian autocrat as "a dependable ally—a friend in need" (Gifford 1993: 234). Doe supported America's anti-Libya policies and helped smuggle arms to UNITA (União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola) rebels in Angola. After the rigged 1985 elections, American officials rushed to justify this farcical charade. Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, described the vote as "a rare achievement in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World" (Liebenow 1987:293). In an era of Cold War, America's strategic interests in Liberia appeared more important to Washington than niceties about human rights and democracy. The Reagan administration sank over $500 million into Liberia in the 1980s. In Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), the United States helped install Mobutu in power in 1965, and with France, remained Mobutu's staunchest external ally for three decades. Like Doe, Mobutu closed the Soviet embassy in his country and adopted pro-Israel policies. He imposed a one-party state, rigged elections, and eliminated his rivals. Ronald Reagan described him as "a voice of good reason and good sense," and George H. W. Bush went fishing with him.

Finally, Somalia's Siad Barre, the third US-backed Cold War "emperor," followed in the repressive footsteps of Doe and Mobutu. Barre

became increasingly brutal from the late 1970s, employing assassination squads, massacring hundreds of religious protestors, and bombing countless villages, towns and cities in a "genocidal campaign" against political enemies in northern Somalia. But the Somali tyrant provided the US with a strategic base on the Horn of Africa to protect Middle Eastern oil sea-lanes and to keep an eye on Cuban troops in neighboring Ethiopia. After the end of the Cold War, Barre, Doe and Mobutu were revealed to be emperors without clothes, humiliated out of power and abandoned by their errant, avuncular paymaster (Booker 2001; Clough 1992; Schraeder 1996).

Of Legislators, Lobbyists, and Libels

To influence U.S. foreign policy requires an understanding of the intricate, labyrinthine world of policymaking in Washington. A plethora of ethnic lobbyists and special interest groups seek to manipulate the policymaking process in their favor. Jewish Americans lobby for Israel; Cuban Americans lobby against Castro; Mexican and Italian Americans lobby for increased immigration from their ancestral homes; and, more recently, Polish Americans have lobbied for Poland's entry into NATO. It is generally believed that, the most effective, powerful, and wealthy group in influencing U.S. foreign policy is the Jewish lobby. The fact that Africa is a continent rather than a country makes it more difficult for US-based lobbyists to rally support for a diverse group of 53 countries.

Historically, African-American scholars and diplomats, even before embarking on their own domestic civil rights struggles, sought to influence U.S. policy toward Africa. They advocated better treatment of indigenous people by the repressive Americo-Liberian oligarchy; criticized the brutalities of the Belgian King Leopold's rule over the Congo; opposed Mussolini's occupation of Ethiopia between 1936 and 1941; and, from the late 1940s, vociferously condemned the inhumane treatment of blacks in South Africa (Harris 1993; Skinner 1992). Though Du Bois lived out his last days in Nkrumah's Ghana and wrote frequently about Africans' plight under colonial rule, his heirs in America, preoccupied with continuing struggles to escape from the vicious circle of poverty, racism, crime, and homelessness, have engaged the continent only fitfully. Even today, some of the most senior African-American officials and intellectuals reveal a stunning ignorance about Africa, limiting their ability to influence U.S. policy toward the continent. Du Bois himself was not free of some of these prejudice: he often described Africans as "backward peoples" in need of a *mission civilisatrice,* which his sense of *noblesse obligé* imposed a "black man's burden" on him to fulfill (Sundquist 1996).

Africa had always been a cultural shield behind which African Americans sought refuge in an idealized past, free of slavery and xenophobia and aggressive efforts by white Americans to obliterate their African cultures and identities. The idealized vision of Africa held by many of Du Bois's descendants was a nostalgic longing for a return to an invented past, a

therapeutic balm to soothe the pains of racism and powerlessness in their adopted homeland. In American popular culture, comedian Eddie Murphy demonstrated the more absurd side of this perception of Africa in his movie *Coming to America*, which depicted an African prince living a palatial existence in an Africa complete with giraffes, lions, and elephants roaming free in his backyard as pets. *Barbershop*, a hit movie in 2002, produced by and starring African Americans, provided the other extreme view of the continent: a negative caricature of a stereotypical African character, a buffoon as inarticulate as he was inelegant.

