REVIEW ARTICLE

Sapphire anniversary reflections on the study of United States foreign policy towards Africa

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The creation in 1958 of a separate Bureau of African Affairs within the United States State Department served as a turning point in US foreign policy towards Africa, in that it signalled Africa’s growing significance within the US policymaking establishment. This historical event has served as a point of reference for Africanists, as demonstrated by Crawford Young’s (1984) ‘silver’ (25-year) anniversary reflections on the state of US Africa policies as president of the African Studies Association. The primary purpose of this essay is to provide ‘sapphire’ (45-year) anniversary reflections on US foreign policy towards Africa, by offering a select review of forty books that have been published on this topic during the last decade (1993–2002). It is important to note, however, that this essay does not provide a comprehensive review of all the books published since 1993, nor does it offer a comprehensive review of the literature published prior to that date. The intention is rather to illuminate trends in scholarship.

TRAVELLERS’ ACCOUNTS

The starting point of any analysis must be the historical travellers’ accounts of missionaries, traders, explorers, and colonial administrators that, although invariably subjective and impressionistic, have served as important building blocks in the accumulation of knowledge within the African studies. Paul Baepler, African Masters: an anthology of American Barbary captivity narratives (1999) explores a specific genre of travellers’ accounts – barbary captivity narratives – that flourished in the US at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The term ‘barbary’, derived from the name of the Berber
inhabitants, carried a pejorative connotation to the perceived ‘barbarian’ Islamic coastal regencies of North Africa, whose capture and enslavement of US citizens ‘forced the [US] government to pay humiliating tributes in cash and military arms to North African rulers, stimulated the drive to create the U.S. navy, and brought about the first postrevolutionary war’ (p. 2). The captivity accounts explored in Baepler’s book offer a fascinating historical backdrop to the Bush administration’s policy of engaging North African states in its ever-widening war against international terrorism. They portray the attitudes of Washington policymakers during an earlier period of military action within the region, notably in terms of what Baepler refers to as the ‘long legacy of mutual hostility between North Africa and the West’ (p. xi).

An underlying theme of American travellers’ accounts, as captured in Drury Pifer, *Innocents in Africa: an American family’s story* (1994), is the assumed special character of US citizens abroad. Born in South Africa to American parents determined to make their fortune in gold and diamonds, Pifer, who now lives in the state of Delaware, captures a common American belief that its citizens are innocent of the treacheries of classic European realpolitik and the ‘tribal instincts’ of African peoples. Travellers’ accounts also embody a narrative of self-discovery. In *Mango Elephants in the Sun: how life in an African village let me be in my skin* (2000), Susana Herrera describes her journey as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon. The Tapouri greeting, *Jam bah noo nah?* (Are you in your skin?), is the focal point of the book, capturing the author’s determination to fit into Cameroonian society. An irony of this quest is that Herrera, who suffered discrimination in the US due to her Navaho and Spanish heritage, was considered to be a nasara (white person) by her host community. As a result, this book offers insights into not only the life of a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa, but issues of race in the US and what it means to be an American.

The most plentiful form of travellers’ account draws upon stereotypical images of the African continent to provide tales of adventure. In *Facing the Congo: a modern-day journey into the Heart of Darkness* (2000), Jeffrey Tayler offers a brutal vision of Africa as he attempts to journey 1,084 miles by pirogue on the Congo River from Kisangani to Kinshasa, in a partial recreation of Henry Stanley’s famous trip. Unlike Herrera’s more positive vision, Tayler draws on the Africa of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Although billed as a ‘sophisticated depiction’ of the contemporary Democratic Republic of the Congo, the armchair traveller is enticed by stereotypical images of ‘smothering heat and intense rains, wary villagers, corrupt officials and dead-eyed soldiers demanding bribes, jungle animals, mosquitoes, and, surprisingly, breathtaking natural beauty’ (p. xxii).
A second important genre of literature emphasises the historic connection of African-Americans to the African continent. While the more nefarious origins of this connection involve the slave trade, an important literature also focuses on the positive contributions that African-Americans have made to Africa. In Pagan Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: a true tale of adventure in the nineteenth century Congo* (2002), we are introduced to William Sheppard, an African-American born in Virginia not long before the end of the US Civil War, who after earning a graduate degree in theology, spent more than twenty years running a Presbyterian mission staffed by African-Americans in the Belgian Congo. Karin Stanford, *Beyond the Boundaries: Reverend Jesse Jackson in international affairs* (1997), continues in this tradition by providing a more contemporary portrayal of what African-Americans have done for Africa in the foreign policy realm. Stanford focuses on the citizen diplomacy of Jesse Jackson, including his attempts in 1986 to alter US foreign policy towards Southern Africa.

