
PETER J. SCHRAEDER

ABSTRACT
This article assesses the Bush administration’s self-proclaimed ‘realist’ policy towards Africa, the essential thrust of which is captured by the motto: ‘Forget the rhetoric and boost the geopolitics’. Three essential elements of this approach include the strategic imperative of cultivating strong links with Africa’s leading regional powers, most notably Nigeria and South Africa, harkening back to the Nixon administration’s strategy of relying on such powers to ensure regional stability; building upon the Clinton administration’s success in promoting US trade and investment with African countries, with a special focus on oil-producing countries; and underscoring the need for Africans to ‘do more for themselves’ in the realm of conflict resolution, suggesting a low-profile Bush administration approach to involvement in either peacekeeping or peacemaking operations. Emerging trends are analyzed by treating the US policymaking establishment as a series of three concentric circles: the inner circle of the White House; a second circle comprising the bureaucracies of the executive branch; and an outer circle inclusive of the US Congress and the larger African affairs constituency. An important result of White House and Congressional neglect of Africa is that the Bush administration’s foreign policy towards Africa, perhaps more so than that directed towards any other region of the world, essentially will be delegated to the high-level bureaucrats and political appointees within the executive branch, leading to an outcome best characterized as ‘bureaucratic incrementalism’ in which continuity rather than change will mark the administration’s policies towards Africa.

The inauguration in January 2001 of George W. Bush as the 43rd President of the United States potentially heralds the beginning of a new era in US policy towards Africa. As was the case with two previous presidential transitions in which Republican Presidents took office after a period of Democratic Party control of the White House (Nixon’s replacement of Johnson in January 1969 and Reagan’s replacement of Carter in January 1981), the Bush foreign policy team has castigated its Democratic predecessor (the Clinton administration) as having pursued an overly idealistic and ultimately

Peter J. Schraeder is associate professor in the Department of Political Science at Loyola University Chicago. His most recent books include African Politics and Society: A mosaic in transformation (2000) and Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric versus reality (forthcoming 2001).
unsuccessful 'feel good' policy towards Africa. The corrective, according to the newly minted foreign policy triumvirate of Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza 'Condi' Rice, is a more 'realist'-oriented foreign policy reminiscent of the Reagan and especially the Nixon administrations, that emphasizes a more 'hard-headed' analysis of concrete US foreign policy interests. Simply put, the essential thrust of this realist approach with regard to Africa can be summarized as follows: 'Forget the rhetoric and boost the geopolitics'.

The primary purpose of this article, written five months after President Bush's inauguration, is to offer an assessment of the most important emerging trends in the Bush administration's policy towards Africa. These trends obviously must be treated with caution owing to the fact that the new administration has yet to complete its appointments to the myriad of executive branch positions below the most senior levels devoted to Africa. Nonetheless, a burgeoning amount of evidence, most notably the campaign and post-inauguration speeches of senior Bush officials, as well as reports in the major US daily newspapers such as the New York Times, provides the basic contours of what Africanists can expect from this newest of Republican administrations. The emerging tendencies of this policy are effectively demonstrated by treating the US policymaking establishment as a series of three concentric circles: (i) the inner circle of the White House; (ii) a second circle comprising the bureaucracies of the executive branch; and (iii) an outer circle inclusive of the US Congress and the larger African affairs constituency.

Africa's neglect within the inner White House circle

The inner White House circle is inclusive of President Bush and his principal White House foreign policy advisors, most notably Vice-President Dick Cheney (who has created a parallel foreign policy staff that is the largest in the history of the Office of the Vice-President) and National Security Advisor Rice (a Soviet specialist by training). The NSC under Rice,