Leadership struggles and divisions within the African-American elite could also weaken its ability to influence U.S. policy toward Africa. The historic battle between the gradualism of the intellectual Du Bois and the radicalism of the activist Marcus Garvey in the 1920s was replicated in the 1960s by the divergent approaches adopted by Martin Luther King (integrationist) and the early Malcolm X (separatist). That historical divide can perhaps still be seen today in the fact that the most charismatic and popular black leader in America today is the fiery Louis Farrakhan, whose Nation of Islam preaches a gospel of self-sufficiency and self-pride. It is doubtful, as Henry Louis Gates has noted, that any other black leader could have mobilized the mass support that Farrakhan achieved during his Million Man March in Washington, D.C., in October 1995 (Gates 1998:123–154). In contrast, prominent black intellectuals like Henry Gates, Bell Hooks, and Cornell West are largely armchair revolutionaries in their "ebony towers," even as leaders like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton are accused of rank opportunism or embroiled in scandals. As Cornell West noted: "There has not been a time in the history of black people in this country when the quantity of politicians and intellectuals was so great, yet the quality of both groups has been so low" (1993:35).

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and TransAfrica had their greatest success in influencing U.S. policy when sanctions were imposed on South Africa's apartheid regime in 1986, after two-thirds of Congress overrode a reactionary Reagan veto. This result followed years of daily protests in front of the South African embassy in Washington, D.C., led by TransAfrica and involving African-American legislators like Ronald Dellums, Charles Rangel, and Julian Dixon. To head the drive for sanctions against South Africa, African-American leaders including Randall Robinson, Walter Fauntroy, Mary Frances Berry, and Eleanor Holmes Norton, founded the Free South Africa Movement.Significantly, influential white legislators like Edward Kennedy, Nancy Kassebaum, and Steven Solarz were in the forefront of the legislative struggle for sanctions, which eventually dealt a serious blow to the South African economy. Since parts of the United States itself had operated a racist, apartheid system until the 1960s, it was possible to rally support for this cause by comparing it to an experience that many Americans recognized.

In contrast to its success with South Africa in the 1980s, the African-American lobby was spectacularly ineffectual in efforts to impose sanctions on Nigeria in the 1990s. During the brutal regime of General Sani Abacha

(1993–1998), several members of the Congressional Black Caucus campaigned to impose oil sanctions on Nigeria. In 1997, Congressman Donald Payne introduced the Nigeria Democracy Act, calling for the freezing of American investments in Nigeria and the imposition of an oil embargo on Nigeria. But some members of the CBC opposed the measure. William Jefferson, for example, described the act as "unimaginative" and "wrongheaded." Senator Carol Mosely-Braun and Louis Farrakhan visited Abacha in Nigeria, demonstrating the ignorance and insensitivity of some members of the African-American leadership in embracing African autocrats who brutalize Africans.

In response to the threat of U.S. sanctions, Abacha hired American public-relations and lobbying firms in Washington, D.C., including supposedly liberal black Democrats, Washington and Christian, to wage an antisanctions campaign. If sanctions were imposed, Abacha threatened to retaliate against American oil companies in Nigeria—Chevron, Exxon, and Mobil. The American oil giants questioned the efficacy of a unilateral U.S. oil embargo and tirelessly reiterated their fears that European companies would move in to fill the vacuum. Senior American officials quietly dropped their previous threats of oil sanctions. Carol Mosely-Braun, William Jefferson, and other African-American members of Congress spoke out against sanctions and in favor of a policy of "constructive dialogue" with the Abacha regime. Mosely-Braun's ill-advised visit to the Abacha family in Abuja was effectively deployed against her when she lost her senate seat in 1998

A national summit on Africa was held in Washington, D.C., in February 2000. This summit involved government officials, the private sector, and civil society actors from across the United States who gathered, after several regional summits, to share perspectives on how to build a viable constituency for Africa in America.