One of the most politically charged issues to emerge in the African-American community is that of reparations for the slave trade. According to Randall Robinson, *The Debt: what America owes to Blacks* (2000), the time has come for the American people and its government to face up to the crimes committed against Africa, its peoples, and its descendants. ‘As Germany and other interests that profited owed reparations to Jews following the holocaust of Nazi persecution’, argues Robinson, ‘America and other interests that profited owe reparations to blacks following the holocaust of African slavery which has carried forward from slavery’s inception for 350-odd years to the end of U.S.-government embraced racial discrimination – an end that arrived, it would seem, only just yesterday’ (p. 9).

The most controversial book within the African-American community, *Out of America: a black man confronts Africa* (1997), was written by Keith Richburg, who draws upon his direct reporting of Africa’s post-cold war conflicts, notably the Somali civil war and genocide in Rwanda. In words designed to shock and prompt a complete reassessment of how African-Americans view their African heritage, Richburg proclaims: ‘Thank God. Thank God my nameless ancestor, brought across the ocean in chains and leg irons, made it out alive. Thank God I am an American’ (cover of book). Although quick to note that he should not be viewed as an apologist for slavery, which he denounces as ‘a crime that must never be repeated’ (p. xiii), he introduces us to his most troubling thoughts: ‘Would I have been better off if this great tragedy, this crime of slavery, had not occurred? Would I be standing here now as a journalist with my notebook in hand and
camera slung over my shoulder?’ (p. 162). The answer to these questions, as well as a complete renunciation of the African-American ideal of a special bond with Africa, are made clear at the end of the book, demonstrating if nothing else that one cannot treat the African-American community as a monolithic bloc. ‘Maybe I would care more if I had never come here and never seen what Africa is today. But I have been here, and I have seen – and frankly, I want no part of it’ (p. 247).

**Journalistic Accounts**

The media serve an important agenda-setting function. What ultimately is reported from the field by foreign correspondents can focus the attention of presidents and congressional representatives historically prone to neglect the African continent. In numerous cases, such as the Clinton administration’s decision to withdraw from Somalia after the deaths of eighteen US Rangers in 1993, changes in policies were at least partially due to media-driven popular outrage. It should therefore come as no surprise that journalists attempt to take stock of what they have observed by writing accounts of their tenures in Africa, often with important insights for US foreign policy.