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which includes Jendayi Frazer, senior director for Africa, has been restructured to focus primarily on defence strategy, including the national missile defence programme and international economics.\footnote{Bush’s NSC will be arguably less influential than its immediate predecessors as regards US Africa policies owing to strong competition from the Vice-President’s foreign policy team, and demands by Secretary of State Powell that the State Department play the lead foreign policy role (in contrast to the Clinton administration, where National Security Advisor Samuel ‘Sandy’ Berger played the central foreign policy role during Clinton’s second term). The inherent potential weakness of Bush’s NSC relative to other executive branch foreign policy actors is demonstrated by the fact that Rice, unlike her predecessors, has not been given cabinet-level status.} It is typically assumed by foreign observers that President Bush and his inner circle will be both the most influential and the most activist in terms of US foreign policy towards Africa. Throughout the Cold War and its aftermath, however, presidents traditionally have devoted less attention to Africa compared with other regions of perceived greater concern, most notably Western Europe, Eastern Europe (including Russia and the other countries that were once part of the former Soviet Union), and more recently Asia and the Middle East. Neglect of Africa at the highest reaches of the US policymaking establishment is the direct result of a wide variety of factors: a president’s typical lack of knowledge and therefore the absence of a deep-felt interest in a region that historically enjoyed few enduring political links with the US as compared with the former European colonial powers; a tendency to view Africa as the responsibility of those same European powers, especially France, whose leaders were often willing to take the lead in crisis situations; the impracticality of one person monitoring relations with 189 countries worldwide, including 53 in Africa, and therefore the necessity of delegating responsibility for handling foreign policy for those regions considered marginal to the newly inaugurated White House; and, most important, the necessity of balancing domestic priorities with foreign affairs necessities, especially during a first term in office in which the ultimate priority of all presidents is to assure re-election, with simple electoral logic clearly suggesting that Africa is not a priority for the vast majority of the voting public. It should therefore come as no surprise that Clinton’s historic trips to the African continent in 1998 and 2000, for example, which raised awareness of Africa within the US to levels previously unseen in the country’s history, were undertaken during his second term in office. In this regard, although these trips raised the foreign policy bar as regards Africa for subsequent administrations, the efforts of the Clinton White House

\footnote{Karen DeYoung and Steven Mufson, ‘A leaner and less visible NSC; reorganization will emphasize defense, global economics’, Washington Post, 10 February 2001, p. A1.}
must be assessed against the larger backdrop of the president's more activist approach during his second term towards all regions of the world, in which Africa relatively speaking still remained the region of least concern.3

President Bush’s statements offer clear evidence of Africa’s decreased standing at the level of the White House from the high benchmark set by the Clinton administration during its second term in office. Two statements during the election campaign were particularly revealing. In response to a question concerning Africa’s place within a future Bush administration, Bush noted that the continent did not ‘fit into the national strategic interests’ of the United States ‘as far as I [Bush] can see them’.4 This response, perfectly consistent with a realist approach that perceives Africa as marginal at best in terms of US national security interests, was followed by a statement concerning the lack of US intervention in Rwanda in 1994 to prevent genocide in that country. ‘No one liked to see it on our TV screens’, explained Bush, who further noted that the Clinton administration had done ‘the right thing’ in deciding not to intervene.5 This latter statement captured Bush’s strong aversion to US involvement in peacemaking operations, often referred to during the presidential campaign as ill-conceived exercises in ‘nation building’. As a result, the Bush White House will almost certainly veto any United Nations-sponsored attempts at peacemaking on the African continent, and will be extremely reluctant to authorize the involvement of US troops even in less threatening peacekeeping operations in which all parties to the conflict desire the placement of a third-party military force on the ground.

The realist tendencies of the Bush White House ensure two outcomes for Africa as regards this inner circle of the policymaking establishment. First, Africa will at best be marginalized by a White House team that does not perceive the continent as an important part of the overall international strategic landscape. As a result, it is highly unlikely that a Bush White House will undertake high-level public relations initiatives, such as the 1994 White House Conference on Africa or a presidential visit to the continent. It is precisely such rhetorical exercises, which Republicans argue were not followed by sufficient concrete actions during the previous Clinton administration, that senior Bush administration strategists have vowed to avoid. As signalled by President Bush’s selection of Mexico as the country to be honoured with the first presidential visit of the new administration (in recent years it was Canada that was so honoured), as well as his high-profile

involvement in the April 2001 Summit of the Americas, Latin America will be the region, outside of classic US attention to Europe, the former Soviet bloc, and the other major northern industrialized democracies (e.g. Canada and Japan), that will receive priority attention from a Bush White House.

A second outcome is that presidential attention to African issues will be sporadic at best, and usually prompted by the emergence of a crisis situation, such as the October 1993 deaths of 18 US soldiers in Mogadishu that forced a previously inattentive Clinton White House to formally review and revise US policy towards Somalia. What became known as the US 'débâcle' in Somalia significantly altered how President Clinton and his White House staff perceived the proper role of US intervention in Africa, as witnessed by that administration's unwillingness to act when confronted with the unfolding of genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The adherence of the Clinton White House from 1993 onwards to the belief that involvement in African crises would unnecessarily distract the president and potentially plunge the White House into unwanted domestic controversies, has been wholeheartedly embraced by the newly inaugurated Bush administration.