To influence U.S. policy toward Africa, it is important to understand the different government agencies and departments involved in the process. Some of the most important decision-making bodies include the Policy Coordinating Committee for Africa and the Deputies Committee, at which representatives from the State and Defense departments, the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Information Agency, the National Security Council, and the Treasury Department gather to discuss how to act toward Africa. The debates in these forums are often critical in influencing US policy toward Africa. The American decision to intervene in Somalia in 1992 and the decision not to intervene in Liberia in 1990 emerged largely from these policy debates. African policy is often left to mid-level officials, with senior administration officials tending to focus on more strategic areas of the world. As Michael Clough noted, Africanists in the State Department often follow three basic rules: don't spend much money; don't create situations that could lead to domestic controversies; and don't let African issues complicate policy in more strategic parts of the world (Clough 1992: 2).

There is still a lack of a powerful, cohesive domestic constituency on Africa in the U.S., a constituency that could wield the influence of the Jewish-American or Cuban-American lobbies. U.S. policy toward Africa is not based on consistent Congressional support, and is often based on seeking *ad hoc* coalitions in support of specific policies. To influence Uncle Sam's policies toward Africa, it is important that African-American lobbyists work more closely with Washington-based NGOs in fields as diverse as human rights, famine, AIDS, and the environment. The tens of thousands of highly educated Africans in the American Diaspora must also be involved in building a constituency for Africa in the United States.

One of the most destructive factors in U.S. perceptions of Africa is the often libelous, stereotypical, and facile journalism on Africa in much of the American media. Media representations of Africa as a disease-ridden, war-ravaged "dark continent" of primitive savages and wild beasts where ignorant "tribes" fight endless wars are hardly likely to encourage support for Africa from instinctively generous, but often spectacularly ignorant, residents of Peoria. One of the most disturbing publications on Africa in recent times was *Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa*, a journalistic account by African-American reporter Keith Richburg, who worked largely as a war correspondent for the *Washington Post* in Africa between 1991 and 1994. After witnessing the horrors and brutalities of civil wars in Liberia, Rwanda, and Somalia, Richburg thanks God that his slave ancestors made it across the Atlantic, wraps himself around the stars and stripes, and launches into a simplistic tirade about Africa: "Talk to me about Africa and my black roots and my kinship with my African brothers and I'll throw it back in your face, and then I'll rub your nose in the images of rotting flesh" (1998: xvi).

It is hard to believe that a Balkan-American journalist covering the savage wars of secession in the Balkans of the 1990s would have rendered such a silly account and linked the brutality of the war to some inherent cultural flaw in his ancestors. Richburg's book provided cover to many white analysts to peddle their own prejudices about Africa, and added to distorted stereotypes about the continent without really explaining its diversity. The real problem with this book was not so much that it was controversial, but that it was simply awful, in substance and style.

Clinton's African Safari

African Americans have often embraced Bill Clinton as one of their own. A myth has even developed that Clinton was one of Africa's best friends, based on two brief African diplomatic safaris in 1998 and 2000 during which he felt the continent's pain. It is important to demythologize Clinton's Africa policy as one that in fact followed in the shameful neglect of his predecessors; he was not a better friend of Africa than previous presidents. Continuing George H. W. Bush's Africa policy, the Clinton White House prioritized