A unique example of this trend is *The New Africa: dispatches from a changing continent* (1999), written by Robert Press, who leans in favour of ‘Afro-Optimism’ – the belief that changes are occurring for the better, and that Africans increasingly are taking control over their own destinies as foreign countries lessen their involvement in the cold war’s aftermath. The vast majority of journalistic accounts, however, embody an ‘Afro-pessimist’ outlook that conjures up stereotypical images of poverty and famine, corruption and ‘tribal’ warfare, and deadly Ebola and AIDS viruses. An example of this genre is Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother: at war in Somalia, Sudan, and Rwanda* (2000), who despite his protestations to the contrary, emerges as a journalistic ‘war junkie’ (one who pursues ‘the story’ both as a result of editors’ demands for what will sell newspapers at home and the adrenalin rush of being a witness to combat). Bill Berkeley, *The Graves Are Not Yet Full: race, tribe and power in the heart of Africa* (2001), also falls within this category. Berkeley argues that Africa’s burgeoning ethnic conflicts are the result of tyranny imposed by corrupt local elites, who in turn were propped up by foreign elites during the cold war. An entire chapter of this book (pp. 63–101), for example, provides a critical analysis of the Africa diplomacy of Chester Crocker, assistant secretary of state for African affairs in the Reagan administration.
Journalistic accounts are at their best when they explicitly seek to provide foreign policy lessons. Mark Huband, *The Skull Beneath the Skin: Africa after the Cold War* (2001), assesses the negative impacts of the tendency under both Democratic and Republican administrations to treat Africa as an expendable strategic pawn in Washington’s wider cold war struggle with global communism. The contemporary implication of this trend is the need to assess the long-term consequences of Washington’s new strategic imperative of countering global terrorism, as it enlists strategically placed African allies, such as Egypt and Morocco, in this quest. A related theme is broached in Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: living on the brink of disaster in Mobutu’s Congo* (2000), which analyses what potentially can happen when normative goals such as democracy promotion are downplayed in favour of strategic imperatives, whether anti-communism during the cold war or anti-terrorism during the contemporary post-9/11 era. Wrong’s chronicle of the rise and fall of Mobutu Sese Seko, a dictatorial kleptocrat who curried the favour of US presidents from Lyndon Johnson to George Bush Sr, should offer pause to policymakers who have made authoritarian leaders, notably Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, the linchpins of US counter-terrorism efforts in North Africa.

Several other journalistic accounts offer potential lessons for the war on terrorism. Mark Bowden’s best-selling account, *Black Hawk Down: a story of modern war* (1999), of the failed military operation in Mogadishu in 1993 that turned the US public against further military involvement in Somalia, should offer pause to policymakers increasingly willing to commit US ground forces abroad in the name of anti-terrorism. Wayne Madsen, *Genocide and Covert Operations in Africa 1993–1999* (1999), raises questions relevant to the Bush administration’s far-reaching efforts to restructure the national security apparatus of the US government, notably by creating a Bureau of Homeland Security. The implications of Madsen’s book, which focuses on US covert intervention in Central Africa during the 1990s, is that such restructuring, if not accompanied by an independent, non-partisan review of the role of US intelligence agencies in promoting discord and tension abroad, will amount to little effective change in US foreign policy. Even those heartened by the administration’s promise to increase historically declining levels of foreign aid by nearly 50 per cent would be well-advised to read Michael Maren, *The Road to Hell: the ravaging effects of foreign aid and international charity* (1997), which suggests that even the most well-intentioned foreign aid efforts will be led horribly astray. ‘My experience there [in Somalia] made me see that aid could be worse than incompetent and inadvertently destructive’, concludes Maren. ‘It could be positively evil’ (p. 12).
A fourth important genre of books, represented by David Gordon, David Miller & Howard Wolpe, *The United States and Africa: a post-Cold War perspective* (1998), seeks to provide policy-oriented recommendations. Like many of its counterparts, this book includes topically oriented chapters that explore the diversity of Africa’s fifty-three countries (and therefore the need for a more nuanced set of policy responses) and the evolution of US interests, followed by bipartisan policy recommendations that invariably call for the upgrading of Africa’s standing within the foreign policy hierarchy. Useful complements to this book include Karl Magyar, ed., *United States Interests and Policies in Africa: transition to a new era* (2000), which explores the evolution of US foreign policy towards individual African regions, and Kim Olsen, ed., *Contact: Africa 2001. A directory of US organisations working on Africa* (2001), which provides a helpful list of state and non-state actors involved in US Africa policies.