*Africa's neglect within the outer Congressional circle*

The outer concentric circle of the policymaking process revolves around the US Congress (the Senate and the House of Representatives) and a variety of African affairs interest groups, such as the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and other African-American groups (for example, the African American Institute), and a wide array of lobbyists representing the interests of various African countries (the so-called 'K street crowd'). The Africa Subcommittee of the International Relations Subcommittee (House of Representatives) and the African Affairs Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee (Senate) typically were the two most important congressional 'watch-dogs' of US foreign policy towards Africa during the post-World War II era. In the aftermath of the Cold War, however, other congressional committees have become increasingly important in debates over issues such as the importance of aid versus trade, the proper US role in peacemaking and peacekeeping, and the normative goal of promoting democracy. Among the influential committees in the Senate (which have counterparts in the House) are the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, the International Finance Committee of the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, and the International Trade Committee of the Finance Committee.

A variety of constitutionally mandated prerogatives, including the confirmation of presidential appointees, the convening of hearings, and the drafting and voting of key legislation, suggests that Congress theoretically should play an important role in defining US policy towards Africa. Like
their White House counterparts, however, members of Congress historically have neglected Africa relative to other regions of perceived greater interest. Re-election pressures and time constraints imposed by terms of office (two years for Representatives and six years for Senators) force them to select and prioritize the domestic and the international issues which will receive their attention. Since the primary objective of most members is to be re-elected, and since most US citizens know or care very little about the African continent, conventional wisdom suggests that it is politically unwise to incur the possibility of alienating their constituencies by focusing on Africa. It is precisely for this reason that chairing the Africa subcommittees is among the least desired positions of authority within both houses of Congress, and is therefore relegated to relatively junior Representatives and Senators. The chair of the House Subcommittee on Africa is Edward R. Royce (Republican-California),¹⁸ and his counterpart in the Senate is Russell Feingold (Democrat-Wisconsin).¹⁹

An important impact of congressional neglect of Africa is that even highly motivated chairpersons of the Africa subcommittees face an uphill task in pushing African issues to the forefront of congressional debate. Simply put, in the absence of crisis, partisan and ideological differences within Congress prevent activist groups from achieving congressionally mandated changes in US foreign policy towards Africa. And even during short-term crises when an issue may attract the attention of a significant number of members of Congress, control of the policymaking process naturally flows to the White House and the bureaucracies of the executive branch. In this regard, the resurgence of guerrilla activity in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) at the beginning of 1999, let alone the involvement of foreign armies in this conflict (what US policymakers typically refer to as ‘Africa’s First World War’) failed to rise to the level of a policymaking crisis in the non-ideological context of the post-Cold War era — a far cry from the crisis atmosphere which prevailed in the 1960s when a guerrilla insurgency within the same region was perceived by US policymakers as threatening to install a pro-Soviet regime under the leadership of Patrice Lumumba.

Historical congressional neglect of Africa was reinforced by the Democratic Party’s stunning defeat in the November 1994 congressional elections that led to Republican control over both the House and the Senate for the first time in decades. From January 1995 to January 2001, a Democratic White House had to deal with an increasingly hostile, Republican-controlled Congress that was at odds with many aspects of White House foreign policy, including that directed towards the African continent. On a number of occasions, this has led both branches of government to treat foreign

¹⁸ See http://www.house.gov/international_relations/sub107.html
¹⁹ See http://www.senate.gov/foreign/subcommittees.html
policy issues in a partisan manner and to seek to exploit differences over foreign policy for domestic political advantage', explains Daniel P. Volfman, a specialist of the congressional role in US foreign policy towards Africa. 'One example of this that has particular importance for U.S. relations with Africa is Republican legislators’ use of public concern about the role of the United States in the United Nations . . . to bolster their demands for cuts in U.S. financial support for the international body and for the curtailment of UN peace-keeping activities in Africa and other parts of the world'. It is precisely this global mindset which allowed Senator Jesse Helms (Republican-North Carolina), the former chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to hold back US funding for the UN until that body finally agreed to reduce the US contributions to the overall UN budget (from 25 to 22 percent) and the UN peacekeeping budget (from 30 to 27 percent), with significant implications for UN activities in Africa. Indeed, the congressional furor during May 2001 over the US loss of its seat on the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council prompted the passage of congressional legislation withholding $244 million in unpaid US dues until the US seat is reinstated — a possibility that will have to wait until the Human Rights Commission’s new round of voting in spring 2002.