democratization, development, and conflict management (Frazer 2003; Khadiagala 2001; Landsberg 2003; Ottaway 1999; Stremlau 2000). The Cold War–era obsession with "containment" was to be replaced by what National Security Adviser Anthony Lake described as a policy of "enlargement," a policy that envisaged the U.S. seeking to enlarge democracies worldwide, rather than to keep tyrants in power. Though in Liberia, Zaire, and Somalia Uncle Sam had abandoned brutal clients on whom Washington had lavished billions of dollars during the Cold War, Clinton's democratization record was abysmal. Policy often resembled that of the Cold War era, as strategic rationales were found to justify a failure to support multiparty democracy in various African countries. Anthony Lake's "enlargement" was soon replaced by American support for a cantankerous warlord's gallery that Clinton arrogantly dubbed Africa's "new leaders": Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi, Eritrea's Isais Afwerki, and Rwanda's Paul Kagame. None of these leaders could be accurately described as operating anything like a democratic multiparty political system, and most of them were thinly disguised autocrats. No sooner had Clinton anointed them as Africa's model rulers than they went to war against each other: Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a bloody border war between 1998 and 2000, and Uganda and Rwanda, after invading the Congo in a bid to topple Laurent Kabila's regime in 1998, soon fell out over strategy and the spoils of war in the mineral-rich country and turned their guns on each other. A large part of U.S. support for these regimes was based on its need to maintain an anti-Sudan coalition. All four nations together received $30 million in U.S. military assistance in 1996 alone.

An important concern of America's post–Cold-War policy toward Africa is that a "green menace" (green being the color of Islam) may be replacing the "red peril" of the Cold War era, particularly after the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and, more significantly, the attacks of 11 September 2001. The Clinton administration bombed what it erroneously described as a chemical factory in Sudan in 1998 in response to the East African embassy bombings. In Algeria in 1991, with Islamist parties poised to win democratic elections, George H. W. Bush's administration turned a blind eye when Algerian military leaders annulled the democratic elections. Washington has consistently refused to pressure the historically repressive regime in Morocco, the so-called "moderate" gatekeeper of the Mediterranean, to accept a U.N. referendum in Western Sahara, a territory unlawfully annexed and occupied by Moroccan military force since 1975.

In the area of development, more than three-quarters of American trade and investment in Africa was concentrated during the Clinton era, as it is today, in four mostly oil-rich countries: Angola, Gabon, Nigeria, and South Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa still accounts for less than 1 percent of U.S. global trade and investment. Newt Gingrich's "do-nothing" Congress of conservative ideologues made good on its promise to cut the Development Aid for Africa from $802 million in 1995 to $675 million in 1996 and 1997. The numerical weakness of the Congressional Black Caucus and the lack of an organized and well-endowed Africa lobby prevented Africa's friends

from restraining Gingrich's ax. That $2 billion of U.S. aid annually goes to autocratic Egypt (Israel receives more than $3 billion) while 48 sub-Saharan African states, comprising some of the poorest countries in the world, have to share less than $1 billion of US aid annually, is the clearest sign that political and strategic considerations, rather than poverty and democratic considerations, continue to drive U.S. aid policy.

Undoubtedly, the worst failures of U.S. policy toward Africa in recent times were Clinton's actions in Somalia and Rwanda. Somalia's civil war erupted in 1991 after Washington's former Cold War client, Siad Barre, fled Mogadishu. With an impending humanitarian catastrophe, the United Nations deployed peacekeepers, led by 25,000 American troops, to establish order and feed a starving population. After Clinton took office, the U.S. reduced its forces to 4,000, but pursued increasingly aggressive tactics, killing many innocent civilians in a hunt for the brutal warlord, Mohammed Farah Aideed, who had murdered U.N. peacekeepers. In October 1993, in a secret, botched mission to hunt down Aideed, planned entirely by the Pentagon without the U.N.'s knowledge, eighteen American soldiers and about one thousand Somalis were killed. Despite Hollywood's later efforts to rewrite history in the revisionist *Black Hawk Down*, there was absolutely nothing heroic about killing thousands of civilians, a large number of them women and children. To deflect a strong domestic backlash and prevent Republicans from making political capital from these events, Clinton inaccurately blamed the botched mission on the U.N. and withdrew his troops from Somalia, effectively crippling the mission without achieving peace in the country (Boutros-Ghali 1999; Clarke and Herbst 1997; Hirsch and Oakley 1995; Kornegay 1993; Sahnoun 1994).