Shifts in the occupants of the White House are usually preceded by the appearance of policy analyses designed to foster debate and alter the course of policy. The stellar example of this trend is Stephen Morrison & Jennifer Cooke, eds., *Africa Policy in the Clinton Years: critical choices for the Bush Administration* (2001), which is the product of a series of bipartisan working groups that met throughout 2000 in Washington, DC. Individual chapters contain a wealth of policy advice, and one of the contributors, Jendayi Fraser, was selected by the Bush White House to serve as senior director for African affairs at the National Security Council. Especially useful is a prescient chapter written by Morrison on the need for policymakers to rethink US policy towards HIV/AIDS in Africa.

The continent-wide approach to policy analysis is complemented by in-depth analyses of specific topics. In Walter Clarke & Jeffrey Herbst, eds., *Learning From Somalia: the lessons of armed humanitarian intervention* (1997), lessons are drawn from the case study of US-led military intervention in Somalia. One conclusion involves the claim by President Bush that the more limited ‘humanitarian’ mission originally undertaken by his father’s administration was transformed by the Clinton administration into an ill advised ‘nation-building’ operation that was destined to fail. According to Clarke and Herbst, the distinction between humanitarian intervention and nation-building central to this critique is ‘extremely problematical’ (p. 240). ‘When U.S. troops intervened in December 1992 to stop the theft of food, they immediately … stepped deeply into the muck of Somali politics because the most fundamental institution in any country is order’, explain the authors. ‘By supplying some aspects of order, the United States inevitably became
involved in providing the basic framework for future Somali politics and was therefore doing ... nation building’ (p. 242). This and other debates are captured in David Smock & Chester Crocker, *African Conflict Resolution: the U.S. role in peacemaking* (1995), which concludes that US leadership short of direct military intervention is imperative in the realm of conflict resolution. ‘Too often, public discussion of the challenge of responding to African conflicts focuses narrowly on military intervention by large-scale forces, led by the United States within some form of UN context’, explains Crocker. ‘Our conclusions should start with the point that there are scores of ways to become involved (or ‘intervene’) in African conflicts apart from direct U.S. combat intervention’ (pp. 122–3).

A final policy relevant theme – how to respond to Africa’s ethnic conflicts – is treated in Donald Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: pressures and incentives for cooperation* (1997), who laments the common belief among policymakers that ethnic conflicts in Africa are inevitable, intractable, and therefore to be avoided. In the case of Rwanda in 1994, the Clinton administration was wary of being drawn into an ethnic conflict that threatened to become ‘another Somalia’. Subsequently it blocked the dispatch of 5,500 troops requested by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali – a position that was strongly endorsed by candidate Bush during the 2000 presidential campaign and reaffirmed after he took office. Although Rothchild notes that it is ‘important not to overstate the influence that mediators can bring to bear on rival parties’, his analysis demonstrates that it is ‘possible in some situations to advance the process of ‘ripening’ (advancing to the point where joint problem solving becomes possible) through the effective use of pressures and incentives by a mediator or a facilitator’ (pp. 2–3).

