Africa: prospects for the future

The renaissance in Africa presents its leaders with many challenges. What are U.S. interests in Africa? What role should the U.S. play?

by Peter J. Schraeder

African Renaissance: origins and implications

The 1994 inauguration of Nelson Mandela as South Africa’s first democratically elected president symbolized the efforts of thousands of pro-democracy groups to instill democratic practices throughout the African continent. Mandela’s willingness to embrace his former captors embodied the vision of a new generation of leaders committed to multiracial and multiethnic societies based on tolerance, universal human rights and the rule of law. Policymakers, technocrats and private entrepreneurs are also at the forefront of restructuring once moribund economies to unleash the African entrepreneurial spirit. This renaissance is perhaps best captured by the flourishing of the media and literature as they enjoy the progressive decline of state censorship. A new generation of journalists, writers and scholars remain firmly committed to strengthening the democratic achievements of the last decade of the 20th century.

As Americans begin debating U.S. foreign policy as part of the 2000 presidential election, the time is ripe for a reassessment of U.S.-Africa relations. Though the African mosaic is diverse, with 53 independent countries and a number of complex issues, one question stands out: Should the next U.S. President draw upon America’s traditional role as aid-giver and play an activist role in the African renaissance, or will budgetary constraints and competing interests in other regions reinforce what is viewed by some as a policy of neglect, at best?

Democratization

Dozens of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern and Southern Europe made transitions from authoritarian to more democratic forms of governance during the last quarter of the 20th century. This trend has prompted visions of a “third wave of democratization” (the first began in the 1820s and the second in the 1940s). In the case of Africa, this third wave coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The collapse of single-party regimes throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union set powerful precedents for African pro-democracy activists who already had begun organizing against human-rights abuses and political repression against the backdrop of severe economic stagnation in their respective countries. The most notable outcome, often referred to as “Africa’s second independence” or “Africa’s second liberation,” was the discrediting of more than 30 years of experimentation with single-party political systems in favor of more democratic forms of governance based on multiparty politics and the protection of human rights.

In the early 1980s, truly competitive elections were held in only five African countries: Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal and Zimbabwe. But between 1990 and 1994, more than 38 countries held competitive elections. Most important, 29 of the multiparty contests of this period constituted “founding elections” in which the office of the head of government is openly contested following a period during which multiparty political competition was impossible.

Optimism or pessimism?

The prospect of a new wave of democratization has fostered both optimism...
Successful Military Coups d’État

and pessimism: optimism generated by a host of democratic successes that culminated in what numerous observers have referred to as the South African “miracle,” and pessimism based on the simple reality that several transitions resulted in “democratic decay,” often ending in military coups d’état and a return to authoritarianism. Colonel Ibrahim Mañassara Baré of Niger achieved the dubious honor of leading the first successful coup d’état against a democratically elected government in francophone West Africa since the beginning of the third wave of democratization. In a throwback to an earlier reign, Colonel Baré announced that there would be multiparty elections in 1996, presented himself as the “civilian” candidate of the ruling party and won what international observers agreed was a grossly flawed electoral contest.

Even when a successful transition to more democratic governance is made, newly elected leaders are confronted with the long-term challenge of ensuring the consolidation of democratic practices in still-fragile political systems. “The frequency of democratic breakdowns in this century—and the difficulties of consolidating new democracies—must give serious pause to those who would argue . . . for the inevitability of global democracy,” explains Larry Diamond, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution. “As a result, those concerned about how countries can move ‘beyond authoritarianism and totalitarianism’ must also ponder the conditions that permit such movement to endure . . . To rid a country of an authoritarian regime or dictator is not necessarily to move it fundamentally beyond authoritarianism.”

The authoritarian-democratic paradox

In 1991 Zambia made a successful transition from a single-party system headed by President Kenneth Kaunda to a multiparty system under the leadership of President Frederick Chiluba of the Movement for Multi-party Democracy. Eighteen months after achieving victory, Chiluba reinstated a “state of emergency” that had existed throughout Kaunda’s rule, and arrested and detained without charges 14 members of the official opposition, the United National Independence party. Critics drew parallels between Kaunda’s use of states of emergency during the 1970s and the 1980s to silence political opponents and Chiluba’s use of them to curb rising criticism of his regime’s inability to resolve economic problems.

