

What Kind of Change for Africa?: U.S. Policy in Africa under the Obama Administration

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The election of President Barack Obama marked a potential turning point in U.S. foreign policy. Broad themes evoked during his campaign and presidency have emphasized engaging with other countries, as opposed to the unilateralism that sometimes characterized Bush foreign policy, and refuting the dichotomy between pursuing values and pursuing security. These themes take on numerous forms across foreign policy, and examining the Obama Administration's foreign policy in Africa provides a number of examples. African policy is an area that has traditionally not been a top priority to U.S. administrations, and Mr. Obama indicated that he planned to change this. Africa had already been growing in importance to the U.S., in part due to growing threats to U.S. security in certain African regions. In addition, the Bush Administration launched a number of new development aid initiatives in Africa and played a part in aiming to resolve numerous conflicts, notably in Sudan, Liberia, and Congo. At the same time, much of his foreign policy was focused on Iraq and Afghanistan and Africa received inconsistent attention. Bush policy in Africa accomplished certain steps forward, which President Obama will be expected to build on, and left room for the new Obama team to further develop African policy.

The expectations that President Obama would make progress on Africa policy and give it appropriate attention have been high since his campaign. Mr. Obama has spoken about his wish that the U.S. aid African states to develop economically and become more secure, and treat African states as potential valuable international partners. The presence of officials in his administration with expertise and interest in African issues underscores the possibilities for progress in African foreign policy. Yet the reality of dealing with the challenges faced in Africa involves dealing with more complex international politics than the pledges to solve problems may imply. An examination of different examples of U.S. policy in Africa under President

Obama provides some insight into the reality of dealing with these foreign policy challenges. This examination could lead to an understanding of the Obama foreign policy in Africa as one that fits with one of his primary campaign messages that was embodied in the simple message "Change", or one that is closer to the shifts of policy and the pragmatism he has displayed since taking office.

The policy challenges faced in Africa are broad, and the President as well as other officials within the Administration has begun to address them in a variety of settings using a variety of foreign policy tools. Earlier this year in Ghana, President Obama gave an address emphasizing that he viewed good governance as a key to the success of African states, and that this was something that African leaders need to take responsibility for. At the same time, Mr. Obama reaffirmed his commitment to aiding developing states and has taken certain steps toward fulfilling these commitments. He has stated that the U.S. has an interest in seeing the socio-economic development of African states, and has also insisted that U.S. security interests are at stake in Africa. President Obama inherited the newly formed African Command, as well as various other regional security and peacekeeping operations, and has been deciding how to use U.S. resources to assist in fighting security threats since coming into office. The Horn of Africa region is particularly implicated in this area, due to the rise of Islamic extremists, and Obama Administration action in this region is indicative of how what he sees as the appropriate measures to combat these threats. The Obama Administration indicated that ending conflicts in war-torn African states, and notably taking further action to improve the humanitarian situation in Darfur and Eastern Congo, would be important to him. Management of these and other conflicts have often tested the Administrations strategies in multi-lateral diplomacy. China's investment in African states with poor human rights records has tested the type of diplomacy that the Obama team will use to deal with this type of complex international problem. The Administration has had to choose its diplomacy style when developing other bilateral relations where questions of inter-African relations can come into play, such as the case of South Africa and Zimbabwe. This report will use these examples to study the development to-date of the African foreign policies of the Obama Administration. While not all of the Obama policies operating in Africa will be examined, these issues are some of the most critical and allow conclusions to be drawn about the Obama Administration's foreign policy in Africa, keeping in mind both the pledges made by the administration and the policies of Obama's predecessor.

Good Governance and Democracy

Governance and the Kenyan Case

President Obama's trip to Ghana and speech in Accra on July 11, 2009, early in his first term, was expected to set the tone for the approach that the Obama Administration planned to take towards working with Africa. The speech highlighted numerous overarching themes of his vision for U.S. policy in Africa, including the importance of good governance and of African leaders taking the responsibility for positive changes. He reaffirmed his view of African countries as significant partners. Ghana is often seen in the U.S. as an example of effective governance in Africa, and this speech both applauded achievements of the Ghanaian government and emphasized the importance of continued reforms. The speech gave indicators for what type of policy towards various African states might evolve under the Obama Administration, and relations with specific countries illustrate how these principals have been acted upon. Governance was also a theme for Secretary Clinton's stop in Liberia. Liberia is now used as an example of a country that ousted a warlord leader and democratically elected a new one, though grave socio-economic challenges remain. President Bush's action in Liberia, sending 100 marines to nearby its coasts, is credited with helping oust the warlord leader Taylor, is seen as one of his positive accomplishments in Africa. The Obama Administration has made it clear that it is aiming to maintain good relations with countries such as these that work towards more effective government.

In addition to speeches given to support government reforms in numerous countries, the position of the Obama Administration towards ongoing governance reforms can be observed in its recent relations with Kenya. Governance in Kenya has received attention from the U.S. government and media in recent years, due to both the disputed elections in 2007 and the threat of Somali rebels taking advantage of Kenyan corruption to operate within Kenyan borders. The U.S. Administration realizes that it has limited power to control the corruption in Kenya, and it is considering different options to influence officials toward reforms. When Secretary Clinton was asked by a journalist during her August trip to Kenya if the U.S. would consider withholding aid to Kenya in order to put pressure on the government to fight corruption, Clinton emphasized that the U.S. did not want to punish the people of Kenya and would prefer to target individuals. She suggested that Kenyans try to use technology (like the internet and other communications) to report instances of corruption to a wider audience. Secretary Clinton

has also expressed the U.S.'s strong desire to see the implementation of the election reforms that were negotiated after the 2007 elections. To encourage the agreed upon reforms, the U.S. sent letters to 15 Kenyan officials warning against blocking election reforms and threatening travel bans on individuals and their families who tried to impede reforms.¹ Although these letters angered some Kenyan officials, they represented a concrete statement that the U.S. was serious about seeing changes implemented.

Another complication lies in the choice of the U.S. and other states to recognize a government after an election if evidence of corruption or fraud is discovered. After the 2007 disputed election, the U.S. initially recognized the government before retracting this recognition. Fears inspired by the decision to create a power sharing government in Zimbabwe have been expressed that African leaders may be getting the impression that if they refuse to accept defeat in an election they will be able to stay in office in power-sharing agreements with their opposition. When asked about these fears, Clinton responded that Kenyan politicians would have to decide how to work with each other, and that the U.S. would not say "we won't work with you," and would instead urge leaders to reform where necessary.² This attitude is consistent with the Obama administration's policy of engaging when possible, yet working with potentially illegitimate governments is another area in which the administration will have to be careful not to aid regimes produced from flawed elections.

Democracy Promotion

Both President Obama and President Bush have noted that the spread of democracy to foreign countries benefits the U.S. Under the Bush Administration, the term "democracy promotion" often related to efforts at regime change such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, and fewer efforts pressuring for democratic reforms that might endanger security or economic interests, including a few examples in Africa. There has been less time so far to observe how Mr. Obama will deal with undemocratic African regimes, and though certain actions indicate that democracy and human rights are an important priority to President Obama, there are few indications at this point that policy towards democracy promotion in African countries that are important suppliers of energy or security partners will change significantly.

