
**UNITED STATES FOREIGN
POLICY TOWARD AFRICA
INCREMENTALISM, CRISIS
AND CHANGE**

PETER J. SCHRAEDER

Loyola University of Chicago



**CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS**

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1994

First published 1994
Reprinted 1995, 1996

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Schraeder, Peter J.

United States foreign policy toward Africa:
Incrementalism, crisis and change / Peter J. Schraeder.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in international relations; 31)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0 521 44439 X

1. Africa – Foreign relations – United States.
2. United States – Foreign relations – Africa.
3. United States – Foreign relations – 1945–1989.
4. United States – Foreign relations – 1989–1993.

I. Title. II. Series.

DT38.W45 1993

327.7306 – dc20 93–21590 CIP

ISBN 0 521 44439 X hardback

ISBN 0 521 46677 6 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2002

CONTENTS

<i>List of tables</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiv
<i>List of acronyms</i>	xvii
<i>Maps</i>	xx
1 An introduction to US foreign policy toward Africa	1
2 Pattern and process in US foreign policy toward Africa	11
3 US foreign policy toward Zaire	51
4 US Foreign policy toward Ethiopia and Somalia	114
5 US foreign policy toward South Africa	189
6 US Africa policies in the post-Cold War era	247
Appendix A: Note on method	260
Appendix B: Note on interview techniques	263
<i>Notes</i>	266
<i>Select bibliography</i>	318
<i>Index</i>	336

TABLES

2.1	Carter administration foreign policy behavior by region	14
2.2	Pattern and process in US Africa policies	49
3.1	US economic and military aid to Zaire, 1959-1992	112
4.1	US economic and military aid to Ethiopia, 1950-1992	184
4.2	US economic and military aid to Somalia, 1954-1992	186
5.1	US economic and military aid to South Africa, 1985-1992	246

1 AN INTRODUCTION TO US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD AFRICA

No other continent has been so consistently ignored by our policy-makers, and yet none but Europe has been so continually connected to important developments in America, from the founding of the Republic in the era of the Atlantic slave trade to the inauguration of training exercises for the new Rapid Deployment Force.¹

Introduction

As the nationalist urges of independence movements swept the countries of Africa during the 1950s and these so-called “winds of change” marked the beginning of the end of European colonialism, two politicians of widely divergent political perspectives underscored the necessity of rethinking US foreign policy toward the continent. “For too many years,” Vice President Richard M. Nixon noted in 1957 after returning from a twenty-two day tour of the African continent, “Africa in the minds of many Americans has been regarded as a remote and mysterious continent which was the special province of big game hunters, explorers and motion picture makers.”² Recognizing the importance of an emerging Africa in the international scene – especially within the context of the East–West struggle – Nixon recommended that President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorize the creation of a separate Bureau of African Affairs within the State Department, an idea which reached fruition in 1958.

Also speaking out in 1957, Senator John F. Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) derided what he perceived as Washington’s inability to come to grips with the question of colonialism and the growing forces of nationalism in Africa.³ Kennedy later warned that the “only real question is whether these new nations [of Africa] will look West or East – to Moscow or Washington – for sympathy, help, and guidance in their effort to recapitulate, in a few decades, the entire history of modern Europe and America.” In order to blunt what he perceived as the steady decline of US prestige in Africa at the expense of growing

Soviet influence, Kennedy concluded that "we must embark on a bold and imaginative new program for the development of Africa."⁴

The prescription offered by both Nixon and Kennedy was to upgrade Africa to a position of priority within the policymaking establishment in accordance with changing international realities. Yet despite important changes in US Africa policies which came about after these leaders voiced their opinions during the late 1950s, Africanists within both governmental and academic circles have continued to lament the low level of attention focused on African issues. The result is a general lack of understanding concerning the formulation and implementation of US Africa policies. Invoking the image of Christopher Columbus, former British Prime Minister James Callaghan placed this state of affairs in perspective in May 1978 when he chided disagreement within the US policymaking establishment over how to respond to the invasion of Zaire by exiles based in neighboring Angola. "There seem to be a number of Christopher Columbuses setting out from the United States to discover Africa for the first time," Callaghan began. "It's been there a long time."⁵

Unfortunately, the United States has had to "rediscover" Africa at several junctures during the post-World War II era. US policymakers have tended to ignore the African continent until some sort of politico-military crisis grabs their attention. One undesirable outcome of such an approach is that policy often becomes driven by events, as opposed to the more desirable outcome of policy shaping events. Perhaps the greatest danger in such a state of affairs is that poor understanding on the part of policymakers can foster poorly devised policies that ultimately are destined to fail. As the US prepares to enter the twenty-first century it will become increasingly important to shed its Christopher Columbus image and formulate effective policies that are proactive rather than reactive.