Chiluba’s predicament illustrates Africa’s new authoritarian-democratic paradox. As with the first generation of African leaders, who took office beginning in the 1950s, Chiluba and the other newly elected leaders of the 1990s are confronted with popular expectations that higher wages and better living conditions will be widely and quickly shared following multiparty elections. When the weak Zambian state was saddled with even the minimal checks and balances of a democratic system, economic progress was stymied, and weariness and disenchantment grew.

Although largely trained within an authoritarian tradition, Chiluba is now expected to abide by the “rules of the game” of Zambia’s multiparty political system. When strict adherence to those rules threatened to seal his political fate in the 1996 presidential elections, however, he put them aside, especially after Kaunda accepted opposition backing and entered the race. To fend off his opponents, Chiluba oversaw the ratification of two constitutional amendments that hark back to the authoritarian excesses of his predecessor and undermined the very democratic political system he had sought to create. The first requires that the parents of any presidential candidate be Zambians by birth. The second limits presidential candidates to two terms of office. Since Kaunda’s parents were born in neighboring Malawi, and he had ruled Zambia for 27 years (1964–91), he was forced to withdraw from the race. Chiluba’s political maneuvering removed the only serious challenge to his rule and ensured his reelection.

Some proponents of democratization believe that the true test of Africa’s newly established systems is their ability to foster an “alternation of power” between rival political parties. Benin stands out as the best example of a newly established, multiparty democracy that has successfully weathered an alternation of power via the ballot box. Following a 1990 national conference,
foundering elections were held in 1991 in which a technocrat, Nicéphore Soglo, was elected president. Mathieu Kérékou, the former Marxist dictator, graciously accepted defeat and retired from politics only to return as the leading opposition candidate in the 1996 presidential elections. With Soglo’s reelection campaign severely hampered by the poor performance of the economy and public perceptions of his disregard for the average citizen, Kérékou overcame the odds, emerged victorious and now serves as a powerful example of the consolidation of democratic practices on the African continent.

Whether democratic consolidation will overcome democratic decay largely depends on how the newly elected elites respond to the authoritarian-democratic paradox. Will they graciously accept defeat and join the ranks of the “loyal opposition,” as was the case in Soglo’s defeat in 1996, or will they increasingly turn to a variety of authoritarian tactics to keep themselves in power at any cost, as did Chiluba?

Civilian militaries

African militaries emerged from the shadows during the 1950s to become some of the most important institutions in politics and society. The main way they achieved power was the coup d’État: the sudden and illegal overthrow of an existing government by a portion of the state’s armed forces. By the end of the 1960s, more than two dozen successful coups had ushered in a period that soon left more than 50% of all African countries governed by military regimes. Even in cases where they led their troops back to the barracks after turning over power to elected civilian regimes, military leaders maintained—and often enhanced—their newfound levels of political influence. Once they enjoyed the fruits of power, these so-called leaders in khaki were prone to return to presidential mansions in subsequent coups, leading foreign observers to characterize African militaries as the primary forces for change throughout the continent.

Most African countries have experienced at least one attempted or successful military coup, and several have experienced two or more. The record for the greatest number (six) is jointly held by Benin, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Only six African countries—Botswana, Djibouti, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Namibia and South Africa—have never faced armed challenges from their military, police or other security personnel. Nonetheless, the common assumption in Africa is that civilian-dominated systems constitute the norm. Even military leaders intent on staying in power are forced to offer, at minimum, rhetorical support for an eventual “return” to civilian rule, usually accompanied by some sort of timetable. The notion of “demilitarization,” sometimes referred to as promoting the “civilianization” of military regimes, became increasingly important in the post-1989 era as policymakers and civilian movements sought firmer transitions to democracy.

In contrast to the 1960s, when military coups reached their peak, the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s have witnessed a sharp decline in military intervention. This trend may suggest a growing strength among democratic transitions in the post-cold-war era. At the same time, it is important to note that the transition to civilian governments during the 1980s ultimately stalled, only to be followed by an explosion of coups that made the 1960s the “decade of the military.” Today’s civilian leaders thus view the potential re-emergence of African militararies—the so-called khaki contagion—as a threat to the democratization process throughout Africa.