An interesting convergence of White House and Republican congressional interests nonetheless emerged with regard to one aspect of US Africa policies: the previous (Cold War) use of foreign aid as the pre-eminent tool of US foreign policy towards the African continent. The traditional predilection of conservative Republicans to oppose foreign aid, combined with Africa’s low priority compared with other regions of greater perceived interest at the level of the White House, reinforced a post-Cold War trend of reducing US foreign aid commitments to the African continent. According to one estimate, US aid to Africa (inclusive of development assistance, economic support funds, food aid, and foreign disaster relief) fell from a peak of $1.93 billion in 1992 to $933 million in 2000, a 52 percent decrease in overall aid. This downward trend is highly likely to continue in a foreign policymaking system in which the White House and both houses of Congress perceive Africa as marginal to US interests.

One potential bright spot in the foreign aid budget has been the Bush administration's promise to strengthen US support for combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the African continent. As noted by Bill Jackson, Director for Policy Programs for the African American Institute, the
administration's 'earnestness' beyond mere rhetoric in this regard will be clearly tested by the funding figure finally agreed upon between the White House and Congress as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 budget process (the first budget of the new administration). Most observers remain wary, however, owing to the simple fact that prominent leaders within both the Republican-dominated White House and Congress have typically not been sympathetic to a wide array of progressive social policies. For example, almost immediately upon taking the presidential oath, President Bush, with the firm backing of his conservative allies, reinstated the ban originally imposed by the Reagan administration (but overturned during the Clinton years) on providing US federal aid to overseas entities that provide, or counsel in favour of, abortion services — an action that will have severe implications for the family planning programmes of African governments.

The likelihood of congressional activism in Africa is further hindered by the razor-thin margins of partisan control of both houses of Congress in the aftermath of the November 2000 elections. As a result of James Jeffords's (Independent-Vermont) stunning defection from the Republican Party in May 2001, a slim Republican majority was transformed into a slim Democratic majority (50 Democrats, 49 Republicans, one Independent). In the House, the Republican lead is somewhat stronger (221 Republicans, 210 Democrats, two Independents, and two vacancies). In both cases, slim partisan majorities militate against activist policies in regions considered to be of minor concern (i.e. Africa), as both parties seek to avoid mistakes in preparation for the mid-term elections of November 2002.

Deferring to the bureaucrats in the middle concentric circle

The net result of White House and congressional neglect of Africa — a historical reality strengthened by the end of the Cold War — is that the Bush administration's foreign policy towards Africa, perhaps more so than that towards any other region, essentially will be delegated to the high-level bureaucrats and political appointees within the executive branch. In order to fully understand continuity and change in that policy, one must therefore focus on the policies and interactions of the African affairs bureaus of the traditional 'national security' bureaucracies, such as the State Department, the Defense Department (Pentagon), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as well as their counterparts within the increasingly important economic realm, most notably the Department of Commerce. Simply put, what I have elsewhere referred to as 'bureaucratic influence' within the policymaking process will more often than not characterize the formulation

and implementation of US foreign policy towards Africa in 'routine' situations (i.e., in the absence of crisis) during the Bush administration.15

Secretary of State Colin Powell and the State Department have emerged as the lead voice in the formulation and implementation of US foreign policy towards Africa during the initial months of the Bush administration. An African-American who enjoyed a distinguished 35-year military career that included serving as National Security Advisor to President Reagan and as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under both Bush (senior) and the first year of the Clinton administration, Powell sought to underscore his determination to make Africa a priority under the new Bush administration by making the State Department’s Africa Bureau the first stop of his numerous get-acquainted meetings with what he likes to refer to as the State Department ‘troops’. Along with Condoleezza Rice, the first African-American woman to head the NSC, Powell’s African-American heritage was viewed by many as a natural bridge to ensuring effective relations with African leaders and their respective diplomatic corps. Some early press reports suggested, for example, that several African leaders were cautiously hopeful that Powell and others in the Bush administration would raise Africa’s standing in Washington. ‘My impression was that he has a very keen interest in African affairs’, explained Seth Kimanzi, Secretary General in Rwanda’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a country considered one of the ‘favourites’ of the Clinton administration. ‘He may prove different from what has been propagated in [the] media — that the Bush administration is ignorant of African affairs.’16 Others, of course, lament what they perceive as a potential turn for the worse under a Republican administration, as witnessed by the question posed in the headline of Africa Business magazine: ‘After the Clinton Smile, Will It Be the Bush Snarl?’17

Regardless of whether Powell is capable of cajoling a recalcitrant White House and Congress to improve Africa’s standing in the US foreign policy hierarchy (highly doubtful), the testimony that he gave at his congressional confirmation hearing on 17 January 2001 offered important insights into how US foreign policy towards Africa would potentially evolve under his stewardship.18 Powell’s remarks with regard to Africa first underscored the strategic imperative of cultivating strong links with Africa’s leading regional powers, most notably Nigeria and South Africa, harkening back to the Nixon