Africa as a foreign policy backwater

One of the earliest recorded incidents of North America's involvement with Africa took place in 1619 when a Dutch ship sold twenty Africans into slavery in the British North American colonies.⁶ From this inauspicious beginning, the colonies eventually became part of a worldwide slave-trading network, the legacy of which nearly four centuries later would be over 30 million citizens – roughly 12 percent of the US population – claiming an African-American heritage.⁷

Despite historical and cultural ties between the US and the African continent, there exists no consensus within the policymaking

establishment over Africa's importance to US national security interests. Indeed, Africa's importance, like the proverbial perception of beauty, lies in the eyes of the beholder. For example, TransAfrica, the foreign policy lobbying apparatus for African-Americans, and the Congressional Black Caucus are quick to emphasize the importance of the racial link. Other members of Congress underscore the humanitarian or moral imperatives which link the US to Africa. Of particular concern are Western efforts to alleviate chronic drought and famine. The Department of Commerce, noting the potential market of nearly 600 million people for US goods and services, as well as significant imports of US oil and mineral imports from West and southern Africa, respectively, underscores the economic links of the relationship. The Department of State focuses on political linkages – most notably the weight of over fifty votes within the United Nations (UN) and the importance of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Department of Defense naturally focuses on military linkages, including Africa's geographical proximity to strategic "chokepoints" such as the Straits of Bab el-Mandeb in the Horn of Africa and the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa.

Despite these linkages, Africanists generally agree that US Africa policies from the founding of the Republic in 1789 to the present have been marked by indifference, at worst, and neglect, at best.⁸ Africa has been treated as a "backwater" in official policymaking circles, compared to the time and resources allocated to other regions considered to be of greater concern. A spirited exchange between Senator Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina) and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-New York) as reported in 1987 by the *New York Times*, for example, underscores the gap of knowledge concerning Africa among some elected officials. The debate revolved around an amendment put forth by Helms who, concerned with perceived communist advances in Africa (most notably the presence of Soviet military advisers in Mozambique and Cuban troops in Angola), sought a ban on aid to any African country hosting foreign troops on its soil.

But, Mr. Moynihan said, what of Chad, which is "fending off the Red armed hordes" with the help of the French? And what of Djibouti, which is doing the same? Mr. Helms was puzzled. Djibouti? Where is this Djibouti? Mr. Moynihan sprang to his feet, strode to the wall of the hearing room, clambered atop a chair and referred to a big map. He pointed to the Horn of Africa. "Communists to the left," he said, gesturing broadly. Another gesture: "Communists to the right." A stab of the finger on the map: "Djibouti – right in the middle." Mr. Helms appeared enlightened, even chastened. The amendment was defeated.⁹

Although Moynihan is credited with enlightening Helms' knowledge of foreign troops stationed in Africa, his analysis of the situation at hand was not without error. The "Red armed hordes" that the French were credited with stopping in Chad were, in reality, Libyan troops under the leadership of Muammar Qaddafi, an independent African leader who has vilified communism and capitalism alike as poor models for African development.¹⁰ Furthermore, the designation of Somalia as a communist country is somewhat misleading. It is true that Marxist rhetoric centering on the need to create a society based on social justice and individual freedom within a socialist framework filled oratorical speeches and official development plans of the Somali regime (1969-91) headed by General Siad Barre. However, in the aftermath of its rupture of relations with the Soviet Union in 1977 and defeat in the 1977-78 Ogaden War with Ethiopia (see Chapter 4), Somalia was a recipient of US aid and followed an export-oriented capitalist path of development.¹¹