Six months after the Somali debacle, the Clinton administration forced the withdrawal of most of a 2,500-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission (which included no American soldiers) from Rwanda, a mission that, if bolstered, could probably have prevented the 1994 genocide. The United States thereby blocked any effective U.N. response to the killing of 800,000 people. Washington was being asked not to provide peacekeepers in Rwanda, but merely to mandate the U.N. to take action to save helpless victims of genocide. But with congressional mid-term elections approaching—as African-American NSC Director Susan Rice was reported to have reminded her colleagues—cynical political calculations took precedence over an international legal obligation to prevent genocide (Power 2002:359). In a bid to escape pressure for the U.N. Security Council to mandate a military intervention to stop the killings, Clinton's officials were ordered not to describe the massacres as "genocide" (Anyidoho 1999; Melvern 2000; Prunier 1995; Suhrke 1997). The conspicuous silence of the Congressional Black Caucus and other African-American lobbyists during this African Holocaust remains one of the most mysterious and disappointing episodes in recent U.S. policy toward Africa.

In light of these events, the constant depiction of Clinton by many African Americans as Africa's best friend seems puzzling. At an Africa-America Institute dinner I attended in New York in 2000, Clinton was

presented as a close friend of Africa, and he beamed a video message from the White House touting his administration's apparently successful Africa policy. The otherwise brilliant Toni Morrison's curious description of Clinton as America's first black president reveals a certain naïveté. Even closer to home, Clinton shamefully surrendered to conservatives on welfare reform in 1996 by signing a bill which will almost certainly throw many black women and children into penury without state support and break up black families. In 1994, at the first sign of ultraconservative opposition, he beat a speedy retreat over the appointment of prominent black lawyer Lani Guinier as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. These actions demonstrate the opportunism of a political survivor who turned pragmatism into an art of governance, effectively metamorphosing into a moderate Republican after Gingrich's conservative troops marched on Congress in 1994. Like Jimmy Carter, Clinton was simply another white southern president who had grown up around blacks and could relate to them, but whose supposedly principled foreign policy ideals in Africa were often sacrificed at the altar of realpolitik.

Emphasizing the triumph of symbolism over substance, Clinton was also popular in many parts of Africa. Even Nigeria's president, Olusegun Obasanjo, was not immune to a certain naïveté about his Africa policy. Following Clinton's visit to the Nigerian capital of Abuja in 2000, the main street leading from the international airport was named after the American president as a tribute to his apparent contributions to Africa. This disappointing act would have been more appropriate for a supplicant banana republic than the biggest black population in the world. It was hard to imagine how the American president who, during an Africa tour only two years earlier, had urged Abacha, a military thug who was brutalizing his own people (and had imprisoned Obasanjo himself), to remove his uniform and become a civilian president, could now become a Nigerian hero.

Following the debacles in Somalia and Rwanda, Washington devised an African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) in 1996 as a way of strengthening the capacity of African armies to intervene in humanitarian crises (Adebajo and O'Hanlon 1997; Campbell 2000; Frazer 1997; Omach 2000). The idea was that Africans would do *most* of the dying, while the United States would do *some* of the spending to avoid being drawn into politically risky interventions in an area of low strategic interest. But the $20 million annual cost of the program is derisory, and ACRI has mostly conducted training of armies in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, and Uganda, without addressing the much more urgent logistical needs of African armies. The program has been criticized for supporting key American allies bilaterally, rather than the multilateral efforts of African organizations like the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Two of Africa's most respected leaders, South Africa's Nelson Mandela and Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, rejected ACRI on the basis that Africans had not been consulted

in its formulation, and the plan had also not included a role for the United Nations, the body primarily responsible for global peace and security. ACRI was therefore thought to be vulnerable to unilateral manipulation by Washington.