17. Ibid.
18. ‘Statement of Secretary of State-Designate Colin L. Powell prepared for the Confirmation Hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Scheduled for 10:30 AM, January 17, 2001’. Available at: http://www senate.gov/727/foreign_testimony/wt_powell_011701.txt
administration's strategy of relying on such powers to ensure stability within their specific regions. This worldview represents something of a departure from the Clinton administration's approach of relying on what was often referred to as the 'new bloc' of African leaders, including Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, and Paul Kagame of Rwanda, who share a commitment to creating 'responsive and accountable' but not necessarily democratic governments. Critics of the Clinton administration's policy, which like Powell's emphasizes the importance of maintaining stability over the normative goal of promoting democracy, argue that its shortcomings were clearly demonstrated by the emergence of interstate conflicts between the members of this new bloc, including the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the military clashes between Uganda and Rwanda in Congo-Kinshasa. According to Powell, the primary problem with the Clinton administration approach was to rely on personalized links with leaders who for whatever reason held the upper hand at any given moment, regardless of the true power of their countries — as in the case of Rwanda's undue influence over its much larger neighbour, the Democratic Republic of Congo. A more effective long-term approach, according to Powell's worldview, is to focus on true regional powers that combine both the economic and military capabilities (not to mention the political intention) to ensure stability within their given regions.

The second element of Powell's approach to Africa is to build upon the Clinton administration's success in promoting US trade and investment with African countries that should be rewarded for creating liberal, free-market economies. An integral aspect of this approach will be the further strengthening of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) that was passed by both houses of Congress under the prodding of the Clinton White House during its second term. Like his post-Cold War predecessors, Powell firmly believes that foreign policy should serve as the facilitator of US private enterprise in all areas of the world, including Africa. 'Open trade is an enormous force', he explains. 'It powers more than just economic reform and growth; it creates better relations between nations.' The most important aspect of US trade ties with Africa will almost certainly revolve around US access to and investment in Africa's burgeoning oil sector. This emphasis will be the direct result not only of the Bush administration's

20. Indeed, prominent Republicans, such as Herman J. Cohen, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under the first (senior) Bush administration, have called for the suspension of US support for World Bank loans to Rwanda (an action unthinkable during the Clinton administration) until that country allows for the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces to the DRC's diamond-rich city of Ituri. See Herman J. Cohen, 'Pressure in Congo' (letter to the editor), New York Times, 21 April 2001, p. A24.
national energy policy (announced in May 2001) which places an overriding emphasis on enhancing the supply of oil available to the US economy, but also of the extremely close ties of senior Bush administration officials with the oil industry. Not only does Bush himself come from a family involved in the oil business, Cheney was the CEO of Halliburton (a major oil services corporation) and Rice was a senior manager with Chevron (with the company even naming an oil tanker after her). In this regard, specialists in US foreign policy towards Africa will be well-advised to focus on the evolving US economic ties with such oil-rich African countries as Angola, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Nigeria.

The final element of the Powell approach to Africa, which is also consistent with Clinton administration policy, is the perceived need for Africans to 'do more for themselves' in the realm of conflict resolution. 'In Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, the Congo [Kinshasa], and elsewhere, this means stopping the killing, taking the weapons out of the hands of children, ending corruption, seeking compromises, and beginning to work in peace and dialogue rather than war and killing', explained Powell at his confirmation hearing. 'It means giving the profits from oil and diamonds and other precious resources to schools and hospitals and decent roads instead of to bombs, bullets, and feuding warlords.'22 Indeed, according to what could be labelled the 'Powell doctrine' for Africa, African diplomats and military forces, and not those of foreign powers (including the US), must take the lead in responding to African crises and conflicts. If this view prevails, the Bush administration most assuredly will not be in the forefront of international efforts to resolve African conflicts, and will resist the involvement of US troops in both peacemaking and peacekeeping operations. It will instead support existing programmes, most notably the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), to strengthen the military capabilities of African countries to intervene in African conflicts. The model for this approach, which, like ACRI, was initiated under the Clinton administration and will be strongly supported by the Bush administration, was the decision in 2000 to send several hundred of the US Army's Special Forces stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to train and equip five Nigerian battalions for military duty in Sierra Leone.23

Powell's commitment to making the African continent a priority was clearly demonstrated by his week-long tour of four African countries (Kenya, Mali, South Africa, and Uganda) during May 2001.24 Africanists applauded Powell's determination to undertake a trip so early in the

