2005 Was the Year for Africa, But Did We Miss the Point?
A Fresh Look at U.S. Policy Toward Africa

The Council on Foreign Relations has organized an Independent Task Force on U.S. Policy towards Africa which will issue its report in December 2005. The Task Force was organized because it is important for Americans to recognize that Africa has become of steadily greater importance to America and to our global interests.

The timing was fortuitous because in 2005 Africa rose to the top of the world's agenda. In June 2005, two billion people around the world viewed the "Live 8" concerts, headed by famous rock musicians Bono and Bob Geldof that passionately appealed for an end to poverty in Africa. A week later the leaders of eight leading industrial nations, including the United States, pledged to double aid to Africa, forgive the debts of fourteen of Africa's poorest countries, and to bring life-saving drugs to all those suffering from AIDS by 2010. These were noble commitments and reflected deeply held humanitarian impulses. They responded to real needs in one of the world's poorest regions.

But the point that was missing—among the music, the communiqués, and the commitments—is that Africa is becoming steadily more vital to the United States across a range of strategic and humanitarian interests. These public events also reinforced an outdated view of Africa. Not a single African leader, teacher, doctor, or nurse was featured on the Live 8 stages. But Africa's leaders in all walks of life are not passive objects but active players with influence over the dynamics in their region. They offer the United States the opportunity to use resources more effectively and to build strong partnerships in all the areas of mutual interest.

The Task Force will report that it is urgent that the United States recognize and act on its rising national interests on the continent through a far higher mobilization of leadership and focused resources that target Africa's new realities. Such a policy, in the view of the Task Force, will not only address the United States's several vital interests beyond humanitarianism, but it will actually lead to a more effective response to Africa's humanitarian needs. The opportunity for such a policy exists because of growing interest in Africa and remarkable bipartisan support for doing more there.

We will know that the response to this opportunity has failed, however, if in another ten years, U.S. policymakers link hands once again with other world economic leaders of the G8 around Africa's problems and the world witnesses another global concert to end Africa's poverty.

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Princeton N. Lyman and J. Stephen Morrison, Project Co-Directors
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The Task Force report will spell out those new factors that make Africa more important to the United States, the new opportunities that now exist to mobilize support for a better Africa policy and to utilize resources more effectively, and make specific recommendations on the several areas of policy. The following touch on these briefly.

What is New about Africa?

Africa is Becoming More Vitally Important

- **Energy** Africa is becoming more important because of its growing role in supplying the world with oil, gas, and non-fuel minerals. Now supplying the United States with 15 percent of oil imports, Africa's production will double in the next decade and its capacity for natural gas exports will grow even more. In the next decade Africa could be supplying the United States as much energy as the Middle East.
- **Competition** The United States, however, is facing intense competition for energy and other natural resources in Africa. China, India, Malaysia, North Korea, and South Korea are all becoming active in the search for these resources and for both economic and political influence on the continent. European countries and Brazil are stepping up their aid and investments as well.
- **China** presents a particularly important challenge to the United States interests and values. China does not share U. S. concern for issues of governance, human rights, or economic policy. Sudan is the most egregious example. China combines its large stake in Sudan's oil industry with protection of the Government of Sudan from United Nations sanctions for the ongoing attacks in Darfur.
- **Terrorism** Africa is becoming more important in the war on terrorism. Terrorist cells struck the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Terrorist organizations more recently have sought refuge in West Africa's Sahel region. Africans are being recruited for terrorism in Iraq, and have been implicated in the subway bombings in London.
- **The HIV/AIDS** pandemic is rapidly reaching the stage where it will not only take a steadily rising death toll, but also undermine social and political stability and the prospects for economic progress. What the United States learns in Africa and what it is able to achieve, will be critical to whether it is possible to stem this pandemic as it spreads across Asia and into Russia.

- **Trade** Africa is more important because African nations, with nearly a third of the votes in the World Trade Organization (WTO), are in a position to provide critical support to the United States in the current world trade negotiations. African nations are, however, challenging the United States and Europe to make major changes in agricultural trade practices to enable Africa to build its export capacity and become better integrated into the world economy.