Despite these disappointments, one of the few areas of U.S. policy toward Africa in which Clinton deserves some credit is trade. Congress passed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in May 2000, granting more generous access to African goods, like apparel and textiles, in selected sectors of the American market. AGOA appears to be yielding dividends for Africa. In the first seven months of 2002, African apparel exports to the United States exceeded $100 million, while 200,000 new jobs were created in Africa between 2000 and 2002 as a result of increased exports from AGOA (Versi 2003). But AGOA has been criticized as a plan to make Africa safe for American capitalism, allowing market access to a limited number of African goods in selected sectors of the U.S. market in exchange for low tariffs and access for American investors to a wide range of African industries (Robinson 2000). Significantly, AGOA does not envisage opening up America's wasteful and heavily-subsidized agricultural sector in which Africa has a comparative advantage, with about 70 percent of its population working in this vital sector.

In concluding this section, it is important to highlight the role played in the Clinton administration by two prominent African Americans: the late Ron Brown and Susan Rice. Brown, Clinton's first Secretary of Commerce, was an energetic champion in challenging France's insistence on maintaining its former African colonies as an exclusive "sphere of influence." France's role in Africa became discredited in the 1990s, after it was implicated in supporting *génocidaires* in Rwanda and backed a sinking Mobutu long after it was politically sensible to do so. Brown encouraged American companies to invest in Africa, traveled often to the continent, and was credited with establishing the U.S.–South-Africa business roundtable. He fought consistently to reverse stereotypical views of Africa. In a television debate before his death (in an airplane crash in April 1996), he employed formidable debating skills to demolish the Ghanaian conservative analyst George Ayitteh, accusing him of highlighting only negative events in a diverse African continent and perpetuating the stereotypes that make foreigners wary of investing in the continent. Brown was a true advocate for Africa.

In 1996, Susan Rice, a 34-year-old Oxford-trained Rhodes scholar at the time, was appointed Clinton's Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. The appointment of such a young and inexperienced Africa hand was seen by many Africans as the clearest sign of the low priority accorded to Africa in Washington policy circles. Rice's Africa experience seemed to consist largely of her doctoral research on the peace process in Zimbabwe, though she had gained some experience in the National Security Council. Being young and female, she did not receive much respect from several of Africa's octogenarian, sexist leaders.

Critics noted Rice's inexperience in leading negotiations over the Ethiopia-Eritrea border dispute, and Anthony Lake eventually took over mediation efforts (Negashi and Tronvil 2000, especially pp. 59–60 and 72). Even within her own department, some observers noted that Rice could be abrasive and insecure in asserting her authority over plenipontentiaries with far more experience than hers. Though her intelligence was widely recognized, she was regarded as somewhat out of her depth in the complicated cesspit of African diplomacy. Like Ron Brown, she urged American investors to take Africa seriously, but she consistently refused to see any personal identification with Africa when questioned by reporters during Clinton's diplomatic safaris to the continent.

Bush's Black "Dove" and White "Hawks"

During the presidential campaign in 2000, George W. Bush, coached by the first female African-American National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, reiterated his lack of interest in Africa and has since spoken about Africa as if it is a country rather than a continent: as Bush noted in June 2001, "Africa is a nation that suffers from incredible disease" (Bruni 2001). Ironically, Bush has an African-American Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who seems to identify genuinely with Africa. Powell visited the continent within four months of taking office and identified South Africa and Nigeria as key allies of the United States. During that trip, Powell vociferously criticized African "dinosaurs" like Kenya's Daniel arap Moi and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, calling on them to relinquish power. Washington was credited with playing a positive role in the South African–brokered withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the Congo at the end of 2002.

But the "dovish" Powell has to contend with powerful "hawks" and members of the white policy establishment in Washington—men like Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and Rumsefeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz. All three took control of foreign policymaking, and have led the inexperienced Bush down all sorts of dangerous blind alleys. Cheney had voted against Nelson Mandela's release from prison as a Congressman in 1986, branding the African National Congress (ANC) a "terrorist" organization. Walter Kansteiner III, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, also opposed sanctions against apartheid South Africa in the 1980s, and as late as 1990 considered Mandela's ANC to be unrepresentative of the aspirations of most South Africans.