¹Kariuki, Anthony, "Kenya: Kibaki Protests Obama Letters," September 26, 2009, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200909260012.html>

²Remarks at "Townterview" Hosted by CNN and KTN, August 6, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/08/126954.htm>

During his Presidency, Mr. Bush faced criticism over his interactions with a few African regimes; in some cases the Bush Administration did not put pressure on these regimes due to economic or security concerns. Critics pointed to Secretary Rice's meeting in 2006 with the leader of major oil exporter Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasago. Though Obiang took power through a coup almost thirty years ago and has a seriously flawed human rights and corruption record, Secretary Rice welcomed him to the meeting, calling him a "good friend." This meeting did serve to create an agreement under which Equatorial Guinea would contribute \$15 million for a social development fund. However, by meeting with this leader, the U.S. sent the message that oil interests were more important than putting pressure on this dictator. Mr. Bush was also criticized for meeting in 2004 with President Bongo of Gabon, another oil-exporting country and partner in the War on Terror led by a regime with a flawed human rights record. Issues important to U.S. interests such as terrorism and security were discussed, and it did not seem that human rights abuses were enough of a priority to pressure Gabon at the cost of U.S. interests in Gabon. At the same time, it is important to note that the Millennium Challenge Corporation, an initiative created under the Bush Administration, has been an important measure that offers incentives to countries that improve democracy and transparency.

In relation to dictatorial regimes that are also important to U.S. energy or security, it is unlikely that President Obama will drastically change U.S. policy. Mr. Obama has publicly recognized that "our security interests will sometimes require that we work with regimes with which we have fundamental disagreements"³ There does seem to be greater potential for the Obama Administration to promote democracy in a more effective way in Zimbabwe than did the former administration. Mr. Obama's pick for U.N. ambassador, Susan Rice, has studied Zimbabwe and has been a strong critic of Mugabe, and the Administration has vowed to take strong measures against Mugabe. The Obama Administration position on Zimbabwe will be discussed further in a later section. The changes in President Obama's policy on democratization and human rights are more evident when his other foreign policy decisions are also examined. One important aspect of Mr. Obama's strategy to support democracy abroad has been to try to change the image of the U.S. as a hypocrite on issues of human rights, through measures such as ending torture and attempting to close Guantanamo Bay. The Obama Administration has put less emphasis on spreading democracy, which was a top priority

³ "Q &A: Obama on Foreign Policy", The Washington Post, March 2, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/02/AR2008030201982.html>.

for the Bush Administration, and a greater emphasis on good governance as well as how the U.S. can be a positive example of a democratic state. Though these issues illustrate that President Obama is committed to improving the image of the U.S. as a positive example of a democracy in the world, it remains to be seen if he will take strong measures in Africa to pressure certain dictatorial regimes to reform, especially when energy and security interests are at stake.

Economic Policy

Trade and the African Growth and Opportunity Act

One of the most important developments in U.S. African trade policy in the past decade was the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). This act was signed into law in 2000 under President Clinton, and offers incentives for African governments to open their markets. Further amendments to AGOA were signed by President Bush, including an extension of preferential access for imports for eligible African countries. Eligibility for inclusion under the AGOA provisions is approved for countries that have established or are making progress towards numerous economic, social, and political reforms, reforms that fit with the framework of neoliberal open markets. A few other programs and initiatives also work towards the goal of increased trade with Africa, notably the African Growth and Competitiveness Initiative (AGCI). Run by USAID, it creates “regional hubs for global competitiveness” and primarily focuses support on programs that improve the environment for business, in terms of access to finance, infrastructure, and the regulatory environment, and improve the knowledge and capacity of enterprises.⁴ Though there has been an increase in U.S. imports from participating countries under AGOA, much of this has been due to an increase in African oil exports. In 2008, U.S. imports from Africa grew by 27.8%, but this was in largely due to an increase of 31.9% in crude oil imports, which make up 79.5% of total imports from Sub-Saharan Africa.⁵

The Obama Administration supports the goals of AGOA, but has recognized that adjustments must be made for African countries to further benefit from the Act. Though the

⁴ http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/initiatives/agci.html

⁵ U.S.- Africa Trade Profile, U.S. Department of Commerce,
http://www.agoa.gov/resources/US_African_Trade_Profile_2009.pdf

Obama administration also supports lowering trade barriers, Secretary Clinton spent less time reminding of the benefits of market liberalization and more time focusing on how to improve and diversify trade under AGOA. President Bush and Secretary Rice noted that African imports to the U.S. had grown under AGOA, but did not emphasize that this was mostly due to oil exports. The AGOA and forum was in the news during early August of 2009 when Secretary Clinton began her trip to Africa at the 8th AGOA forum in Nairobi, Kenya. During this speech, as well as at numerous other meetings with African business leaders, Ms. Clinton emphasized the Administration's goal that African countries diversify the products that they export and take advantage of the list of 6,999 items that can be sent to the U.S. duty-free. Ms. Clinton has also emphasized that infrastructure development is important. As an example of U.S. policy in this area, she pointed to aviation infrastructure, an area in which the U.S. government is aiding the governments of Liberia, Angola, and Kenya to improve their airport functionality and security.⁶ Her speech indicated that the Obama Administration is conscious of some of the fundamental problems preventing development of African exports, such as weak infrastructure. Clinton once again highlighted other areas that the Obama Administration has focused renewed attention on, such as agricultural development and an increase in the economic and political participation of women. She further recognized the importance of increasing the number of bilateral investment treaties (BIT) with African countries, giving the example of the start of negotiations on a BIT between the U.S. and Mauritius. The Bush Administration was a strong proponent of free markets, and during his presidency this concept was the foundation of AGOA. The Obama Administration too has reaffirmed its commitment to AGOA, but has also noted that diversification, and not simply reliance on oil exports, is key to success, as well as advances in related areas of the economy such as infrastructure and women's participation.

Development Assistance

One key aspect of U.S. policy foreign in many African states is the nature of development assistance. The issue of development aid in Africa, and throughout the developing world, is one that President Obama highlighted during his campaign. Although there is certainly room for Mr. Obama to make foreign aid more of a priority for his administration, a number of key initiatives which Mr. Obama can continue to build on were launched during the

⁶ Clinton, Hilary, "Remarks at the Corporate Council on Africa's Seventh Biennial U.S.-Africa Business Summit", <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/10/130182.htm>

Bush Administration. President Bush is often praised for overseeing the implementation of the U.S. President's Plan for Emergency Aids Relief (PEPFAR), the "largest commitment by any nation to combat a disease in history."⁷ In addition, Mr. Bush announced the creation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation in 2002, which began operations in 2004. This new government agency is a fund for development assistance that provides grants to developing countries that meet certain criteria based on good governance, economic freedom, and investment in their citizens. Its design underscored the Bush Administration's commitment to promoting neoliberal economic values, rewarding economic freedom with aid. Some experts, including William Easterly, have advocated shifting the focus towards helping the poorest people get basic services. Critics of the neoliberal focus of the Bush aid policy pointed to other areas that had could be further supported by US aid, such as education, agriculture, science and technology.⁸

President Obama made ambitious promises regarding foreign aid, and these promises have come under increased scrutiny due to the current economic pressures that might encourage the government to scale back international aid programs. His primary pledge was to double foreign assistance spending to \$50 billion by 2012. Many of the development aid programs concern certain African countries, although Mr. Obama did not make specific pledges regarding specific African countries or regions. He did, however, indicate that he planned to increase funding for certain programs and to create other entirely new initiatives. The budget proposal submitted by the White House did include substantial increases in development aid spending that suggest that the Administration is still committed to its promises. Proposed development assistance would increase from 1.5 billion dollars in FY2009 to 2.73 billion dollars in FY2010. Funding for U.S. Agency for International Development would increase from 1.25 billion dollars to 1.7 billion dollars.⁹ However, Mr. Obama's other campaign pledge to establish a Global Education Fund has yet to be acted on by the Administration. Education advocates have called on the administration to take steps to establish this fund, but it seems that the Administration has chosen not to focus on this initiative in the early stages of its term.