African Commitments and Capacities are Increasing

- **Democracy and economic policy** Many African leaders have strengthened their commitment to constitutional rule, improved economic policy, good governance, and resolution of conflict. While there is a long ways to go before these commitments are fulfilled across the continent, several concrete steps have been taken to achieve them.
- **Peacekeeping** Africa has dispatched its own peacekeepers to almost all of the countries in conflict. Africans need outside assistance to maintain these deployments and to bring about an end to the most serious conflicts; but they are prepared to act and to build, with external support and additional capacity.
- **Conflict resolution** Africa's most influential and capable countries, (e.g., South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Senegal), are providing important leadership. Burundi is a good example, where genocide on the scale of Rwanda could have taken place. But determined South African leadership and the readiness of the African Union (AU) to deploy peacekeepers quickly, ahead of the United Nations forces, have forged a new peace there.

Bipartisan Support for Africa is Growing

- **Aid levels** to Africa have been rising steadily since the mid 1990s, through Democratic and Republican administrations, and with bipartisan support in Congress. President Bush has pledged to double aid to Africa again by 2010. The **African Growth and Opportunity Act** (AGOA), a major opening of the U.S. market to African exporters, was fashioned with bipartisan congressional support during the Clinton administration, and has been steadily improved during the Bush administration.
- **HIV/AIDS** President Bush, with strong bipartisan support in Congress, galvanized international support for addressing this pandemic with a dramatic pledge in 2003 of $15 billion over five years.

- **Peace building** Since the late 1990s, the United States has supported a steadily increased United Nations peacekeeping presence to contain conflicts in Africa. President Bush and the other members of the G8 have pledged to support the training of 40,000 African peacekeepers over the next five years.

The Constituency for Africa is Broadening

- **Religious groups** Joining a long tradition of support for Africa from the African-American community, humanitarian organizations, and select members of Congress, an increasing number of religious groups have become engaged on issues in Africa. Evangelical Christian groups played a leading role in galvanizing U.S. leadership in resolving Sudan's decades-long civil war, raising public awareness about the atrocities in Darfur, and advocates for debt relief for poor African countries and in the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- **Student groups** are taking up African issues. A coalition of college students created the Save Darfur campaign, advocating stronger U.S. action on Darfur, and lobbying for divestment in the Chinese petroleum company. The rapidly increasing programs to combat HIV/AIDS have enlisted interest and involvement from **public health schools and professional organizations** along with rising numbers of non-governmental organizations.
- **U.S. military commands** in Europe and the Middle East have recognized the strategic role of Africa, with an emphasis on the terrorist threat in Africa and the security of energy installations. This sharply contrasts to the traditional Pentagon view that Africa has little strategic importance.

Shaping a More Comprehensive Africa Policy

U.S. policy has begun to respond to these new realities and opportunities, but the policy is fragmented and geared more to short-term emergencies, than long-term investments. Congress has begun cutting back the president's aid requests, international support for HIV/AIDS has begun to wane, U.S. diplomatic and intelligence capabilities in Africa remain weak, and the U.S is failing to provide the resources and policies needed to ensure a reliable energy supply from Africa or to compete better with China and other newly active countries on the continent.

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A comprehensive policy, addressing Africa's new importance and its persistent problems of poverty and conflict, comprises a big agenda. African policy is complicated further by the fact that there are forty-eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with quite different circumstances, influence, and potential. At the same time, many of the most challenging problems such as disease, conflict, and terrorist activity, cross borders, demanding both bilateral and regional responses. Sometimes the most disturbing crises occur in countries not thought of as strategically important. Rwanda in 1994 was such a case, where the crisis and the ensuing genocide touched the most basic values of the American people. But the growing African capacity and willingness to lead on many of these issues, the bipartisan support that can be mobilized in support of a more comprehensive policy, and the partners with whom the United States can share responsibility make this challenge manageable.

The Task Force will be making recommendations along the following lines

A more long-term and consistent commitment to growth in Africa

- **Trade** reform is one of the most critical priorities. Together with adequate technical assistance and trade reform within Africa, the elimination of U.S. and European barriers to Africa's agricultural exports could add hundreds of millions of dollars annually to African earnings, reduce substantially rural poverty, and place many countries on the path to self-sufficiency.
- **Increased aid** should be consistently focused areas of U.S. expertise such as agriculture, health, education, environment, and facilitation of private investment.
- **Support for African institutions and leadership** Special attention should be paid in the coming year to supporting constitutionally based political transitions and electoral processes in Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia.
- **Population** Famine-prone countries like Ethiopia and Niger have doubled their population in the past two decades and the projections are for further sharp increases in the future. The social and political impact of the growing youth bulge should garner more attention, as this bulge presages more conflict, unemployment, and potential recruitment for extremist activity.