Powell has suffered some humiliating policy failures at the hands of these "hawks." In the African context, his failure to attend, as scheduled, the United Nations World Conference against Racism in Durban in September 2001, was a disappointing policy defeat. Concerns over criticisms of Israel's harsh occupation of Palestine apparently led to Powell's last-minute withdrawal from the conference. This was the clearest sign, if any was needed, of how powerful the Jewish-American lobby is, in stark contrast to

the powerlessness of the African-American lobby. In a global conference to discuss slavery, reparations, and racism—the issues closest to the hearts of many African Americans—the United States could not muster the will to send a representative to the conference. Powell's presence—as the top diplomat of the most powerful state in the world—would have sent a strong message of some of the changes at the top of American society and given Powell the stature to argue America's case from a position of moral strength.

Condoleezza Rice has often been reported to be siding with the "hawks" in the Bush administration. During the debate on the Race conference in Durban in September 2001, she insensitively dismissed reparations for Africans and their descendants in the Diaspora as an irrelevance of the past, revealing a stunning ignorance by many conservative African Americans, who neither care much about Africa, nor identify with, African-American causes (Lemann 2002; Staples 2003). Many members of this group steadfastly refuse to acknowledge any sort of African identity. Even more liberal members of this group, like Susan Rice, seem eager to play down their African heritage. Powell, in contrast, seems to be comfortable in his own skin. The son of Jamaican immigrants, he has embraced a black identity not in a naïve way, but in recognition that his African identity does not make him any less American. As he noted during his trip to South Africa in May 2001, "Africa matters to America by history and by choice. As the first African-American secretary of state so far, I will enthusiastically engage with Africa on behalf of the American people" (Innocenti 2001:1). He has identified with, and spoken out for, African and African-American causes and courageously defended them, even in hostile forums, such as the Republican national convention (Barry and Thomas 2001; Cose 2001; Gates 1998; Powell 1995). A controversial and notable exception was Powell's support for the misguided U.S. policy of "constructive engagement" with apartheid South Africa under Ronald Reagan.

Following the failure of Powell's strategy of securing U.N. support for the American invasion of Iraq in March 2003, he has been seen as having moved into the camp of the "hawks." He seems to be endangering his historical legacy, as seen most vividly in his presentation of flimsy and unconvincing evidence to the U.N. Security Council in February 2003, to justify the U.S. invasion of Iraq. He has since told confidants he did not entirely believe the case he was arguing at the UN (Keller 2003). African-American civil-rights activist and singer Harry Bellafonte's stinging condemnation of Powell as a "house slave" may reflect more widespread unease among his early supporters that he has simply become a servant of power, used by "hawks" to justify actions he patently does not believe in, as long as he can continue to parade as America's top diplomat.

One of the most urgent policy challenges for the Bush administration is the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which killed 2.4 million Africans out of a global total of 3 million in 2000. Since the early 1980s, an estimated 17 million Africans are believed to have died of this disease (Ala 2003; Peters 2000). In 2001, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, called on rich countries

to contribute $7 to $10 billion annually to a global AIDS fund. The United States announced a disappointing initial contribution of $200 million to the fund. Bush's pledge of $15 billion to the global battle against AIDS (with most of this money set aside for Africa) in January 2003 was facing the prospect of drastic cuts by a penny-pinching Congress at the time of writing. This promise was the main focus of Bush's largely symbolic visit to Senegal, South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, and Nigeria in July 2003. Failure to deliver on this pledge will be seen by many Africans as yet another example of the empty rhetoric of another American president embarking on another diplomatic safari to the continent. Shortly after Bush's visit to Africa, the United States deployed 200 soldiers to assist a Nigerian-led peacekeeping force in Liberia; the American soldiers were withdrawn after only two months.

What Is to be Done?