Many areas of international aid saw an increase in funding under Mr. Obama's proposed budget. One of these increases came in the agriculture sector, an area that the Obama Administration has placed a new emphasis on as part of the growth of developing economies,

⁷ "About PEPFAR" <http://www.pepfar.gov/about/index.htm>

⁸ Copson, Raymond W, *The United States in Africa: Bush Policy and Beyond*, (London: Zed Books) 2007, p 30.

⁹ Lobe, Jim, "US: Obama boosts foreign, development aid," May 8, 2009
<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=46782>

and more specifically African economies. Funding for agriculture related aid was doubled under Obama's budget proposal. The proposal also included increased funding for numerous health initiatives, such as those to combat malaria, bilateral HIV/AIDS and TB aid, and Neglected Tropical Diseases. This proposal drew some criticism from health advocates due to the planned U.S. contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, which would see no increase in funding under this proposal. The fight against HIV/AIDS was a topic that Mr. Obama did bring up in his campaign, promising to provide \$50 billion by 2013 for the global fight against HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS activists have highlighted the lack of increase for the Global Fund and relatively small increase for the PEPFAR program, which stand out in light of President Obama's stated commitment to fighting these diseases. However, funding was increased for U.S. bilateral aid for HIV/AIDS and TB.

Overall the increased funding does reflect the Obama Administrations commitment to global health and illustrates a few new initiatives, such as greater focus on areas that did not previously receive substantial attention, notably agricultural development and food supply, and neglected tropical diseases. Though it remains unclear exactly which countries would benefit from the increased funding for global health programs, Deputy Secretary of State Jack Lew is reported to have emphasized that African countries need significant aid.¹⁰ Though the global economic crisis has put pressure on the U.S. budget, the Obama Administration is making efforts to uphold its aid pledges and carry on its development aid priorities in Africa. Though lack of attention to establishing a global education fund and lack of increased funding for the Global Fund for AIDS show that the Administration has not yet carried out all of its aid pledges, it has continued Bush Administration initiatives and increased aid in many areas.

Security and Strategic Policy

Security, Counterterrorism and Peace Keeping

One of the more controversial recent U.S. military policies towards Africa was the establishment of the U. S. Africa Command (Africom), announced under the Bush

¹⁰Kellerhals, Merle David Jr. "Obama Proposes Massive Global Health Initiative", May 8, 2009

<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/May/20090507095154dmslahrellek0.7992975.html>

Administration in February of 2007. Before the existence of this command, military responsibility for Africa was divided between the headquarters for Europe, the Middle East, and the Pacific. Africom established its headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, and continued to use the already existent U.S. military presence based at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti. Africom's staff is projected to be 1,300 people, half of whom will be civilians (by September 1, 2009, 1,200 personnel had been assigned). According to its mission statement, Africom along with its partners "conducts sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy."¹¹ Officials argue that Africom will help the U.S. better coordinate its operations in the area as well as coordinate with other U.S. agencies and foreign states involved in Africa such as Britain and France.

Although according to Africom the aim of the command is not to establish large troop bases or "take a leading role in African security matters,"¹² the command has been met with much criticism and was not embraced by many of the African leaders. One of the largest campaigns against Africom, called Resist Africom, claims that the true mission of the command is to counter terrorism in Africa, secure oil resources in Africa, and counter China's increasing investment and involvement on the continent.¹³ Some critics fear that increased military presence in Africa will further incite anti-Americanism, or that it will lead to more instability due to the increased provision of arms.¹⁴ Another fear is the militarization of too many government and civilian functions. Many of the activities in which U.S. soldiers will be running under Africom, such as giving out vaccination or food, could be carried out instead by civilian organizations.

Despite the criticisms, the Obama Administration has defended Africom and supports expanding its funding. The Obama Administration's proposed budget for FY 2010 includes approximately \$300 million for AFRICOM and Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP). Africom runs the military aspect of TSCTP through Operation Enduring Freedom- Trans Sahara (OEF-TS), whose stated goals include counterterrorism, promoting regional cooperation, and promoting democratic governance. This

¹¹ "U.S. Africa Command," <http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "About Africom", Resist Africom, http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1552/t/5734/content.jsp?content_KEY=3855

¹⁴ Glover, Danny and Lee, Nicole C., "Say No to Africom," November 1, 2007, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20071119/glover_lee

program developed from one that was launched after 9/11 under the Bush administration, and the Obama Administration proposed increasing funding for this program from \$15 million in 2009 to \$20 million in 2010. During his speech in Ghana, President Obama aimed to reassure critics that Africom is not about “establishing a foothold” in Africa.¹⁵ Throughout Mr. Obama’s trip to Ghana, certain critics reported rumors that he might have been seeking a base for Africom in the country. A spokesman for Africom, Vince Crawley, denied these rumors, stating that the U.S. was not planning to seek any further bases in Africa.¹⁶

At the same time, the new Administration has proposed additional budget increases for peacekeeping and military assistance programs. These programs include an operation supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accords in southern Sudan, further funding for the Conflict Stabilization and Border Security Program (which operates in the Mano river region, the Horn of Africa, Chad, the and Central Africa Republic), support for the African Union Mission in Somalia, and increased funding for the Global Peace Operations Initiative, which includes funding for the African Contingency Operations and Training Assistance program (ACOTA).¹⁷ The ACOTA program, launched under President Bush in 2004 as the successor to the African Crisis Response Initiative, has worked with 21 countries, and trained approximately 45,000 African soldiers and 3,200 African trainers.¹⁸

Both through Africom and other joint tasks, the U.S. military often aims to build international cooperation and support for its activities in Africa. The U.S. actively cooperates with French operations in Africa, many of which are focused on training and located in West and Central Africa. Future French training centers are planned to be focused on improving security in the Sahel and maritime security, two overlapping areas of interest with the U.S.¹⁹ Additionally, France’s largest military base is located in Djibouti, the country that also hosts U.S. Camp Lemonier. Both the U.S. and France use their presence in this region to work together to increase maritime security near the Horn of Africa. A component of Africom is also involved in a partnership with the British military in Eastern and Central Africa. Efforts to cooperate with other

¹⁵ “Obama’s Speech in Ghana”, July 11, 2009, <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/July/20090711110050abretnuh0.1079783.html&distid=ucs>

¹⁶ U.S. Africom Public Affairs, “BBC World Service Discusses U.S. Africa Command in Analysis Broadcast,” <http://www.africom.mil/printStory.asp?art=3175>

¹⁷ “Africa: Africom to Continue Under Obama,” June 11, 2009, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200906110882.html>

¹⁸ Fact Sheet: African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=1886>

¹⁹ “Defense and Security: French Cooperation in Africa,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, July 17, 2009, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=3221&lang=1>

states involved in African capacity building were evident under both the Bush and continue to grow as part of the Obama Administration's focus on international cooperation.