The crisis of the African state

The 1950–70 period was marked by the creation of highly authoritarian and centralized states seeking to co-opt or silence the very elements of civil society that had contributed to the independence struggle, most notably political parties, labor unions and student groups. These states were significantly challenged during the 1970s and the 1980s by a series of economic, political and military developments often referred to as the crisis of the African state. African leaders found their hold on power simultaneously threatened by the demands of faltering national economies, the resurgence of civil society, and in some cases civil unrest and conflict. Hobbled by decades of corruption and economic mismanagement, the “predatory states” of the earlier independence era increasingly proved incapable of maintaining control over their respective territories, and became known as lame Leviathans and shadow states.

The most noteworthy outcome was the inability of African leaders to contain domestic violence and conflict. As explained by Christopher Clapham, a noted British Africanist, an especially threatening trend was the rise of guerrilla insurgencies. First and foremost, liberation insurgencies were directed against colonial empires unwilling tocede power peacefully, as well as against white minority regimes in Southern Africa. Other guerrilla groups sought greater rights for specific regions of already independent nation-states. In the
REBEL SOLDIERS in Kinshasa await proclamation by Laurent Kabila about a new government. Kabila proclaimed himself president and changed the name of the country from Zaire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

extreme, such separatist insurgencies sought secession and recognition of their territories as independent nation-states. Although another group of reform insurgencies sought to maintain the territorial integrity of existing nation-states, their leaders were nonetheless committed to overthrowing existing regimes. A fourth group, warlord insurgencies, lacked a coherent vision beyond the immediate goal of overthrowing the regime in power. Such insurgencies usually were unable to reestablish centralized states after achieving victory, often leading to the continuation of conflict among competing warlords and their respective armies.

The crisis of the African state clearly demonstrated that highly authoritarian governments were ineffective managers. It also highlighted the rising importance of African civil societies. Just prior to their marginalization in the post-independence era, civil societies had played important roles, and during the 1990s they expected to wield equal if not greater levels of influence in their newly restructured societies. The international dimension had also changed with the cold war’s end. African leaders could no longer count on the diplomatic, financial or even military support of foreign powers to compensate for an increased inability to manage internal affairs.

Experiments in restructuring state-society relations

Can a new generation of leaders succeed in fostering an economic and political renaissance? Skeptics point to Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the former guerrilla leader whose forces overthrew the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa; formerly Zaire), in 1997. Rather than establish democratic practices and timetable for national elections, Kabila created a new dictatorship. In a series of moves that harked back to the rise of authoritarianism under Mobutu, he banned opposition parties, arrested several leading opposition figures, outlawed human rights organizations and arrested journalists who criticized the new regime.

In an ironic but unsurprising twist of fate, the Kabila regime in 1999 found itself confronted with a guerrilla insurgency in the eastern provinces funded by Kabila’s former military benefactors, Uganda and Rwanda.

There are, however, other more hopeful situations. One group of victorious guerrilla leaders, often referred to as the “new bloc,” led disciplined and battle-tested guerrilla armies to victory over discredited states. Bloc members include Issias Aferki of Eritrea, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda. All share a commitment to a free-market economy, the reduction of corruption at all levels of government, the rule of law and the creation of responsible police and mili-
tary forces. However, this new bloc also tends to view multiparty democracy as a luxury that must take a backseat to the promotion of politico-military stability and socioeconomic development. In the case of Uganda, for example, Museveni’s regime has instituted a “no-party” system that does not allow candidates to campaign under the banner of opposition parties. As a result, this bloc increasingly finds itself criticized by citizens as well as international observers who question the long-term wisdom of stifling political dissent.

A second restructuring that attracted tremendous debate revolves around Ethiopia’s ethnically based federal system. In 1991, after nearly 30 years of civil war, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) overthrew a highly authoritarian and centralized state that had been ruled by the U.S.-supported monarchy of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930–74) and then the Soviet-supported Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam (1977–91). EPRDF leaders firmly believed that both the Selassie and Mengistu regimes intensified ethnic hatreds and polarized the nation. They fielded a guerrilla army and led it to victory, one outcome of which was the determination of Eritrean guerrilla forces to demand independence for their province.

In a 1993 referendum, 99.8% of voters favored independence.

The EPRDF leadership believed that the only way to “save” the remaining portions of the multiethnic Ethiopian state was to create a federal system comprising 12 ethnically based states and two autonomous cities. Although critics have argued that such an arrangement will further polarize politics as ethnic leaders compete for federal resources, proponents have countered that the move quelled separatist tendencies. Meanwhile, Ethiopia’s experiment in federalism has been marred by the authoritarian practices of the Tigrean People’s Liberation Front, the politico-military core of the EPRDF, which controls both the presidency and the vast majority of the seats in the Council of People’s Representatives, the national legislature.