In concluding this essay, it is important to offer recommendations for a more enlightened U.S. policy toward Africa. First, Washington must support democracy more consistently in Africa and not make exceptions that are politically expedient for short-term policy gains. Genuine democrats must be supported and brutish autocrats shunned. To build a strong constituency for Africa, African-American lobbyists must support more education and research on African issues and continue to work with the Congressional Black Caucus, Africans in the United States, and NGOs with an interest in Africa. Initiatives such as the National Summit for Africa, must be sustained, and they must build support for Africa at the grassroots level in America.

In pursuing its support for conflict management efforts in Africa, Washington must be careful not to incur the wrath of other African states by focusing too much attention on South Africa and Nigeria. This support should be multilateral, and not simply bilateral, and regional organizations like the AU, ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD badly need strengthening. This does not, of course, preclude bilateral assistance to the South African army or Nigerian police, but there must be a recognition that Africans are striving to establish more legitimate multilateral security mechanisms that should be supported. The funds available for ACRI—now renamed Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance—must be massively increased, and this military cooperation must be extended beyond training to include the supply of logistical equipment to regional security organizations.

Many Africans have expressed profound concerns that the U.S. war on terrorism will divert American assistance to Africa from economic development and democratization to terrorism-related security issues. Many African analysts have called on Washington to address urgently the root causes of terrorism—such as poverty, injustice, and social inequalities—rather than simply launching military strikes against an elusive enemy (Baregu

2002; Jordan 2003). The establishment of a U.S. military base in Djibouti in 2002 to hunt down terrorist suspects in the Horn of Africa heightened such concerns. Antiterrorism, like anticommunism during the Cold War, must not become the new conditionality for receiving future American aid.

Washington must instead support more strongly the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a plan designed by African leaders to mobilize Western financial assistance for Africa in exchange for "good governance" by African leaders (Adedeji 2002; International Peace Academy 2002; Landsberg 2002). NEPAD itself must be democratized to address the views of African civil society activists. The United States needs to play more of a role in annulling Africa's $230 billion debt, which was largely accumulated by corrupt, monstrous African autocrats, many of whom were fed with western loans during the Cold War. Even with an AIDS epidemic threatening to wipe out populations in many African countries, these governments are forced to use a quarter of their export earnings on servicing debts that everyone knows can never be repaid. Scarce resources that should go to health and education must not continue to go to service unpayable debts. The African Growth and Opportunity Act must be expanded to allow free access to Africa's agricultural products, so that the continent can garner the resources needed for its industrial takeoff. This change must be effected not just out of an altruistic feeling of charity, but to take advantage of the potential of trade with an African market of nearly one billion consumers.

One of the most shocking and horrifying incidents I encountered as an African living in New York for five years was the case of Amadou Diallo, a Guinean immigrant who was shot to death in New York in 2001 when four white policemen pumped forty-one bullets into his chest in front of his home. This case highlights the continued link between the struggles for racial equality of Africans and African Americans. The outrage that followed the policemen's acquittal in a tragic American history of injustice from the lynching and castration of black men to countless cases of police brutality against unarmed blacks could be heard from the Bronx to Conakry, and from Dakar to Harlem.

The Pan-Africanist torch that Du Bois had handed to Nkrumah in Manchester in 1945 was nearly extinguished when Nkrumah dropped it within eight years of increasingly autocratic rule and diplomatic isolation. The flame continues to flicker, even as the heirs of Nkrumah, men like Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo, attempt to fulfill the vision of a united, peaceful Africa. It is important that Africans and African Americans not surrender the efforts of Du Bois, Nkrumah, and their heirs to link the struggles for racial equality between Africa and the Diaspora by finding effective ways to work together to ensure a more enlightened U.S. policy toward Africa. American policy must be infused with what South Africans call *ubuntu,* the gift of discovering our shared humanity. In May 1994, I attended Nelson Mandela's inauguration as South Africa's first black president in Pretoria. He ended an unforgettable speech by saying, "In the words

of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God, we are free at last!'" Nothing could have better symbolized the continued relationship between African Americans and their African ancestors than these words, spoken by the prophetic leader of Africa's last racist enclave.

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