A further security policy test for the Obama Administration has been maritime security, notably insecurity and piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Guinea. Numerous measures to respond to piracy were already being developed when President Obama took office, such as the establishment of the international Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151) to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia. This task force developed from the Combined Task Force 150, which now focuses on other security operations in the Horn of Africa region, leaving the response to piracy to CTF 151. President Obama's policy towards piracy was tested in April 2009 when an American captain was taken hostage aboard a Somali pirate ship. His response to allow U.S. Navy Seals to shoot the pirates indicated that he was willing to authorize military involvement at times, though it did not illustrate what his policy on the larger issue of maritime security in the region would be. The Obama Administration has emphasized working with international partners and organizations, such as the UN and CTF 151, to increase maritime security. The response to piracy in the gulf of Guinea has generally come in the form of naval training and assistance to African states in the region. The U.S. participates in the African Partnership Station (APS) along with participants from Africa, Europe and South America. The APS operates both military and non-military activities related to improving African maritime security.²⁰ The military's policy under the Obama Administration on maritime security off the coast of Africa has been relatively consistent with that of the Bush Administration, and President Obama has continually reaffirmed his commitment to working internationally and supporting regional efforts on these issues.

The increased focus on Africa that Mr. Obama promised during his campaign is evident in the realm of security due to his continued and increased funding for numerous military and civilian security projects. The type of attention that President Obama has given to Africa, however, could not be characterized as a complete departure from the foreign policy of his predecessor. Some changes in policy, particularly on a global security level, do exist; the Obama Administration has supported negotiations on a global arms trade treaty that would affect Africa and the ease of procuring weapons on the continent, while Bush policy had instead supported national controls. Mr. Obama's continued funding of Africom is an example of an important policy area in which Obama policy does not differ greatly from Bush policy. Most

²⁰ Corey, Charles W., "America Builds New African Partnerships to Tackle Piracy," February 24, 2009, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=2718&lang=>

changes in the security area have been characterized by shifts of emphasis rather than the creation or the dismantling of entire programs. Though Obama has tried to emphasize that Africom is not looking to open further bases in Africa and militarize the continent, many skeptics remain and will be looking for evidence to refute this claim. Increased funding for peacekeeping operations and military-to-military training corresponds with the foreign policy vision that Mr. Obama outlined during his campaign. However, effective results of these initiatives depend on a complicated set of factors, and the Obama Administration will have to commit to addressing non-military needs of certain weak states to prevent further instability.

Energy Security

As global competition for energy rises and new energy discoveries are made and infrastructure built in Africa, this continent has become increasingly important to U.S. energy security. In light of recent evolutions in geopolitical realities, such as growing energy demand from emerging economies such as China and India and the U.S. desire to decrease its oil dependency on unpredictable Middle Eastern countries, attention has shifted to Africa as an energy supplier. In 2008, African oil accounted for 24% of U.S. oil imports, and in 2007 19% of U.S. African oil imports were from sub-Saharan Africa.²¹ Africa is also a substantial supplier of natural gas. Keeping up relationships with top energy-resource exporting countries in Africa has long been a top priority for U.S. administrations and continues to be one today. Some African producers of oil are relatively stable and taking further measures to secure them is not necessary. There are a number of more uncertain states however, as well as oil producing states whose governments should be pressured to reform. Another important aspect of energy security strategy as it relates to Africa and the rest of the world is efforts by the U.S. government to decrease dependence on foreign oil.

The largest source of U.S. oil imports in Africa is Nigeria, providing 8% of U.S. petroleum imports, a country whose security is unsure. Experts have warned of growing security threats in the region including guerrilla movements and extremist. Although some have pointed out the possibility of U.S. programs emerging to support maritime security off the coast of Nigeria, any further military action could have negative consequences and enflame anti-Americanism. The

²¹ Goldwyn, David L. "Pursuing U.S. Security Interests in Africa," in *Africa Policy Beyond the Bush Years: Critical Challenges for the Obama Administration* Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009, 66.

Bush Administration seemed to have recognized this and refrained from using the military to ensure security of oil supplies. The new administration has continued this policy, and has continued to provide aid to Nigeria in a number of areas, including governance and military capacity building, and supports the reform program outlined by the Nigerian president; extensive changes in strategy towards Nigeria have not been announced.

The Obama Administration has already made some efforts to keep strong relationships with oil-exporting African countries, such as visits by Secretary Clinton to Nigeria and Angola on her trip to Africa in August. In Nigeria, Ms. Clinton held a town-hall style meeting on the subject of good governance and transparency, a subject that is one of the foundations of the Obama vision for Africa as well as an important aspect of securing and better using Nigeria's energy resources for both Nigeria and the U.S. The Obama Administration has recognized some of the challenges that still face energy-resource rich African countries. In an effort to support responsible management of the oil revenues, the U.S. contributed \$6 million to the World Bank's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). During the Bush Administration, the U.S. only contributed to the EITI when forced to do so by a congressional earmark in 2007.²² The Secretaries of State under Bush also visited both Angola and Nigeria, though Secretary Powell's visit to Angola in 2002 focused primarily on the peace process at the time.

The Obama Administration has also made a number of investments in alternative energy that will eventually lower some U.S. dependency on foreign oil sources, although it is hard to say how this will specifically affect oil imports from Africa. The Obama Administration has thus far invested \$80 billion in clean energy, increased fuel economy standards for the first time in a decade, and established a program to lease federal waters to generate energy from wind, currents, and other sources. The Bush Administration also took steps to reduce dependence on foreign oil, but included more focus on sources such as ethanol and nuclear. One key divergence between the two administrations' approaches was the Bush Administration's refusal to increase vehicle fuel economy standards, which it feared would result in U.S. auto job losses and the production of unsafe vehicles. Overall, the Obama administration has not dealt with oil producing countries in a drastically different fashion, and greater differences can be noted in energy dependence and environmental measures.

²² Goldwyn, David L. "Pursuing U.S. Security Interests in Africa," in *Africa Policy Beyond the Bush Years: Critical Challenges for the Obama Administration* Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009.