The lack of substantive knowledge of Africa is especially acute at the level of the mass public, which maintains what can be called a *National Geographic* image of the continent. Although topics, such as apartheid in South Africa and famine in the Horn of Africa, receive regular press coverage and have somewhat improved the public's awareness of African political and economic issues, the mention of Africa typically conjures up images of lush jungles and wild animals. Many citizens seem quite surprised to learn that Africa's jungles comprise only approximately 4 percent of the continent and that, each and every business day, African businesspersons dressed in Western-style suits report to offices in financial hubs, such as Abidjan and Nairobi.¹²

This *National Geographic* image is reinforced by the nature of US media programming and the safari tradition of US journalism. Media programming, when it does focus on Africa, usually concentrates on the sensationalistic and often negative aspects of the continent.¹³ Hodding Carter, narrator of *Assignment Africa*, a Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentary on the role of the press in Africa, notes that there is a difference between "the Africa you read about or see on your TV screen, and the other more complex Africa that is hidden from you."¹⁴ Unless field reporters can produce a "hard" news story that can attract attention back home – such as interviews with US Marines detailing the hardships of being deployed in Somalia during the Christmas season as part of Operation Restore Hope – editors interested in what will sell make it difficult to achieve placement of a feature story in the press. Even the traditional crisis-oriented stories that usually make it into the Western press are often blocked. For

example, despite the availability of excellent film footage documenting the emerging Ethiopian famine of 1983–85 – an event which ultimately would receive significant press coverage and produce an outpouring of Western aid – editors initially refused to air the material because they “thought that there was no news in another African famine.”¹⁵

The safari tradition of US journalism – sending generalists to Africa on short-term assignments as opposed to those willing to make a long-term commitment to becoming authorities on Africa – reinforces the checkered view of what the public learns about the continent. Helen Kitchen, a former journalist and respected Africanist, notes that while much of the reporting by US newspaper and wire correspondents is informed and conscientious, follow-up is inconsistent. Kitchen laments that what one still gets from the US media is “discontinuous segments of the day-to-day history of Africa.”¹⁶ As another journalist poignantly notes, “The media’s misunderstanding of African crises stems from a dearth of the kind of day-to-day coverage of the continent that would put extraordinary events like famines and coups into perspective.”¹⁷

Finally, even the scholarly community has focused an inadequate amount of attention on US Africa policies.¹⁸ Indeed, the study of Africa within the fields of comparative foreign policy and international relations theory has been relegated to a low-level status. Instead, studies that focus on traditional US security concerns, such as East–West relations and the nature of the Atlantic Alliance, or geographical regions of perceived greater importance, such as Eastern Europe or the Middle East, are given academic priority. It is for these reasons that scholars are hopeful that the substantial increase in African studies and African-American studies programs since the 1960s and 1970s will contribute to a greater exploration of African issues within academia.

Continuity or change?

One outgrowth of Africa’s low status within the policymaking community, the public, and especially academia is the lack of understanding surrounding the nature and evolution of US Africa policies. Every few years it has been a ritual exercise for Africanists to ponder the continuities and discontinuities inherent in US Africa policies. In carrying out such exercises, the time-frame of analysis is usually the post-World War II period to the present, with 1958 – the year marking “official” recognition of Africa through the creation of the State Department’s Africa Bureau – serving as a convenient starting point.

The fairly consistent conclusion of these studies is that US Africa

policies largely have been marked by continuity rather than by change. For example, in his remarks on the twenty-fifth anniversary of official relations between the US and Africa, former African Studies Association President Crawford Young noted that it was the "essential continuity" which stood out. Although Young added that "noteworthy fluctuations" have occurred, he concluded that "these variations have been above all of style, tone, and the subtler chemistry of policy articulation, and not its underlying substance."¹⁹ Five years later, another scholar concurred, noting that US Africa policy "has demonstrated remarkable coherence and regularity despite the differences between Republican and Democratic administrations and the tenure of nine different Assistant Secretaries of State for African Affairs."²⁰ Finally, writing in 1992 from the vantage point of an Africanist who has witnessed the decline of communism and the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, Michael Clough, Senior Fellow for Africa at the Council on Foreign Relations, warns of the dangers associated with foreign policy continuity, and argues for abandoning traditional, government-to-government diplomatic approaches in favor of greater links at the local community level.²¹