The most comprehensive example of state-society restructuring revolves around the ongoing transformation of South Africa’s former apartheid system into a multiracial and multiethnic democracy. Prior to 1994, South Africa had been ruled by a white minority regime that instituted racial and social segregation. As part of democratization, South Africans were challenged to confront their collective past and to create a culture of forgiveness through public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Subsequent negotiations among the major political parties resulted in the adoption of a constitutional framework in 1997 that separated powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; created a three-tiered structure of municipal, provincial, and federal governments; and established a bill of rights for individuals and civil society. Although the constitution recognizes the importance of protecting the “cultural rights” of individual racial and ethnic groups, the unified federal system is not based on race or ethnicity.

South Africa’s carefully crafted state-society balance is threatened by a dramatic rise in crime and the continued poverty of a large portion of the population. Constitutional guarantees of political freedoms may mean little to working parents who cannot safely walk about their townships or earn enough money to move their families out of poverty. Indeed, the suggestion that the new constitution will eventually evolve into a living testament to the multiracial and multiethnic ideals of the African National Congress (ANC) misses the crucial elements in this political transition: the vast majority expects and demands immediate rewards to make up for the past injustices of apartheid.

“However it evolves, it seems safe to conclude that the [South African] constitution provides a solid basis for representative, transparent and accountable governance, with meaningful protection and promotion of fundamental rights,” concluded a special report by the Carnegie Foundation. “As such, it does hold promise as an inspiration for other countries in transition, particularly those that are attempting to build viable state-society coalitions under conditions of diverse cultures, deep economic disparities and limited political authority and financial resources.”

**OAU and conflict resolution**

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has the potential to play an important role in the resolution of conflicts emerging from such restructuring experiments. However, the OAU’s two bedrock principles—support for the ter-
titorial integrity of member states and noninterference in internal affairs—historically have impeded its ability to mediate both internal conflicts and those among member states. The 1967–70 Nigerian civil war, for example, which yielded automatic support for the territorial integrity of Nigeria, seriously called into doubt (at least from the view of the secessionist Igbo) the OAU’s ability to serve as an impartial negotiator. It is for this reason that the OAU Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration was stillborn, and the majority of African-initiated arbitration efforts have been carried out on an ad hoc basis by African presidents. For example, former President Hassan Gouled Aptidon of Djibouti used his country’s stature as the headquarters for the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development to mediate the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia. According to I. William Zartman, a specialist in conflict resolution, such efforts historically had a 33% success rate, and then only temporarily as warring parties returned to the battlefield.

The ability to dispatch peacemaking or peacekeeping forces is critical to conflict resolution. The OAU founding fathers attempted to prepare for this by planning the creation of an African High Command: a multinational military force comprising military contingents from OAU member states. The African High Command never made it beyond the planning stage, however, leading once again to a variety of ad hoc measures. In 1981 the OAU sponsored the creation of a short-term all-African military force designed to resolve an expanding civil war in Chad. With approximately 4,800 troops from Congo-Kinshasa, Nigeria and Senegal, the OAU force failed to achieve any concrete solution due to financial, logistical and political difficulties, and within a few months was forced to withdraw.

Search for an interventionist solution

The OAU’s shortcomings have fostered intervention by four sets of actors: the United Nations, as demonstrated by the Security Council’s 1991 decision to sponsor a series of U.S.-led military operations in Somalia, usually referred to as Operation Restore Hope; African regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States, which sponsored a series of Nigerian-led military operations in Liberia; foreign powers, most notably the former Soviet Union, the U.S. and France; and African powers, as demonstrated by Nigeria’s 1997 dispatch of troops to neighboring Sierra Leone to restore a civilian government to power. From the perspective of pan-Africanists, such interventions are ultimately undesirable: rather than representing the consensus of OAU member states, they appear driven by the self-interests of the intervenors.

In the wake of the cold war, African leaders agreed in 1997 to create an African Defense Force made up of military units of OAU member states equipped by foreign powers, most notably the U.S., France and Britain. The African Defense Force would remain under the command of the OAU. Unresolved issues revolve around which countries should be eligible to contribute forces (e.g., should involvement be limited only to democratic countries?) and what type of decisionmaking body should authorize interventions (e.g., should intervention be the consensus of all OAU member states, or a smaller representative body?).