China in Africa

Although China's engagement with Africa is not new, it has taken on a larger place in international politics over the last decade. The U.S. response to China's involvement in Africa involves multiple realms of policy, relating to security, economics, and human rights. The Bush Administration did not focus much on the issue until somewhat recently, beginning with a presentation on the topic in front of the House Subcommittee on Africa in July 2004 by the Deputy Assistant of State for African Affairs Michael Ranneberger. However after this its policy towards China on this issue was generally appropriate. The Bush administration questioned certain practices or loans that it saw as inadvisable, but also insisted that it did not see U.S. and Chinese involvement in Africa as a "zero sum game."²³ The Bush Administration did hold numerous dialogues with China on the topic of aid and investment in Africa, and the Obama Administration has continued and further developed this practice. In July 2009, the first Strategic and Economic Dialogue between the U.S. and China was held. This dialogue was established to encompass a broader range of international topics than did its predecessor, the Strategic Economic Dialogue, which began under Mr. Bush's Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson. Issues of concern to both states in Africa were discussed, and each state agreed to work towards resolution of the Darfur issue and promoting the success of a peaceful settlement of the north-south conflict.²⁴

The complex situation in Sudan is one of the more prominent differences between U.S. and China regarding Africa. The mere fact that China has been working and trading with Sudan made isolation by the U.S. and the international community a more difficult and less effective strategy to pursue. China has used its UN veto to protect Sudan in the past, although it has been seen as taking some measures against human rights violations more recently,²⁵ and has supported some peacekeeping operations.²⁶ Some of these shifts occurred in 2008, especially in response to pressure on China from the international community during the Beijing Olympics. The issue of Sudan is one that Secretary Clinton has brought up in meetings with China, and remarks made by top U.S. State Department officials during the fall of 2009 implied that China

²³ Shinn, David H. "China's Engagement in Africa," in *Africa Policy Beyond the Bush Years: Critical Challenges for the Obama Administration* Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009.

²⁴ Clinton, Hilary, and Geithner, Timothy, "A
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204886304574308753825396372.html>

²⁵ Polgreen, Lydia "China, in a new role, presses Sudan on Darfur" February 23, 2008,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/23/world/africa/23iht-23darfur.10322602.html?scp=1&sq=new%20role%20china%20sudan&st=cse>

²⁶ "Background note: China", US Dept of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm>

seemed more willing to work towards peace in Darfur and implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, though little was said of specific measures.²⁷ Concrete changes related to China's role supporting abusive or corrupt regimes have been limited however. China's largest oil company, China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC) signed an agreement November 2009 to expand one of its oil refineries in Sudan.²⁸ Actions such as these suggest that although China has recognized the importance of stabilizing the situation in Darfur even in regards to its own interests, it does not plan to cease investments in the country any time soon.

President Obama's recent trip to China presented an opportunity to discuss China's involvement in Africa, and numerous lobbies wrote petitions and articles asking the President to bring up issues such as Chinese involvement in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.²⁹ Yet there is little evidence that any significant new accomplishments or agreements regarding Africa were made. Although it is true that there are many other pressing issues in the relations between the U.S. and China, this opportunity could also have been used to raise more visibility on China's sometimes questionable investment in certain African states. According to Special Envoy to Sudan Gration, President Obama discussed the issue with Chinese president Hu Jintao, but that some differences remained, such as on the issue of arms.³⁰ Discussions over Chinese action in Africa were not highlighted by the Administration and garnered little media attention.

In some ways, it is not unsurprising that Mr. Obama did not make these types of investments in Africa more of a public issue during this trip. Although he has emphasized that African issues and human rights are of importance to him, he has also constructed an image of himself as someone who is pragmatic and would rather engage with other countries on areas of common interest even when the two countries may still harbor disagreements. This engagement can indeed help accomplish many important goals, yet at times it may be worth the risk of sacrificing some of the goodwill within the bilateral relationship to call attention to human rights priorities or other disagreements. Though it is hard to claim that this issue should have

²⁷ Steinberg, James B. "Administration's Vision of U.S.-China Relationship," Keynote Address at the Center for a New American Security, September 24, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/2009/129686.htm>

²⁸ "CNPS, Sudan Sign Oil Refining, Asset Swap Agreements," Bloomberg News, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601091&sid=abhOz4OOU2_s

²⁹ Prendergast, John, "To Obama in China: Don't Shy Away from Sudan, Congo," Enough Project <http://www.enoughproject.org/blogs/obama-china-don't-shy-away-sudan-congo>, November 16, 2009

³⁰ Envoy: US Negotiates with Genocidal Regime in Sudan, CNN, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/12/03/us.sudan/>, December 3, 2009

been the primary priority for the meetings, if the Obama Administration wants to change this type of investments, it may have to use meetings with top leaders such as this to take measures that go beyond discussions in which China affirms its will to work towards the end of conflict in Sudan. When asked about China's role in Africa, Administration officials have taken a non-confrontational stance, emphasizing that while the two countries have disagreements, they also share interests and plan to work together. The Administration's subtle diplomacy can be effective, but Mr. Obama will need to be sure that it produces concrete accomplishments.

Sub-Regional Policies and Bilateral Relations

Horn of Africa

American priorities in the Horn of Africa are complex; some relate closely to its security interests such as an Islamic extremist movement and piracy, and others are more humanitarian in nature. A debate still exists within the Obama Administration over how to deal with the weak Somali government as it battles against militants including the Shabaab (which the U.S. government sees as Al Qaeda's proxy in the area.) Mr. Obama did not go into detail on planned policy in this region during his campaign, though he did say that he would develop a "coherent strategy for stabilizing Somalia."³¹ President Obama has ruled out sending troops to the area, though the U.S. has offered military aid to the government including weapons. This policy too carries inherit risks, as some of the weapons provided by the U.S. government end up in the hands of rebels. Although the current Administration is unsure about fully supporting the Somali government, there has been some dialogue between the two administrations; in August of 2009 Secretary Clinton met with Somalia's President, Sheik Sharif Ahmed, the former head of the Islamic Courts Union, to discuss ways to stabilize the situation.³² In a statement made in front of the Senate Subcommittee of African Affairs in May 2009, Assistant Secretary for Africa Carson stated that the Obama Administration was looking for ways that the U.S. and its partners could support the Transitional Federal Government, whose solidity is important to the stability of a region in which there is a demonstrated Al Qaeda presence. The U.S. is currently assisting

³¹ "Foreign Policy" http://www.barackobama.com/issues/foreign_policy/index_campaign.php#onafrika

³² Pleming, Sue, "Clinton Seeks to Bolster Somalia's Weak Government" Reuters, August 5, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/vcCandidateFeed1/idUSN05260801>

the TFG in developing its security sector. The Obama Administration also plans to continue to give monetary support to the African Union Mission in Somalia.³³

The U.S. runs some of its operations in the area through its Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, set up under President Bush in 2003. This task force of about 1,600 personnel, headquartered at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti, was originally meant as a center from which to launch counter-terrorism operations. Operations to “win the hearts and minds” of Somali people have become a major goal of the Task Force. During one of his campaign speeches, Mr. Obama highlighted this type of operation, using it as an example of the type of American diplomatic efforts that he would support.³⁴ Emphasis on “hearts and minds” operations is consistent with Mr. Obama’s outlook on foreign policy, though it remains to be seen if these operations will be effective, especially as the U.S. government continues to use force against potential security threats in the region.