**Diplomatic Accounts**

A fifth important genre of writing involves books written by former government officials. Such books tend to appear not long after an administration has left office, especially if the transition is highly partisan in nature, as was the case when Clinton succeeded Bush in 1993. This period witnessed a virtual outpouring of diplomatic accounts, many of which were written by former Africa ‘players’ within the Reagan and Bush administrations. Although it is important to recognise that most ‘policymaker-authors’ characterise their diplomatic efforts in the best positive light, the primary benefit of works within this genre is their ability to offer valuable insights into the foreign policymaking process.
A number of books written by former diplomats focus on events that took place during the cold war era. In *Captive in the Congo: a consul’s return to the heart of darkness* (2000), Michael Hoyt, who served in 1964 as US consul to the city of Stanleyville (now Kisangani), offers a highly pro-US account of how he and other US diplomatic personnel were taken captive by guerrilla forces for 111 days during a period of guerrilla unrest in Congo-Kinshasa that made the country the first major African battleground of the cold war. In contrast, Peter Bridges, *Safirka: an American envoy* (2000), reflects on the shortcomings of providing continued support to a venal dictator (Mohammed Siad Barre) as witnessed during his tenure as safirka (Somali for ambassador) to Somalia during a period of intensifying guerrilla insurgency in the mid-1980s. The best of the cold war genre is Donald Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar: an American’s Cold War tale* (2002), which describes cold war intrigues associated with revolutionary upheaval on the island of Zanzibar in 1964. Petterson’s account captures several guiding principles of US cold war policies: the overriding importance of bureaucratically driven strategic interests in determining the nature and strength of the foreign policy relationship (in Zanzibar’s case, an ideally situated space-tracking station); the role of a perceived communist threat in elevating a once-obscure geographical location to the highest reaches of the White House (the attention of the Johnson White House was assured by ‘Zanzibar as the Cuba of Africa’ analogies); and the belief among senior policymakers that the US should follow the lead of its European allies who were ‘responsible’ for maintaining stability in their former colonies (it is noted, for example, that Secretary of State George Ball informed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennan Williams that revolutionary upheaval in Zanzibar was ‘one situation we should leave to the British’ (p. 96).

Washington’s efforts to navigate the transitional period of the immediate post-cold war era are captured in Herman Cohen, *Intervening in Africa: superpower peacemaking in a troubled continent* (2000), who served as assistant secretary of state for African affairs under the Bush Sr administration. Cohen is frank on the Bush administration’s determination to avoid the bruising battles with Congress that were so evident during the Reagan years. He is also clear about the constant need to ‘co-opt’ other bureaucracies in the artful game of bureaucratic politics – the policymaking level where most Africa policies are decided – so as to ensure a lead role for the State Department’s Africa Bureau. The most revealing aspect of the book is the degree to which policies were constrained by the continued adherence of policymakers, including Cohen himself, to the cold war strategic framework of US–Soviet (now Russian) relations. Cohen notes, for example, that his marching orders from above underscored the importance of working with the Russians to
resolve regional conflicts in Africa (p. 4). This invariably contributed to a top-down approach to conflict resolution that assumed the ability of the superpowers to impose solutions from above, often with negligible long-term benefits to the African countries in question.

Several books also deal with specific events of the post-Cold War era. The trials and tribulations of US military intervention in Somalia are addressed in *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: reflections on peacemaking and peacekeeping* (1995), jointly written by John Hirsch (US political advisor to the UN coalition) and Robert Oakley (US special envoy to Somalia under Presidents Bush and Clinton). Hirsch, who subsequently served as ambassador to Sierra Leone from 1995 to 1998, offers further reflection on US involvement in Africa’s post-cold war conflicts in *Sierra Leone: diamonds and the struggle for democracy* (2001). Unlike many of the authors within the conflict resolution literature, Hirsch concludes that military action against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) represented Sierra Leone’s best chance at achieving a durable solution. In *Partner to History: the U.S. role in South Africa’s transition to democracy* (2002), Princeton Lyman, ambassador to South Africa from 1992 to 1995, offers an interesting account that nonetheless downplays Washington’s importance in South Africa’s democratic transition. The issue of Islamic revivalism is broached in Donald Petterson’s, *Inside Sudan: political Islam, conflict, and catastrophe* (1999). Unlike his more retrospective cold war analysis, Petterson’s discussion of the Sudan, where he served as ambassador from 1992 to 1995, often reads more like an indictment of Sudanese terrorism at home and abroad than a reasoned assessment of the breakdown in the US-Sudanese relationship—a relationship that is now improving somewhat as a result of the Sudanese government’s willingness to cooperate with Washington in its global war on terrorism.