Response of the Clinton Administration

President Bill Clinton’s 11-day visit to Africa in 1998 was intended to signal a significant change in U.S. policy and a firm commitment to strengthening the African renaissance. “In coming to Africa,” Clinton explained in an address to the Great Hall of Parliament in Capetown, South Africa, “my motive in part was to help the American people see the new Africa with new eyes, and to focus our own efforts on new policies suited to the new reality.”

Clinton Administration pronouncements are not unlike those of their Democratic party predecessors, who also sought to underscore their “fresh thinking” when it came to Africa. In rhetoric that would resonate just as strongly with Africanists during the late 1950s and early 1960s as it did during the late 1990s, then Senator John F. Kennedy derided Washington’s inability to come to grips with the rising tide of African nationalism, and he underscored the need to embark on a “bold and imaginative new program for the development of Africa.”

President Jimmy Carter entered office on a pledge to transcend his predecessors’ cold-war preoccupations in favor of such positive goals as promoting human rights and basic human needs. The Kennedy and Carter Administrations nonetheless came under fire from Africanists who criticized the chasm between rhetoric and action. Despite his sharp attacks on European colonialism, Kennedy kept close military ties to Portugal in order to protect access to Portuguese-controlled military bases in the Azores. And Carter’s human-rights rhetoric notwithstanding, the U.S. continued to align itself with authoritarian dictators, including Zaire’s Mobutu.

Reassessing military force

In October 1993, dozens of U.S. soldiers were killed or wounded in a fierce battle in Mogadishu, Somalia, during a humanitarian military mission launched by the previous president, George Bush. Media images of victorious Somali forces holding a U.S. helicopter pilot hostage and dragging the corpse of a U.S. soldier through the streets unleashed a firestorm of criticism and debate. What became known as America’s “debacle” in Somalia served as a crucial turning point in Clinton Administration foreign policy toward Africa.

The White House renounced a campaign to significantly expand multilateral peacekeeping through the creation of a UN rapid deployment force. A formal Presidential Decision Directive, PDD-25, outlined fairly restrictive conditions that had to be met before the U.S.
would agree to any further UN-sponsored military operations, regardless of whether American troops took part. Among the most important conditions was the consent of all warring parties prior to the deployment of military forces. The simple message was that the U.S. "cannot resolve the conflicts of the world but does not believe that the UN is capable of making and keeping peace, particularly when hostilities among parties still exist."

The most important outcome of the new directive, which in essence denied U.S. support for UN-sponsored military operations designed to impose peace, was an extremely cautious approach to other conflicts in Africa. In the case of Rwanda, for example, the Clinton Administration was clearly wary of being drawn into a civil conflict that, according to a UN report issued in 1994, had resulted in the execution of between 500,000 and 1 million unarmed civilians. Fearful of being drawn into "another Somalia," the Clinton Administration not only initially blocked the dispatch of 5,500 troops requested by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, but instructed Administration spokespeople to avoid labeling the unfolding ethnic conflict as "genocide," lest such a label further inflame American public sympathy and a demand for intervention, as had been the case in Somalia.

This unwillingness to support UN-sponsored peacekeeping missions has led to de facto support for African military solutions under the guise of "African solutions for African problems." It is precisely for this reason, argue critics of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa, that the Administration originally proposed creation of an African Crisis Response Force, subsequently reformulated as the African Crisis Response Initiative. Africans, not Americans, were to take the lead in resolving conflicts—a regional dynamic that stands in sharp contrast to extensive White House attempts at resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East or the series of crises in the Balkans.

One controversial implication is tacit support for military solutions imposed by African regional powers. For example, the Administration quietly supported Rwanda's military efforts to install a pro-U.S. government in Congo-Kinshasa under Kabila, and at this writing the U.S. is also supporting efforts by Rwanda, Eritrea and Ethiopia to un-dermine what is perceived as a radical Islamic fundamentalist regime in the Sudan. The Administration has embraced the so-called new bloc—Sudan, Eritrea, Zenawi of Ethiopia, Museveni of Uganda and Kagame of Rwanda—who control battle-hardened guerrilla armies. Apart from the fact that they hold the reins, these regimes are believed able to maintain stability and create "responsible and accountable" governments. Paradoxically, a stress on stability may in fact run counter to the long-term goal of promoting democracy.