24. For a complete listing of Powell's official statements during this trip, see http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm2001/index.cfm?
administration, and were heartened by his very public focus on African
efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and a variety of other communicable
diseases, most notably malaria and tuberculosis. The more realist underpinnings of
the trip were nonetheless demonstrated by the fact that conflicts in neigh-
bouring countries and what Africans could do to resolve them with US
support served as an important component of private discussions with host
country leaders. Among the regional hotspots that dominated the bilateral
talks were: Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone with President Alpha Oumar
Konaré of Mali; Angola, Congo-Kinshasa, and Zimbabwe with President
Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; Congo Kinshasa and Sudan with President
Daniel arap Moi of Kenya; and Congo-Kinshasa and Sudan with President
Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. Realism also pervaded high-level discussions
that focused on strengthening US–African trade relationships via the AGOA
— an area of common national self-interest regardless of whether Powell
was dealing with a democratic South Africa under Mbeki’s leadership or an
undemocratic Kenya under Moi.

Emerging foreign policy fissures

It is not guaranteed, however, that Powell’s realist-inspired approach will
serve as the guiding framework for US foreign policy towards each of
Africa’s 53 countries. An important outcome of bureaucratic influence in
the policymaking process is that, in the absence of active co-ordination of
policy at the highest reaches of the US government (i.e. the White House),
US foreign policy towards each African country tends to become frag-
mented and interpreted differently, according to the established organiza-
tional missions of bureaucracies that were historically created to deal with
different aspects of the foreign policy relationship. The primary mission of
the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs, for example, is the main-
tenance of smooth and stable relationships with all African governments.
The emphasis is on quiet diplomacy and the negotiated resolution of any
conflicts that may arise. In sharp contrast, the primary bureaucratic mission
of the CIA’s Africa Division has traditionally been to carry the ideological
battle against the former Soviet Union and communism to the African con-
tinent in efforts that range from the cultivation of local agents to the mount-
ing of covert operations. Openly contemptuous of self-proclaimed Marxist
and other ‘leftist’ regimes, liberation movements, and, more recently,
‘radical’ Islamist regimes, the CIA prefers close liaison with the security ser-
dices of European allies and friendly African regimes. In the case of the Pen-
tagon, the primary bureaucratic mission of the Office for African Affairs
(International Security Affairs) is to ensure continued access to strategically
located bases and other facilities for responding to local crises and, most
important, military contingencies in Europe and the Middle East. Finally,
the primary bureaucratic mission of the Africa Office within the Department of Commerce is to foster greater levels of US trade and investment throughout the African continent.

Each bureaucracy essentially fosters a unique institutional culture that both supports its mission and socializes individuals into working towards its attainment. Although other sources of bureaucratic behaviour such as the substantive views and personal ambitions of individual bureaucrats are important, the critical point here is that members of a bureaucracy often become the advocates of their agencies and tend to interpret US foreign policy according to their agency's role and mission in the foreign policy establishment, often leading to a less than harmonious relationship. Bureaucracies do not run wild within a political void, but rather constitute part of a domestic political process — in this case, bureaucratic politics. To this end, they bargain and compromise, ultimately seeking to maximize their own positions within the policymaking establishment.

Foreign policy fissures have already emerged, for example, between the conservative and moderate wings of the Republican Party, as witnessed by rising bureaucratic competition between the Pentagon under Rumsfeld and the State Department under Powell.25 Rumsfeld, with strong support from Vice-President Cheney, has favoured hawkish foreign policy positions in a wide variety of issue areas, including the need to make a national missile defence system operational as soon as possible, an unwillingness to continue the Clinton administration policy of engagement with North Korea (not surprising due to the centrality of a North Korean missile threat as one of the rationales for the much-coveted national missile defence), an increasingly bellicose stance towards the aspiring great powers of Russia and especially China, and the necessity of adopting a much more aggressive approach toward Saddam Hussein's Iraq (with hawks in Congress calling for the launching of a paramilitary programme designed to overthrow the regime). In each of these cases, a more hawkish approach to foreign policy has not surprisingly contributed to rising tensions with traditional US allies in Europe and Asia. Most important, the bureaucratic ascendancy of the conservative wing of the Bush administration initially forced Powell to backpedal from several of his early policy positions, most notably his willingness to continue the Clinton administration policy of diplomatic engagement with North Korea. In the case of US foreign policy toward individual African countries, however, Powell and the State Department more often than not will serve as the lead bureaucracy. This will be because of Africa's low priority within the overall conservative foreign policy agenda,

as well as the simplistic belief that this region will be of particular importance to the first African-American Secretary of State.