Though the Obama Administration has not yet articulated a comprehensive plan for Somalia and the region, it is possible to compare individual decisions made to Mr. Obama’s promised vision for foreign policy and that of his predecessor. One of the most recent clashes occurred when U.S. Special Forces operating from helicopters shot at and killed four men suspected to be involved with Al-Qeada in September 2009. One of these men was Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, who is thought to be the leader of an Al-Qeada cell in Kenya, and to have been deeply involved in the bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salem. This signaled Mr. Obama’s willingness to use force against suspected terrorists, but illustrated some differences with his predecessor. This operation employed commandos instead of long range missiles, as was the practice under President Bush, a choice which could have been influenced by a wish to avoid civilian casualties. Using this strategy, it was also easier to act quickly and confirm that the targets had been hit.³⁵ Islamic insurgents were angered by this attack, and retaliated by detonating suicide car bombs at an African Union base, killing at least 16 people. Though the new administration may have chosen to shift tactics for this type of operation, these

³³ Carson, Johnnie, “Developing a Coordinated and Sustainable U.S. Strategy Toward Somalia” Testimony in front of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Africa Affairs, May 20, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2009/123729.htm>

³⁴ Obama, Barack “The America Moment: Remarks to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, April 23, 2007, <http://www.barackobama.com/2007/04/23/the_american_moment_remarks_to.php>

³⁵ Gettleman, Jeffrey, and Schmitt, Eric, “U.S. Kills Top Qaeda Militant in Southern Somalia,” The New York Times, September 14, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/15/world/africa/15raid.html?scp=1&sq=Somalia%20US%20helicopters&st=cse>

differences did not influence the opinions of already anti-American groups, and these attacks still risk emboldening Al-Qaeda or extreme Islamist groups in the region.

Some critics of U.S. policy toward Somalia have pointed to the vast media attention that piracy off the coast of Somalia received in comparison with other more fundamental Somali political and security problems. In response to the increase of incidents of piracy off the coast of Somalia, the U.S. Central Command established a Combined Task Force 151 to deal with the issue in January of 2009, just before President's Obama's inauguration. President Obama has indicated that he would use the U.S. military to protect U.S. citizens from pirates if needed, based on an incident in April 2009 when an American captain was taken hostage by Somali pirates and President Obama sent U.S. Navy SEAL snipers who killed three Somali pirates. After this incident Mr. Obama pledged to work with international community to resolve this matter. The UN met in mid-November 2009 to discuss possible resolutions to the issue and pledged to aid in the creation of Somali national coast guard,³⁶ though attempts at addressing this issue will eventually return to the fundamental problem of political instability in Somalia.

The position of the U.S. in this region is further complicated by its relations with Ethiopia. According to the U.S. Department of State site, the U.S. considers Ethiopia a "strategic partner in its global war on terror."³⁷ Since 2002, the U.S. under the Bush Administration has given almost \$20 million in military aid to Ethiopia. With the assistance of this military aid, Ethiopia invaded Somalia in December of 2006 and although the invasion ousted the increasingly extreme Islamic Courts Union, it enflamed anti-Americanism in Somalia and gave the Shabaab a rationale to go after Ethiopian, U.S. and Western interests. Ethiopia withdrew its troops from Somalia in January of 2009. Some researchers have pointed out that although the U.S. partnership with Ethiopia aided the short term goal of removing the ICU from power, it is continuing to undermine long-term goals in the region. In addition to the rise in anti-Americanism after the Ethiopian invasion in Somalia, a U.S. partnership with an Ethiopian regime whose human rights record is flawed undermines U.S. credibility in the region. The Obama administration has recognized the risk of certain political decisions undercutting long term interests in the area, and Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Johnnie Carson made a reference to the need for a policy that would balance short term goals with the importance of elements of civil society, such as a free press and trade unions, in testimony in front of the

³⁶ UN News Centre, "UN maritime agency pledges support to repress piracy off Somali coast," November 2, 2009, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32812&Cr=piracy&Cr1>

³⁷ Background Note: Ethiopia, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2859.htm>

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.³⁸ According to Council on Foreign Relations researcher Bronwyn Bruton, the Obama Administration has taken steps to avoid a short-sighted policy in the area, such as diplomatic outreach to Eritrea and “public attempts to restrain Ethiopian military action in response to the escalating violence in Mogadishu.”³⁹ This is still an area in which a comprehensive Obama Administration policy has yet to be fully formed and tested.

Sudan

Sudan has received a large amount of attention from the U.S. government, media, and general public due to its recent civil war and humanitarian crisis in Darfur. U.S. relations with Sudan have historically been strained. Sudan is on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism, and there is no U.S. ambassador to Sudan. Under the Obama Administration, the U.S. State Department has assigned Scott Gration as the Special Envoy to Sudan.

After completing a review of its Sudan policy, the Obama Administration released its plan for dealing with the Sudanese government in late October of 2009. The plan entails taking a middle route policy that would involve both sanctions and incentives for positive steps forward related to Darfur, the north-south conflict, and counterterrorism. The incentives would only be offered if progress is made in all three areas. However, many of the details of the types of incentives and punishments to be used remain confidential.⁴⁰ The reaction of Sudan's government to the announcement of the new policy was mixed. Although they recognized some positive points, such as the new focus on engagement, they were unhappy with the term “genocide” and the renewal of the sanctions.⁴¹

This plan, as well as the way in which the Obama Administration has dealt with Sudan since it has taken office, has differed in numerous ways with Obama's comments and actions regarding Sudan before taking office. Although President Obama said he planned to isolate

³⁸ Hultman, Tami, Africa: “Carson Outlines Obama Administration's Policy Priorities,” <http://www.abbaymedia.com/News/?p=2415>

³⁹ Bruton, Bronwyn E. “U.S. Policy Shift Needed in Horn of Africa” Council on Foreign Relations Expert Brief, August 6, 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/19982/>

⁴⁰ Knowlton, Brian, “White House Unveils Sudan Strategy”, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/world/africa/20Sudan.html?_r=1&ref=global-home

⁴¹ Hsiao, Amanda, “New US Policy: Sudan Officials Voice Cautious Optimism,” October 21, 2009, <http://www.enoughproject.org/category/special-topic/sudan-now>

Sudanese leaders during his campaign,⁴² this policy involves more engagement. Before Mr. Obama took office, he sent a number of signals that his policy toward Sudan may have been more severe. Some saw the appointment of Susan Rice, “an advocate of ‘dramatic action’ against genocide,” as ambassador to the U.N. as a sign that Mr. Obama too favored dramatic action.⁴³ At various points during his campaign, Mr. Obama also advocated stronger measures that did not appear in the policy announced in October 2009. He suggested providing additional logistical support to the African Union forces and setting up a no-fly zone.⁴⁴ Defending against criticisms of a shift in the planned policy for Sudan, President Obama’s aids, have said that the modifications of the plan are a reflection of the changing situation in Sudan. The changing situation may in fact have called for this type of strategy, and this policy will offer another test of Mr. Obama’s use of engagement.