**U.S. involvement, for and against**

Entering office at a time when civil conflicts were multiplying across Africa, the Administration was expected to formulate a comprehensive policy of conflict resolution. The new Administration was initially split. One school felt African issues would necessarily distract the President and potentially plunge the White House into political controversies at home. A second, more activist point of view, also inspired by the U.S. experience in Somalia, asserted that disaster could have been avoided by preventive action. "The choice is not between intervening or not intervening," explained one White House policymaker. "It is between getting involved early and doing it at a cheaper cost, or being forced to intervene in a massive, more costly way later."

With White House attention focused elsewhere, the African affairs bureaus of the national security bureaucracies, such as the State Department, the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), grew in importance, along with economic policy units, most notably within the Department of Commerce. The net result has been fragmented foreign policy. In the case of Somalia, lack of high-level coordination led to what many Somali specialists considered an ill-conceived military operation from the start (i.e., famine was merely the symptom of an underlying political problem that could not be resolved through military intervention). As separate bureaucracies pursued different, often contradictory goals, the emphasis on political reconstruction was at best contradicted by the military's approach in the field, and at worst mere rhetoric.

The first high-level analysis of growing contradictions in policy toward Somalia nonetheless occurred only after the deaths of U.S. soldiers—some eight months after Clinton assumed office. To his credit, Clinton recognized the shortcomings of policy as it had evolved and quickly announced the impracticality of a military solution imposed
from abroad. However, the structural problem inherent in the foreign policy apparatus—the lack of high-level attention and coordination of U.S. policies toward Africa—is as much a problem today as ever.

Uneven approach to democratization

Africanists have been understandably disappointed. "Democracy" was one of the common threads in Clinton's campaign speeches, during which he stated that "we should encourage and nurture the stirring for democratic reform that is surfacing all across Africa from the birth of an independent Namibia to the pressure for democratic reforms in Kenya." Though U.S. support for South Africa's transition to a democracy indicates rhetoric can be transformed into viable policies, in Congo-Kinshasa the cornerstone of Administration policy is a permutation of the same "Mobutu or chaos" thesis that dominated State Department, Pentagon and CIA thinking from the 1960s through the 1980s. Under this bureaucratically inspired view, regional instability and, ultimately, Communist expansion into the heart of Africa was the only alternative to Mobutu's continued hold over power. "Regardless of the fact that we are no longer faced with a Communist threat," explained one member of the State Department's Africa bureau, "the destabilization of Zaire [Congo-Kinshasa]—which borders nine other African countries—could have a tremendously negative impact on regional stability." With the experiences of Somalia and Rwanda still etched in their minds, the Africa specialists of the national security bureaucracies have successfully argued for the need to tread softly as, according to another member of the State Department's Africa bureau, the situation in Congo-Kinshasa "could easily turn into a Somalia and a Rwanda rolled into one, although this time in one of Africa's largest and most populous nations."

It is particularly striking to hear members of the State Department's Africa bureau argue that, like his predecessor, Kabila is both "part of the problem and part of the solution" to resolving the crisis in the region. As is the case with U.S. support for other members of the new bloc of African leaders, a responsive and accountable government capable of restoring order, ensuring territorial integrity and ending transborder threats will be viewed as a success—even if it is at the expense of democracy.

The Administration's ambivalence can be nicely summed up by comparing Clinton's trip to Africa with one made by Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright in December 1997. Clinton's itinerary was purposely whittled down to emphasize his commitment to democratization: four of the six countries visited—Botswana, Ghana, Senegal and South Africa—are among Africa's leading democracies. Albright, however, visited seven countries, six of which—Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Congo-Kinshasa, Angola and Zimbabwe—are ruled by leaders who seized power with the barrel of the gun rather than by democratic elections. The message sent by the Albright visit was that the Administration's true priority is the cultivation of strategically located, pro-U.S. regimes capable of maintaining stability where civil wars and ethnic conflicts once raged.

A final component of the Administration's approach has been to emphasize foreign aid in favor of trade and investment. Foreign aid to Africa has steadily decreased from a peak of $1.8 billion in 1985 to approximately $800 million in 1999; meanwhile, a 1996 initiative, built around the proposed Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, would stimulate U.S. investments and sales throughout Africa. Africans have sharply criticized the gradual decline in U.S. aid, and some, most notably Mandela, have denounced the political and economic conditionalities associated with the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. Indeed, although a version of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act has passed both the House and the Senate, powerful domestic criticism, most notably within the Congressional Black Caucus and the textile industry, threatens the viability of any trial bill.