Contain the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

- **Strong Presidential leadership** will be needed well beyond this administration. The commitment by the G8 in 2005 to see all those in need worldwide have access to treatment contains an enormous commitment to future funding that has yet to be calculated.
- **Mobilize other donors** The United States must mobilize other donors to commit to a rising level of support for HIV/AIDS programs as the pandemic reaches major proportions on the continent. In particular, the United States must press other countries to meet two-thirds of the required budget for the Global Fund. The shortage of skilled health workers and infrastructure is also one of the major limiting factors in delivering HIV/AIDS programs as well as addressing Africa's other critical health needs.
- **Prevention** Ideological differences must be set aside and support given to all those prevention programs that work, including "abstain, be faithful and use a condom" (ABC).

Promote a reliable supply of energy from Africa

- **Anti-corruption** A reliable and responsible policy for assuring the supply of energy from these states requires encouraging responsible use of oil and gas proceeds by the producing states. To do so, the United States must give a higher level and more consistent political attention to these states, find resources to help develop transparency and good governance, and help in securing the energy producing installations.
- **Security** Military assistance should be provided to help states in the Gulf of Guinea improve security of coastal environments and to develop regional maritime security programs.
- **China** To compete more effectively with China, the United States must provide more encouragement and support to well-performing African states, develop innovative means for U.S. companies to compete, give high-level attention to Africa, and engage China on those practices that conflict with U.S. interests.

Build security against failed states and other sources of terrorism

- **Funding** More funding for Africa should be added to the President's Transitional Initiative for fragile and post-conflict states. There is currently insufficient funding for such fragile countries in Africa as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, and the Central African Republic.

- **Intelligence and Diplomatic capabilities** The United States needs to rebuild its intelligence capabilities in Africa to understand better the dimensions of the threat, the sources of unrest, the warning signs of collapse, and the most appropriate forms of U.S. response, whether economic, cultural, political, or military. Diplomatic presence needs to be expanded in states where terrorism has established roots or is a serious threat.

Reduce conflict

- **High-level attention** from the White House and by senior officials in the Department of State must be given to resolving major conflicts in Africa as was done earlier for Sudan.
- **Peacekeeping budgeting and funding** of UN and other peacekeeping needs reform. The administration's budget requests to Congress do not take into account even known new peacekeeping operations, let alone allow for rapid support in fast-breaking crises. These budgets need to be expanded to cover the costs of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs for ex-combatants in post-conflict countries.

Prevent future genocides and other instances of mass atrocities

- Failure to prevent the genocide in **Rwanda** was a major moral failure for the international community. The loss of life was horrific. The ongoing fighting in **Darfur** represents the most recent challenge of this kind. Two years after the fighting began, and the death of perhaps 100,000, the situation remains one where more than two million people are displaced from their homes, are subject to periodic attack, and are without adequate protection from either African Union (AU) or other peacekeepers.
- The United States should press urgently for further action including support for a new peacekeeping force with a stronger mandate, further sanctions against the Sudanese government, pressure on China to unblock action by the United Nations, and pressure as well on the rebel forces to develop a political agenda.

Improve policy direction and coordination

- Implementing a complex and multifaceted policy requires high-level attention along with the necessary multiplicity of program instruments**.** At present, the programmatic instruments are not sufficiently led and coordinated to achieve maximum impact and nor do they constitute a balanced application of political, economic, and security assets. The Task Force will review several ways to improve policy direction and management.

A Unique Opportunity, But One that Could Be Lost

This "year of Africa" provides an exceptional opportunity to turn all the attention, and the added resources that may flow from it, into a far more comprehensive and effective policy toward Africa than the United States has ever had before. It could lead to a deeper understanding of United States interests in Africa and to a more comprehensive and more productive long-term policy. Or it could be but a superficial, passing phase for United States policy, a feel-good era of promises, in which the United States fails to grasp the deeper shifts that are occurring and fails to graduate to a more coherent, strategic approach to Africa backed by adequate human and financial resources. If the latter comes to pass, both the United States and Africa will suffer.

The newer, broader approach this report advocates requires high-level leadership—the voice of the President, the Secretary of State, and others—articulating a new integrated vision of how to advance U.S. interests in Africa. The vision must encompass Africa's growing importance to the United States—in energy, security, global health, and trade. It must impart to the American people a sense of urgency in addressing United States interests there more effectively, including embarking upon a long-term commitment to help achieve a fundamental improvement in Africa's place in the world. With this vision, the "year of Africa" can be a turning point. Not a passing phase, but the beginning of a serious long-term commitment to achieving the United States and Africa's best interests.