Beyond the new policy itself, the long period leading up to the announcement of an official policy questioned if the Obama Administration was truly placing as much emphasis on the issue as it had promised. Though careful reflection is certainly required for matters of foreign policy as complicated as Sudan and Darfur, the amount of emphasis that Obama placed on the issue of Darfur during his campaign and before taking office suggested that it would have taken less than nine months to formulate a comprehensive policy regarding Sudan. Before the announcement of the policy, the Obama Administration appeared to be split between those like Ambassador Rice who favored a harsher approach, and those who, like Special Envoy Scott Gration, seemed to be leaning more towards incentives than threats. According to some critics, the Administration’s stance toward Sudan before the announcement of its new policy seemed to be moving towards normalization of relations and “emboldened” the NCP. The new policy is less lenient than some Darfur activists had feared, but it does correspond with all of the measures that Mr. Obama highlighted during his campaign.

This plan does represent a shift from the policy during the Bush years. The new policy places more emphasis on verifiable changes on the ground. According to John Prendergast, a leading Darfur scholar and activist, the policy has the potential provide the emphasis on verifiable changes that would create an accountability that is needed when dealing with

⁴² Thompson, Ginger, “White House Drops Plan to Isolate Sudan,” The New York Times
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/17/world/africa/17sudan.html?fta=y>

⁴³ Baker, Peter, “Choice for U.N. Backs Action Against Mass Killings” The New York Times, November 30, 2008,
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/01/us/politics/01rice.html?scp=6&sq=obama%20sudan%202008&st=cse>>

⁴⁴ “Transcript of Second McCain-Obama Debate” October 7, 2009, <
<http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/10/07/presidential.debate.transcript/>>

genocides.⁴⁵ The policy shift is characterized as one from the Bush policy of isolation to a new policy of engagement, although the Obama Administration continues to refuse to deal with President Al-Bashir, and will instead hold talks with other senior officials. This new focus is not surprising; engaging with other countries despite important differences was one of the themes of Mr. Obama's presidential campaign. Another important aspect of the policy is a renewed focus on the north-south conflict in Sudan. Many fear that the deal between the north and south, which was brokered with the help of the Bush Administration, may break down and lead to further instability.⁴⁶ Secretary Clinton emphasized that both the conflict in Darfur and the North-South conflict would be addressed by this policy. Hearings were held on December 3, 2009 in the U.S. House of Representatives to review the policy and its efficacy. Critics voiced their opinion that the policy has not been successful so far and that conditions on the ground are worsening. For this policy to be successful, the Obama Administration must act quickly and take concrete action on the incentives and disincentives that it promised.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The long-running and complex conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and its neighboring regions to the east was highlighted by the visit of Secretary Clinton to the DRC early in her term in August of 2009. Although numerous rebel groups and the DRC government signed the Goma Accord in 2007 that aimed to stop the violence in Eastern Congo, there have been violations to the cease-fire and many reports of sexual violence. The conflict in the DRC received attention under the Bush administration, including the passage of Democratic Republic of Congo relief act. Attention to this issue was inconsistent, however, and was sometimes overshadowed by other efforts such as those related to the crisis in Darfur or Somalia. President Bush did meet with the president of the DRC, Kigali, numerous times throughout his terms. However, headlines describing meetings between Mr. Bush and other African leaders to discuss international issues often focused on how to resolve the conflict in Darfur more than the conflict in eastern DRC.

Upon taking office, the Obama Administration has highlighted the conflict numerous times, with Secretary Clinton paying special attention to this issue. Secretary Clinton's efforts in

⁴⁵ "Ask the Expert- John Prendergast" Enough Project, Center for American Progress
<<http://www.enoughproject.org/ObamaNewSudanPolicy>> (Video)

⁴⁶ Sheridan, Mary Beth, "North-South Conflict to be Emphasis of New U.S. Policy on Sudan," The Washington Post, October 20, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/19/AR2009101901378.html>

the DRC underscore one of her top priorities, and a goal that she has called a cornerstone of American foreign policy: the advancement of women and girls in the world. The Bush Administration had also recognized the importance of improving the status of women worldwide, but placed less emphasis on the centrality of the issue to foreign policy. Secretary Clinton's visit to Goma in the eastern region of the DRC, the first visit of a secretary of state into this war zone, highlighted the humanitarian crisis here and particularly the use of rape as a weapon in the region. During the trip she visited a refugee camp outside Goma, where she met with aid workers as well as female residents of the camp. Ms. Clinton's announcement after this visit of a \$17 million plan to fight sexual violence in the DRC was one of the primary accomplishments of her trip to Africa. In remarks after her meeting with the president of the DRC, Ms. Clinton also emphasized the importance of preventing wealth generated by the mines of the DRC from contributing to the funding of the violence. Though the Obama Administration has yet to take formulate a specific plan for dealing with this aspect of the conflict, her position suggests that the Administration is prepared to address some of the root causes of the continuing violence. Because it is difficult for U.S. policy to directly end this type of violence on Congo, one of the most important aspects of this administration's strategy on the DRC is to raise the profile of the conflict, put pressure on the DRC government, and provide aid where possible, which Secretary Clinton's actions illustrate that they are beginning to do.

South Africa and Zimbabwe

A number of factors have made the relationship between the U.S. and South Africa an important U.S. foreign policy issue. The former U.S. and South African administrations disagreed on several questions, and formation of new administrations in both countries since January 2009 has created an opportunity to move forward on a number of policy issues. During one of a few meetings since January between high level U.S. and South Africa officials, Secretary Clinton met with Ambassador Nhlapo and the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs in March of 2009. A number of issues emerged as priorities in U.S.- South Africa relations. Increased U.S. investment in South Africa and collaboration on energy issues were discussed, as well as areas that the two countries have disagreed in before, notably the fight against HIV/AIDS and relations with Zimbabwe.

In the past, the U.S. has criticized former South African President Thabo Mbeki's approach to dealing with the disease, and his questioning of the link between HIV and AIDS.

The U.S. was able to engage in South Africa through the Presidents Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which began under the Bush Administration. The new possibilities for collaboration between the U.S. and South Africa have been particularly marked on this issue, especially due to the new South African administration's willingness to change its approach to the problem of HIV/AIDS. On December 1, 2009 (World AIDS day), the Zuma Administration announced its plan to increase its provision of anti-retroviral drugs for patients with both AIDS and tuberculosis. Responding to a request from Zuma, the U.S. announced the same day that it would provide \$120 million in funding for this program over two years.⁴⁷ The Zuma Administration's greater willingness to respond to the HIV/AIDS will likely aid the Obama Administration in fulfilling its pledges to fight the disease.

The two new administrations have also begun to address another common source of tension. The U.S. has been critical of South Africa's position toward Zimbabwe in the past, and viewed former president Mbeki as being too conciliatory towards Mugabe's regime. During Clinton's August 2009 trip to the region, CNN reported that Clinton "stood by South Africa's much criticized quiet diplomacy with neighboring Zimbabwe."⁴⁸ Clinton stated after a meeting with President Zuma that "South Africa is deeply involved in trying to complete adherence to the global political agreement."⁴⁹ In August 2009, after a two-day visit by South African President Zuma to Zimbabwe, his stance toward the country was reported to be tougher and more direct.⁵⁰ Secretary Clinton's statements as well as President Zuma's possible toughening toward Mugabe suggest that the countries positions toward Zimbabwe may be becoming more closely aligned. In order for the Obama Administration to keep its pledge to be tough on Mugabe, it will need to monitor South African relations with Zimbabwe and verify if their diplomacy is truly effective.