The Administration's aggressive trade policy has intensified economic competition between the U.S. and other industrialized democracies with an eye on Africa. This has strained U.S.-French relations because stakes are so high in the lucrative petroleum, telecommunications and transport industries in francophone Africa. In the eyes of French policymakers, the penetration of American and other Western companies constitutes at best an intrusion and at worst an aggression against France's former colonies. The seriousness with which this issue is taken became clear when France's minister of cooperation, Michel Roussin, said a series of meetings had been held at the beginning of the 1990s on how best to defend French economic and political interests against those of the U.S.
Options for the new millennium

Grappling with ways to strengthen the African renaissance at the beginning of the new millennium, African leaders are confronted with the simple reality that even the best of intentions are often not enough, while American leaders are confronted by the knowledge that enlarging the renaissance will require enormous political will and greater understanding of an extremely diverse continent that has never been a U.S. priority. Even the best of American intentions can be deemed contradictory or as even constituting an “Uncle Scrooge” approach devoid of either true interest or sincerity. But Clinton’s visit and other steps in the right direction mean the time is ripe to build on the successes thus far and to promote debate about the future. Three policy options stand out:

1. The U.S. should speak out publicly and put pressure on all African governments—including those that have been freely elected—that do not respect the political rights and civil liberties of their citizens, especially when civilian democracies have been overthrown by military coups d’état.

**Pro:** Making democracy the sine qua non of enhanced U.S.-African ties is consistent with U.S. values and an appropriate and constructive way to treat all foreign countries. In the absence of strong, national institutions, this is the most effective way to foster democratic norms. It also clearly conveys U.S. commitment to democratic practice.

**Con:** U.S. policymakers should of course condemn military coups, but they have no business interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, especially those with democratic elections. Democracies come in many varieties, and the U.S. should be careful not to impose its own model on other countries. Acting in such a way might jeopardize other, more important issues on the U.S. agenda for foreign policy toward Africa.

2. The U.S. should make the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) the thrust of its approach to conflict resolution in Africa.

**Pro:** The guiding principles of the OAU—support for the territorial integrity of member states and noninterference in internal affairs—historically have impeded its ability to mediate internal conflicts and those between two or more member states. Ad hoc arrangements, such as Nigeria’s unilateral intervention in Sierra Leone, raised questions as to the desirability of regional, often undemocratic countries (Nigeria was under military rule at the time) taking matters into their own hands. African countries need external help in the creation and maintenance of a continent-wide force capable of responding to internal crises and state collapse. U.S. training of national armies, such as Senegal’s, has helped improve peacekeeping and should be strengthened.

**Con:** Ever wary of the consequences of direct U.S. military intervention, Washington supports ACRI as a way to wash its hands of its military responsibilities on the African continent. The slogan “African solutions for African problems” in essence signals the lack of political will to put American soldiers in harm’s way. ACRI itself remains flawed, because of such unresolved issues as which countries should be eligible to contribute forces and what type of decisionmaking body should be capable of authorizing when and where to intervene. In the extreme, U.S. support of local military forces will ultimately intensify regional military conflicts, as witnessed by Rwanda’s ongoing military intervention in Eastern Congo-Kinshasa.

3. The U.S. should actively implement the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and make it the centerpiece of U.S.-African economic relations.

**Pro:** In an era of declining foreign aid, the promotion of trade and investment serves as a solid indicator of U.S. interest in Africa. Trade and investment—the cornerstone of economic growth and development—are key to strengthening fledgling African democracies and preventing the return of military rule. Trade will ultimately benefit African and American producers and economies alike.

**Con:** Trade and investment are not reliable substitutes for foreign aid because they gravitate to countries that are already economic leaders, to the potential detriment of the most impoverished African countries. Several prominent African leaders, including Nelson Mandela, have sharply criticized the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and the political and economic conditions that would accompany its extension to individual African countries. Congressional critics say increased trade and investment in Africa would hurt certain U.S. economic sectors, most notably the textile industry in the U.S. South.

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**AFRICA**
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the problems and prospects associated with the "third wave of democratization" in Africa?

2. What are the essential components for ensuring the successful "demilitarization" or "civilization" of African military regimes?