The most provocative policymaking book is Smith Hempstone, *Rogue Ambassador: an African memoir* (1997). Successful in his lobbying efforts to be appointed ambassador to Kenya from 1989 to 1993, Hempstone spares no-one as concerns his reading of the inherent problems in US foreign policy towards Africa. ‘My talk and photo opportunity with the president [Bush] was unexceptional’, remarks Hempstone, who is not afraid to bite the hand which fed him, ‘as was my formal chat with Vice-President Dan Quayle, who seemed somewhat alarmed when I asked his view of African policy’ (p. 15). Hempstone is equally critical of Congress, especially its Africa subcommittees. ‘To the best of my recollection, only two members of the [Senate sub]committee [on Africa], [Senator Paul] Simon on the Democratic side and [Senator Nancy] Kassebaum for the Republicans, bothered to show up for my hearing, although one or two others may have stuck their
heads in for a minute’, bemoans Hempstone. ‘If Kassebaum asked me a question’, he notes in a clear slight, ‘I cannot recall it’ (p. 14). The primary target of Hempstone’s book is the vast array of career diplomats, including ambassadors abroad, who exhibit the classic bureaucratic tendencies to rely on established standard operating procedures, resist innovative ideas and approaches, and protect perceived bureaucratic turf at the expense of policy advancement.

**Scholarly Case Studies**

Another important genre of scholarship is the in-depth case study. This approach is valued by regional specialists due to attention to detail that is usually the result of extensive field research, often spanning several years. Its shortcoming lies in the difficulty in generalising conclusions to other case studies. The seriousness with which we must treat this genre of scholarship, however, is demonstrated by the simple fact that the case study continues to serve as the dominant approach to the study of US Africa policies.

The most written about case during the period under review is South Africa. In Apartheid’s Reluctant Uncle: the United States and Southern Africa in the early Cold War (1993), Thomas Borstelmann analyses US policy during the Truman administration in the light of the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 and the intensification of the cold war. He focuses on the strategically oriented decisions made by government officials, although there is a tendency to overemphasise the impact of high-level White House attention as opposed to the more influential day-to-day impact of middle-range bureaucrats. In contrast, Donald Culverson, Contesting Apartheid: U.S. activism, 1960–1987 (1999), highlights the foreign policy impact of non-state actors that coalesced into an anti-apartheid movement so powerful that it successfully prompted congressional passage of the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 over the veto of the Reagan White House. The most comprehensive study of the apartheid era is Robert Massie, Loosing the Bonds: the United States and South Africa in the apartheid years (1997). Especially valuable is Massie’s analysis of the degree to which the anti-apartheid movement and the imposition of economic sanctions were responsible for South Africa’s transition. ‘Though for years the South African government insisted, and many Westerners agreed, that South Africa was so wealthy and powerful that it could never be influenced by economic pressure’, explains Massie, ‘the historical evidence is now overwhelmingly to the contrary’ (p. xxviii).

Zimbabwe is a second case study that has enjoyed a great deal of attention in recent years. In Black, White Chrome: the United States and Zimbabwe, 1953–1998 (2001), Andrew DeRoche focuses on Zimbabwe’s successful
transition to black majority rule in 1980 as proof of the rising foreign policy influence of African-Americans, and therefore the role of race in US Africa policies. Gerald Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun: the United States and the war against Zimbabwe, 1965–1980* (2001), emphasises the more nefarious efforts of the US government to hinder the transition to majority rule. According to Horne, US mercenaries who were permitted to ply their trade free from prosecution by the US government were critical to the maintenance of white minority rule after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965. They became even better organised during the 1990s as US-government-sponsored mercenary firms, such as Military Professional Resources, Inc (MPRI), received financial windfalls as a result of the ‘outsourcing’ of security functions once typically handled by the states themselves within the region. ‘African Americans, along with U.S. investors, were seeking to play an ever larger role in shaping U.S. policy towards Africa’, explains Horne. ‘However, the proliferation of mercenary firms in an age of privatisation insures that the “barrel of the gun” will continue to be a powerful U.S. force in the region’ (p. 286). Indeed, the corporate-friendly attitude of the Bush administration clearly suggests that such firms will continue to reap windfalls from US foreign policy, especially if foreign aid figures are dramatically increased as has been promised.