Two case studies nonetheless demonstrate how a more bellicose conservatism will often override the more moderate instincts of Powell and the State Department. First, the Bush administration refused to drop US sanctions against Libya, despite the fact that the Qaddafi regime had finally handed over two suspects associated with the 1988 Lockerbie air disaster (in which a bomb destroyed Pan Am Flight 103 killing all on board), and an international court in January 2001 had found one of the suspects guilty, while releasing the second. As part of a conservative-inspired ‘get tough’ policy with regional pariah states, the newly elected Bush administration raised new foreign policy conditions for the suspension of sanctions, which included the Qaddafi regime’s formal admission of guilt and payment of compensation to the families of the deceased.26

US foreign policy towards the Sudanese regime of Omar Hassan al-Bashir, despite the fact that it has taken certain steps to marginalize the Islamist forces of Omar Hassan al-Turabi, further demonstrates the Bush administration’s ‘get tough’ policy with regional pariah states. Whereas the Clinton administration focused on the regional threat associated with Sudan’s attempts to export its brand of Islamic revivalism, the Bush administration has initially focused on the human rights abuses associated with that country’s 18-year-old civil war, the longest running in Africa. Powell noted in congressional testimony on 7 March 2001, for example, that there exists ‘perhaps no greater tragedy on the face of the earth today’.27 The principal driving force in US policy towards Sudan, however, is not necessarily Powell’s personal interest but rather rising pressures from a wide array of Christian groups — one of the Bush administration’s most important grass-roots constituencies — to ‘do something’ to stop what they perceive as the genocidal policy that a northern-based Islamic regime is carrying out against a southern-based, predominantly Christian population. Christian groups are especially outraged by the ongoing practice of southern Christians being sold as slaves in northern Sudan, and have joined with sympathetic members of Congress, most notably Sam Brownback (Republican-Kansas), to call for a more aggressive US policy stance, which in the extreme could involve US military aid to southern-based guerrilla groups.28

An irony of the Bush administration’s evolving approach to Libya and Sudan is that a truly realist foreign policy would have responded to the diplomatic openings provided by the Qaddafi and Bashir regimes by pursuing a

policy of cautious engagement — as was occurring during the last few months of the Clinton administration. Although such a policy may be preferable to the more moderate Powell, as witnessed by his initial moderate instincts as regards US foreign policy towards North Korea, a more conservative foreign policy framework reminiscent of the Cold War makes such an approach, at least in the cases of Libya and Sudan, extremely unlikely. Especially in the case of Sudan, a rising chorus of anti-Bashir voices within the US Christian community almost ensures an increasingly bellicose US policy that, in the end, may end up providing military aid to the southern guerrillas.

The appointment of Walter Kansteiner III as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, typically the most influential voice for Africa in the State Department, offers further insight into the future contours of US policy towards Africa. Although it is unclear at this point how much latitude Kansteiner will be given in the policymaking process (as was the case with Chester Crocker and Herman J. Cohen under the Reagan and (senior) Bush administrations, respectively), his background is troubling to many Africanists. Clearly hailing from the more conservative wing of the Republican Party, Kansteiner was formerly associated with a conservative, Washington-based organization, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, served in the first (senior) Bush administration, and has earned a living as a commodities trader. Salih Booker, Executive Director of Africa Watch in Washington, aptly captures the sentiment of many Africanists:

Like [Vice President] Cheney, he [Kansteiner] opposed sanctions against apartheid South Africa years after they were in place and as late as 1990 considered the pro-democracy movement in South Africa, led by Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress, to be unrepresentative of most South Africans. With analytical skills like those, he appears singularly unqualified for the job except that he fits the profile of many new Bush staff: conservative ideologues who served Bush’s father.29

Continuity versus change

One must be careful, however, not to overestimate the impact of the new Bush administration on promoting change in US foreign policy towards Africa. An important outcome associated with bureaucratic influence in the policymaking process — the dominant feature of US Africa policy — is the creation of a bureaucratic mindset among a career civil service elite which fosters a fundamental resistance to change or a predilection towards maintenance of the status quo. Among the most important factors contributing to bureaucratic conservatism are the safety of relying on established and accepted standard operating procedures, as well as the realization that

undue risk-taking may permanently damage one's career by effectively blocking upward mobility through the ranks. As explained by Morton A. Halperin, the net result is that the 'majority of bureaucrats prefer to maintain the status quo, and only a small group is, at any one time, advocating change'. Subsequently, members of a bureaucracy, especially its politically appointed head, will often put up a fierce struggle rather than submit to changes that they perceive as infringing on their 'territory', or threatening the integrity of their organization's mission. In short, the inherently conservative nature of bureaucracies prompts their members to resist change.