Has US foreign policy toward Africa been marked by continuity, or is this much too simple a statement for summarizing the complexities involved in US relations with over fifty African countries? In the case of variations between Republican and Democratic administrations, for example, it has been noted that the Africa policies of the Kennedy administration constituted a significant departure from the anti-nationalist tendency of US foreign policy in the Third World.²² I have argued elsewhere that President Jimmy Carter's policy of promoting majority rule in Zimbabwe – which inevitably meant supporting the Marxist Patriotic Front headed by Robert Mugabe – broke rank with yet another standard of US foreign policy. This standard is based on the belief that radical forces in Third World countries should be excluded from playing a major role in internal political and economic reforms.²³ Finally, others have noted that the Reagan administration's policy of "constructive engagement" – most notably its willingness to publicly upgrade ties with South Africa – also constituted a significant departure from past US foreign policy.²⁴

The common thread linking all three of these examples is that they find discontinuity in US foreign policy toward Africa. Yet are these isolated cases, or are they indicative of significant changes brought on as new administrations with divergent beliefs replaced their predecessors? Crawford Young attempts to answer this question by asserting that, despite the fact that the Kennedy, Carter, and Reagan

administrations all “entered office with an African policy project that diverged sharply from that of its predecessor,” in each case “the actual change was far less than what appeared in prospect from the blueprints.”²⁵ Indeed, proponents of the theme of continuity can note that, despite strong rhetoric denouncing Portuguese colonialism on the African continent and supporting black majority rule, the Kennedy administration largely failed to move beyond this rhetoric. When US access to the highly valued and Portuguese-controlled bases in the Azores was called into question, Kennedy ultimately sided with the Europeanists in his administration who were in favor of the established status quo.²⁶ Similarly, despite a stated commitment to human rights and the need to decrease ties with authoritarian dictatorships, the Carter administration largely failed to follow through on this promise in 1977 in the case of Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire (see Chapter 3). Rather, strong rhetoric in the first year of the administration ultimately gave way to inaction and acceptance of a consensus within the national security bureaucracies that Mobutu’s fall would yield chaos and instability. Finally, it has been noted that the Reagan administration’s strong anti-communist proclivities and stated intention of shoring up valued clients often were not realized on the African continent. For example, the administration’s relationship during the 1980s with Somalia – an anti-communist client said to be threatened by formerly Marxist Ethiopia – initially followed the cautious, restrained path of the Carter administration (see Chapter 4).²⁷

Who is correct? Those arguing continuity? Those arguing discontinuity? Or some combination of the two? Clearly there exist opposing interpretations depending on the particular cases emphasized. Yet one finds opposing interpretations even when scholars focus upon the same factual events. In the case of the Reagan administration’s policy of constructive engagement, for example, some opponents branded the initiative as a radical departure from established policy toward the apartheid government of South Africa. At the same time, other opponents merely perceived the policy as the refurbishment or codification of the Nixon administration’s tilt toward the white-ruled regimes in the region. Posing the dilemma in a more light-hearted manner, Crawford Young notes:

Is it possible that Chester Crocker is simply Richard Moose by another name? Senator Jesse Helms apparently thinks so, but should we? Or, to put the matter more graphically, is it plausible that, despite the apparent rhetorical contrasts, United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick holds essentially the same views concerning

Africa as did her predecessors Andrew Young and Donald McHenry?²⁸

Overview

The most important purpose of this book is to describe and explain continuity and change in US foreign policy toward Africa by identifying the dominant patterns of US interventionist practices on the continent during the post-World War II period. Specifically, the goal of this research is to clarify why Washington has strengthened or weakened security relationships with African regimes over time. (See Appendix A for a brief note on research method.) Several questions are key in this regard: Under what circumstances has the US become involved with a particular regime in Africa? Who have been the key actors within the foreign policy establishment? What role do foreign powers play in decisions to intervene? Do the beliefs and interests of US leaders play a major role in determining when to intervene? What effect do foreign events have on these decisions? What role has been played by African Americans in the foreign policy process? What does the end of the Cold War mean for the future of US Africa policies? The remaining five chapters of this book are devoted to exploring these questions.