A final case study written by Irwin Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (2001), provides insights into US–French competition in Africa, a tendency that initially intensified in the cold war’s aftermath. I have argued elsewhere that this trend indicated the emergence of a ‘cold peace’, in which the major northern industrialised democracies struggled for economic supremacy in the highly competitive economic environment of the 1990s. More precisely, the common pursuit of economic self-interest had increasingly supplanted more traditional foreign policy goals, such as containment of communism on the part of the US and promotion of la francophonie on the part of France, and this shift was responsible for rising US–French tensions in francophone Africa. In the post-9/11 era, it will be noteworthy to assess what long-term impact the Bush administration’s renewed security focus on a global war on terrorism will exert on US–French relations in Africa, especially as its anti-Islamist element prompts Washington’s pursuit of closer security ties with Algeria (the case study of Wall’s book), Morocco and Tunisia.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

The least common form of writing involves the formulation of theoretical frameworks that ideally should be capable of explaining foreign policy
developments regardless of the case in question. I developed such a framework in *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa: incrementalism, crisis and change* (1994), which examined the evolution of US foreign policy towards Congo-Kinshasa, Ethiopia/Somalia, and South Africa, from independence to January 1993. The framework involved an assessment of a variety of variables, most notably the nature of the situation confronted by US policymakers (routine, crisis, or extended crisis situations), and how this affected the policymaking process (bureaucratic, White House, or congressional dominance), and ultimately continuity and change in US foreign policy. The primary conclusion of the book is that US Africa policies, perhaps more so than those directed towards any other region of world, typically have been marked by bureaucratic dominance of the policymaking process in the absence of sustained White House or congressional interest. As a result they have tended towards maintenance of the status quo, regardless of who occupies the White House or which party controls the Congress.

A second book by Emmanuel Amadife, *Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy-Making* (1999), applies the classic ‘pre-theory’ framework of James Rosenau to analyse US foreign policy during the 1967-70 Nigerian civil war. Amadife is insightful in terms of how the five sets of pre-theory variables – external, societal, governmental, role, and individual – can be adapted to explain turning points in US foreign policy. Contrary to Amadife’s expectations, ‘governmental’ variables, notably the bureaucratic dominance of the State Department, were most influential. One explanation is that the Nigerian civil war, unlike other African conflicts during the cold war era, did not become a flashpoint for East–West competition. Both the US and the Soviet Union found themselves on the same side, supporting Nigeria’s territorial integrity. In the absence of a perceived crisis at the level of the White House (i.e. no communist intervention on the side of the secessionist Biafrans), policy was automatically deferred to the bureaucracies of the executive branch, which initially pursued a continuation of the status quo.

Amadife’s findings, which are similar to my own, nonetheless point out the need for the further refinement and application of our multicausal theoretical frameworks to other cases and time periods. The time is ripe, for example, to see how well the theoretical expectations of my framework are capable of explaining changes in US Africa policies during the post-9/11 era. Amadife’s analysis would similarly benefit from its application to other civil wars of the 1960s, notably the cold war flashpoint of Congo-Kinshasa, as well as the abundance of cases that have emerged in the post-cold war era. In short, the field of US foreign policy towards Africa would greatly
benefit from the further formulation and testing of both existing and new theoretical frameworks.

**TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

This review of forty books, which is by no means exhaustive, demonstrates that our understanding of US foreign policy towards Africa has been richly expanding. We can look forward to even greater numbers of books as former members of the Clinton administration reflect on what eight years of Democratic Party control of the White House entailed for continuity and change in US Africa policies. We as a scholarly community (in reality) have just begun to truly assess the successes and failures of US Africa policies during the cold war and immediate post-cold war eras, now that we have the luxury of historical detachment and hindsight. However, our need to understand and take stock of these lessons, and the need for further scholarship, has never been greater, especially as the Bush administration makes anti-terrorism its central foreign policy goal and, as a result, continues to press African countries to join the White House in that quest.

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