The Obama Administration has also taken direct action regarding the situation in Zimbabwe. Although the U.S. has been critical of Mugabe's regime in the past, the tyranny in Zimbabwe as well as South Africa's lack of strong response received inconsistent attention and was not as high a priority during the Bush Administration as some other issues, such as the

⁴⁷ Bosch, Maruis, "South Africa to expand AIDS treatment" Reuters, December 1, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/healthNews/idUSTRE5B021420091201?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

⁴⁸ "Clinton Stands by South Africa on Zimbabwe Policy," CNN, August 7, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/08/07/clinton.south.africa/index.html>

⁴⁹ "Clinton Backs South Africa Zimbabwe Efforts" United Press International, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2009/08/07/Clinton-backs-S-Africa-Zimbabwe-efforts/UPI-93641249652706

⁵⁰ Zimbabwe: Quiet Diplomacy Replaced with More Direct Approach, IRIN News, August 31, 2009, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=85941>

conflict in Sudan. As early as January of 2009, the Obama Administration indicated that it planned a new approach in dealing with Zimbabwe. This plan would combine a push to get UN sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe, coupled with a diplomatic effort towards China and Russia, who have vetoed sanctions toward Zimbabwe in the past. Susan Rice, President Obama's ambassador to the UN, has studied Zimbabwe in depth and pledged to confront the situation more strongly during her time as ambassador. Though UN sanctions have not yet been imposed on Zimbabwe, in March of 2009, the Obama Administration announced that it would extend U.S. sanctions toward certain Zimbabwean leaders.⁵¹ In light of the rocky power sharing deal now in place between President Mugabe and Prime Minister Tsvangari, it seems as if the Obama Administration is unsure how effective this deal will be, but has made sure to express its support for the Prime Minister. After the visit of Prime Minister and former opposition leader Tsvangari, the U.S. pledged \$73 million in aid to Zimbabwe. President Obama also took this meeting as an opportunity to publicly criticize Mugabe. In an effort to improve living conditions in Zimbabwe without propping up Mugabe's government, Mr. Obama said that this aid would not be provided directly to the government, but would be channeled through civil society and NGOs.

Both the new administration in South Africa and the recent power sharing deal present opportunities for the Obama Administration to push for positive reforms in Zimbabwe and renew cooperation with South Africa. Positive steps have been made in this direction, but Mugabe must continue to face pressure within this power sharing agreement, and the Obama administration should be careful not to soften on this issue. If the South African government's diplomacy does not seem to be effective in the future, the Obama Administration will have to balance their wish to cooperate with South Africa and its need to maintain international pressure on Mugabe.

Conclusion

Though the Obama Administration has already begun to develop its Africa policy and take action on the continent, the formation of comprehensive and effective policies throughout Africa still faces many obstacles. The complexity of the challenges faced as well as the multitude of other issues on the policy agenda, have at times caused African issues to be given less attention than they may need. President Obama campaigned on an agenda that

⁵¹ Rainers, Verna, "Zimbabwe: Obama Extends US Sanctions", March 5, 2009
<http://allafrica.com/stories/200903050792.html>

emphasized domestic issues, such as the economy and healthcare, as well as responsibly addressing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, so it was clear that much of his time would be occupied with other challenges. At the same time, expectations for his Africa policies are high. He has indicated that this continent would be a priority to him, and that he sees Africa as both a partner, and a continent where American interests are at stake. Public expectations in both the U.S. and Africa are often raised even higher due to his status as the first African-American president and his familial ties to Kenya.

The legacy of the Bush Administration in Africa further influences how Mr. Obama's policies will be received. The Bush Administration was responsible for a number of important development aid initiatives and played an important role in ending certain aspects of conflict in Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Congo. These initiatives were welcomed in many countries, and the Obama Administration will be expected to at least uphold this progress, if not develop it further. However, numerous other Bush Administration policies were less popular, and Mr. Obama will also have to decide if and how to continue these measures. Security initiatives linked to the Global War on Terror often caused increases in anti-American resentment. Some of Mr. Obama's actions in this field, such as continuing funding for Africom, and his statements on the importance of security threats in Africa, have underscored his view that American security interests are at stake in Africa. Yet, due to the geopolitical realities of the post 9/11 world, the Obama Administration cannot ignore the potential for terrorist and security threats emanating from African countries. If the Administration wishes to change the Anti-American sentiments he will have to make the goals of his policies and shifts from the Bush Global War on Terror seem clear.

When examining the Obama Administration's Africa policies, it is important to note that senior officials other than President Obama himself are often more directly involved in managing certain aspects of the Africa policy. The opinions and priorities of these officials further indicate the possible direction of the Obama Africa policy. President Obama's choices of appointees for top positions signified what type of stances and policies might be important under his administration. Secretary Clinton spoke out about the humanitarian situation in eastern DRC before becoming secretary of state and there have been indications that this issue will be a higher priority to the administration. The appointment of UN ambassador Susan Rice, a former Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, also underscored the Administration's potential to focus on African issues. Even though President Obama has a broad scope of domestic and international policies to manage, his team has the ability to develop appropriate African policies.

At times the Obama Administration has decided on policies for Africa that have not directly corresponded with what President Obama and his advisors had evoked during the campaign. In many other cases, the action taken on policy has been consistent with what was indicated during the Obama campaign and the overall themes and goals the President said he would use as guidelines. Though some have criticized the continuation of certain Bush era policies, such as the operation of Africom, Mr. Obama had not stated that his policy in Africa would be a complete rupture with that of his predecessor. President Obama has always indicated that he recognized threats to American security in Africa, notably the presence of Islamic extremists sometimes linked to Al-Qaeda. Overall policy towards Africa has not and most likely will not change greatly under Mr. Obama. Many programs from the Bush era and before will be kept in place, and key allies in the continent have not changed much (although there have been opportunities to change the tone of relations under a new administration, such as in the case of South Africa.) Other Obama policies do reflect differences in style between himself and Bush that were evident during the campaign, notably his wish to engage with foreign countries when possible. Shifts from his predecessor are illustrated in his Sudan policy, the most comprehensive Africa policy he has announced since taking office, as well as new development priorities including agriculture and neglected tropical diseases.

Though the theme of change that was the headline of his campaign has manifested itself in some areas, the more subtle theme of pragmatism, which was also invoked during the campaign but did not capture the public imagination as much as that of vast change, has been better illustrated by many of the African policy decisions so far. Some types of engagement with other governments may not produce immediate and dramatically visible results. The Administration has supported South Africa's quiet diplomacy with Zimbabwe, and any discussions with China about human rights or Africa represent been closer to a quiet diplomacy style than dramatic proclamations that one might have expected if they heard only the Change message of the campaign. Though these strategies can be effective, President Obama only has so much time to prove that they can achieve concrete results, not simply pledges and promises from his and other administrations. His administration has shown it will work with foreign leaders and develop policies, but drastic changes in conditions in African countries will take time to be accomplished. The emphasis on international engagement that many of his African policies both illustrates one of the strengths of the Obama Administrations long-running message, and the risks that this policy poses; it will be up to the administration to prove that this style of diplomacy can in fact bring about the change that was promised.