3. How should state-society relations be restructured so as to provide a firm basis for African economic growth and political development?

4. What are the primary beliefs of the so-called new bloc of African leaders concerning the process of democratization? Do these beliefs ultimately facilitate or hinder the consolidation of African democracy in the long-term?

5. What actors and/or international organizations ultimately should be responsible for resolving African conflicts, in every way including the ultimate interventionist tool of direct military intervention?

6. How prominent should the African continent be in the global hierarchy of U.S. foreign policy in comparison to other regions, most notably Asia (including Japan and China), Latin America (including Central America and the Caribbean), the Middle East, Russia and Eastern Europe (the former Communist states), and Western Europe?

7. How involved should U.S. policymakers be in attempting to facilitate and strengthen the "African renaissance"?

8. What are some of the challenges and pitfalls associated with U.S. foreign policy efforts to promote democratization and conflict resolution in Africa?

9. What should be the relative importance of the following U.S. foreign policy goals in Africa: democratization, conflict resolution, and trade and investment?

READINGS AND RESOURCES


THE AFRICA FUND, 50 Broad St., Suite 711, New York, NY 10004; (212) 785-1024; Fax (212) 785-1078. Since 1966, the Africa Fund has worked for an informed U.S. policy toward southern Africa, mobilizing community leaders throughout America and providing guidance, information and contacts. www.prairienet.org/acas/afund.html

AFRICANews Online, P.O. Box 3851, Durham, NC 27702; (919) 286-0747; Fax (919) 286-2614. Contains up-to-date news stories and features about a wide spectrum of issues concerning Africa. www.africanews.org

AFRICA POLICY INFORMATION CENTER (APIC), 110 Maryland Ave., NE, #509, Washington, DC 20002; (202) 546-7961; Fax (202) 546-1545. A nonprofit organization dedicated to disseminating information on African issues. The APIC offers maps, news, documents, publications and reports. www.africapolicy.org

AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION (ASA), Rutgers University, Douglass Campus, 132 George St, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1400; (732) 932-8173; Fax (732) 932-3394. A nonprofit organization with a mission to bring together people with a scholarly and professional interest in Africa. www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/ASA/ASA_Groups.html

* You can find links to this document and additional readings on our website at www.fpa.org/program.html
OPINION BALLOTS

Please feel free to xerox opinion ballots, but be sure to submit only one ballot per person.
To have your vote counted, mail ballots by June 30, 2000. Send ballots to:
FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION, 470 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, NY 10016-6819

TOPIC 7
Africa’s Prospects

ISSUE A. What should serve as the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa? (choose one)
- 1. Promoting democratization
- 2. Prevention of genocide
- 3. Encouraging trade and foreign investment.

ISSUE B. How important should the African continent be in the global hierarchy of U.S. foreign policy in comparison to other regions of the world? (choose one)
- 1. The single most important region.
- 2. More important than most other regions.
- 3. Less important than most other regions.
- 4. Not important at all.

Your zip code: ____________________________

Date: / /2000 Ballot continues on reverse side...

TOPIC 8
Humanitarianism

ISSUE A. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGRE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
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<td>The interventions in Kosovo and East Timor have set a precedent for dealing with humanitarian disasters elsewhere in the world.</td>
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<td>International humanitarian assistance needs to be regulated by a global body.</td>
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ISSUE B. Who should take the lead in spelling out criteria for humanitarian interventions?
- 1. The UN
- 2. The U.S.
- 3. NATO
- 4. The Red Cross

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**ISSUE C.** As for dealing with African conflicts, which of the following U.S. foreign policy tools are appropriate and which ones are not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>Not Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Noninvolvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diplomacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Economic and military aid</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Covert intervention</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Direct military intervention</td>
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**ISSUE D.** Who should be ultimately responsible for resolving African conflicts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Not Responsible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. African countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. African regional organizations, most notably the Organization of African Unity (OAU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Foreign powers, most notably the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. International organizations, most notably the UN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ISSUE C.** Do the principles of neutrality and impartiality still provide a useful guide to humanitarian action, or are these principles now obsolete?

- 1. Still useful
- 2. Now obsolete

Comment: __________________________________________________________________________

**ISSUE D.** Should humanitarian assistance be limited to delivery of such supplies as food or medical aid, or should it do more in addressing the root causes of the crises?

- 1. Deliver supplies
- 2. Address root causes

Comment: __________________________________________________________________________