Before proceeding with an overview, however, it is important to explicitly state what is meant in the context of this book by “intervention” – a term which is widely used and is potentially confusing, meaning many different things to many different people.²⁹ Intervention is defined, in a broad sense, as the calculated use of political, economic, and military instruments by one country to influence the domestic or the foreign policies of another country. Four important aspects of this definition stand out. First, intervention is seen as purposeful, underscoring the intentional nature of the act. Second, intervention entails a wide choice of instruments ranging from the extension of economic and military aid to economic sanctions, covert action, paramilitary interference, and, finally, direct application of military force. Third, attempts to influence a country’s policies need not be restricted to efforts to change those policies but may also support a given regime in order to insulate it from change. Finally, intervention is not limited to affecting the domestic politics of a given country, but can be undertaken to affect that country’s foreign policies, as well.

This broad definition is adopted to capture the entire range of US foreign policy toward Africa and how it affects the strengthening or

weakening of security relationships with African regimes over time. The field of actions covered by this definition therefore includes such policies as President Lyndon B. Johnson's decision in 1964 to provide transport for Belgian troops to rescue and evacuate hostages and defeat the vestiges of a guerilla insurgency in northeastern Zaire; the State Department's growing advocacy during the 1960s of increased levels of economic and military aid to Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie in exchange for continued access to strategically important facilities; congressional adoption in 1986 of economic sanctions against South Africa in an attempt to force changes in that country's apartheid system; and the Defense Department's airlift in 1988 of military supplies to strengthen the Somali regime of General Siad Barre against an internal insurgency.

Chapter 2 is devoted to outlining a theoretical framework for analyzing the patterns and processes of US Africa policies during the post-World War II period. An important theme of this chapter is that US interventionist episodes – such as the four noted above – do not constitute isolated incidents, but rather are the result of identifiable trends. Some of these are unique to US Africa policies, while others are indicative of US foreign policy in general.

Chapters 3–5 constitute three case studies illustrative of broad trends in US foreign policy toward the African continent. Each chapter begins with an overview of US relations with a particular African country and ends with a short section summarizing the nature of that involvement. The bulk of each chapter is devoted to an assessment of why the US has strengthened or weakened its foreign policy relationship with a particular African country during the post-World War II period. Detailed comparative case studies include an overview and analysis of US foreign policy toward Zaire (Chapter 3), Ethiopia and Somalia (Chapter 4), and South Africa (Chapter 5). In each of these cases, the analysis ends with the inauguration of President Bill Clinton on January 20, 1993.

The final chapter of the book assesses the implications of the end of the Cold War on the future of US Africa policies. Among the major trends discussed are (1) the reinforcement of the historical tendency to treat Africa as a “back-burner” issue; (2) pressure to trim already reduced levels of economic and military aid; (3) the continuing importance of the national security bureaucracies as the primary driving forces of US Africa policies; (4) rising perceptions of the threat posed by the spread of Islamic fundamentalism; (5) Great Power involvement in the resolution of regional conflicts, particularly in cooperation with regional and international organizations; and (6) the

rising debate over making multiparty democracy a precondition of closer US ties.

A final note about sources is in order. A significant portion of what is written in these pages is the result of nearly 100 interviews with members of the US foreign policy establishment, both past and present, who have been intimately involved in the conduct of US Africa policies. (See Appendix B for a brief review of the interview process.) Although several of these individuals made their comments for attribution, and are noted as such, the majority, requested anonymity due to legitimate concerns that "on-the-record" remarks could affect current or future standing within the policymaking establishment. This, of course, would pose a problem if the only sources tapped were oral histories. However, the discussion is also based on four additional sets of primary sources: (1) the vast government public record, including official speeches, statements, and proceedings, such as those published in the voluminous congressional record; (2) previously classified government documents, such as those held by the National Security Archive in Washington, DC; (3) public reporting of events in newspapers, such as the *New York Times*; and (4) the memoirs and autobiographies of relevant US officials, such as the insightful analysis of the US–Ethiopian relationship written by David A. Korn, former US Ambassador to Ethiopia.³⁰ All of these sources have been weighed against much of the substantial secondary material that has been written about US Africa policies during the last forty years.