The self-interested nature of bureaucracies nonetheless propels their members to attempt to expand their realm of influence within the policymaking establishment. Since, as was noted earlier, members of a bureaucracy tend to identify national security in terms of their agency's mission in the foreign policy establishment, it follows that these same members will seek to widen the role of their organization. The primary means of achieving this has typically been through the expansion of bureaucratically inspired activities associated with each of Africa's 53 countries. These have included the Africa Bureau's (State Department) pursuit of White House visits for African heads of state; the Pentagon's interest in strengthening joint military manoeuvres with African militaries, most notably the expansion of a wide array of military assistance programmes with Nigeria; the CIA's willingness to share intelligence findings with friendly African regimes, such as the Kagame regime of Rwanda; and the Commerce Department's interest in securing new trade and investment accords, with South Africa and the various oil-producing states (for example, Angola) serving as the centrepiece of US economic policy. Regardless of the particular strategy pursued in strengthening ties with a particular African country, the term 'incrementalism' best captures the resulting process of change: once a foreign policy relationship is established with an African country, the self-interested nature of bureaucracies often contributes to the maintenance and/or gradual enhancement of relations that are difficult to reverse.

The process of incrementalism helps explain the rarity of dramatic shifts in US foreign policy towards the vast majority of Africa's 53 countries, even when a new administration with seemingly different beliefs from its predecessor takes power (as in the most recent shift in power from the Clinton to the Bush administrations). As noted earlier, the time constraints associated with relatively short terms of office for presidents and most members of Congress, coupled with the traditionally low level of attention paid by them to African issues, favours bureaucratic influence, and therefore generally

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supports policies of maintaining the status quo. Perhaps the most significant barrier to change, however, is the fact that the numerous activities of the bureaucracies simply do not fall within the realm of presidential action. As President Johnson's Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, commented during the transition from the Johnson to the Nixon administrations: 'A transition is not so earth-shaking. Of the thousand or so cables that go out of here every day, I see only five or six and the President only one or two. Those who send out the other 994 cables will still be here long after the administration is gone'. Adopting a train metaphor to clarify his thoughts, Rusk noted that a transition 'is a little bit like changing engineers on a train going steadily down the track. The new engineer has some switches he can make choices about — but 4,500 intergovernmental agreements don't change'.

Although somewhat exaggerating the importance of bureaucracies during presidential transitions, Rusk's train metaphor is correct in one key respect. It suggests that established bureaucratic missions greatly increase the possibility that US foreign policy towards the vast majority of African countries will continue to chug along on established tracks until some event (such as a crisis situation) potentially attracts the attention of the White House or other US domestic actors and provides the basis for a reassessment. In the absence of crisis, White House attention will invariably be focused elsewhere, and established policies will continue to be maintained and strengthened by the bureaucratic train. As a result, although policy towards some African countries may shift, due to Powell's reordering of US priorities or the idiosyncratic interests of certain members of Congress or an ascendant African affairs interest group (such as the Christian coalition), US policy towards Africa under the Bush administration will demonstrate strong threads of continuity with its Democratic predecessor. Indeed, only one of Powell's three priorities for Africa — a focus on regional powers — represents something of a shift in policy, which in any case builds upon the Clinton administration's focus on both South Africa and (at least during Clinton's second term in office) Nigeria as important components of US policy.

In this regard, the greatest change of all will be a reduction in what critics have referred to as the Clinton administration's 'feel-good' rhetoric towards Africa. Although such a shift may avoid some of the criticisms that have emerged in the past when rhetoric failed to match reality, leading to unfulfilled expectations among Africans and Africanists alike, it nonetheless underscores Africa's marginalization within the new administration, prompting a leading current affairs journal to speak of 'The Coming Apathy' — a unique twist on Robert Kaplan's hotly debated article, 'The

Coming Anarchy, Africa's greatest challenge under both Democratic and Republican administrations has been to overcome apathy on the part of senior US policymakers. Although President Clinton's attention to the African continent suggested that this state of affairs was on the verge of changing, it is clear that the Bush White House has little interest in following in the path of its Democratic predecessor. Indeed, the motto, 'Forget the rhetoric and boost the geopolitics', suggests a return to a geostrategic approach reminiscent of the Cold War era when Africa only became important in the eyes of Washington policymakers when viewed through the prism of a policy (such as the containment of communism) that often had little if anything to do with African reality.

32. See the editorial note (inside cover) in *Current History* 100, 645 (April 2001), which summarized the themes and titles of the articles scheduled to appear in the May 2001 edition of the journal (which always focuses on Africa).