

An hourglass-shaped graphic with a globe inside. The top bulb is dark blue, and the bottom bulb is light blue. The globe is centered in the narrow neck of the hourglass. The text is centered within the hourglass.

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*AFRICA BACKGROUNDER: HISTORY, U.S. POLICY,
PRINCIPAL CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS*

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Updated January 5, 2001

Abstract. This report introduces the region by providing an overview of Africa's history, a summary of U.S. policy toward Africa, and a listing of principal congressional actions affecting the region. It concludes with suggestions for further reading and a list of selected Congressional Research Service (CRS) documents.

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Africa Backgrounder: History, U.S. Policy, Principal Congressional Actions

Updated January 5, 2001

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Africa Backgrounder: History, U.S. Policy, Principal Congressional Actions

Summary

Congress has dealt repeatedly with issues related to sub-Saharan Africa since the late 1950s. This report provides basic background on Africa and its history, U.S. policy, and congressional involvement, for the general congressional reader.

The modern human species is believed to have emerged in Africa approximately 200,000 years ago. Perhaps 2,500 years ago, the Bantu people began to expand from a West African base, gradually spreading a complex agricultural system over much of the continent. Africanists generally agree that loyalties to large ethnic groups, a key factor in African politics today, were largely absent in pre-colonial Africa.

The Atlantic slave trade, which began about 1450 and lasted 400 years, removed millions of people in their most productive years from Africa and left the continent ill-prepared to cope with the European "scramble for Africa." From the 1870s through the early twentieth century, nearly the entire sub-Saharan region was divided among the European powers. The Europeans built a basic economic infrastructure; but imposed a bureaucratic system of government and strengthened traditional chiefs and other "big men" to help them rule. These patterns deepened divisions in African societies and strengthened anti-democratic patterns of government.

After World War II, African nationalists organized political parties and began to demand independence. By the early 1960s, independence had come to most of eastern and western Africa, but white minority rule persisted in southern Africa, ending only in 1994, when universal-suffrage elections were held in South Africa.

In the first years of the 1960s, there were high hopes that the end of colonialism would bring rapid economic growth. Instead, Africa confronted a number of problems, including inefficient, state-centered economic systems; frequent military coups; ethnic strife; and corruption. The Cold War contributed to Africa's difficulties, flooding the continent with arms and strengthening a number of repressive regimes that had superpower backing. French policy also tended to bolster authoritarian governments in former French colonies.

In the early 1990s, hopes for Africa's future revived following widespread political and economic reforms and the end of the Cold War. Later in the decade, however, the pace of reforms slowed and central Africa fell into an era of violent conflict. "Afro-pessimists" believe that these developments have gravely damaged Africa's prospects, but others argue that they are temporary problems masking an underlying "African Renaissance." The Clinton Administration sided with the "Afro-optimists," despite frustrations over the war in Congo (formerly Zaire) and other problems.

The 106th Congress passed legislation to strengthen U.S.-African economic ties and to boost spending to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa and worldwide. Previous Congresses acted on a number of African issues, including African food security, apartheid in South Africa, and covert U.S. involvement in Angola.

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Africa Backgrounder: History, U.S. Policy, and Principal Congressional Actions

Congress, in the exercise of its legislative and oversight functions, has dealt repeatedly with Africa-related issues, especially since the late 1950s, when Europe's colonization of the sub-Saharan region began to come to an end. Bills, resolutions, and hearings have covered a wide variety of topics, including apartheid in South Africa, other human rights issues, Soviet involvement in Africa during the Cold War years, the suffering of children and other innocent civilians during the Nigerian civil war (1967-1971), African famine, and African economic development. Attention has also focused on several

democracy and human rights issues, particularly with respect to Nigeria, Congo (formerly Zaire), and Sudan, as well as the warfare and violence that afflicted much of the continent. In 1998, Congress passed the Africa: Seeds of Hope Act (P.L. 105-385), aimed at promoting African food production, and in 2000, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA, P.L. 106-200), intended to promote African development through increased trade and investment, became law. The Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-264), also enacted in 2000, authorizes new funding to combat the global HIV/AIDS epidemic and was, in large measure, a response to the devastation AIDS is causing in sub-Saharan Africa.

Congressional interest in Africa seems certain to continue, not only because the region is affected by a number of serious problems, some of which could have grave humanitarian consequences, but also because of the potential Africa offers for U.S. trade and investment should these problems ease. Africa's problems and prospects will likely assure continuing constituent interest as well, stimulated in part by the churches, relief organizations, and other non-governmental organizations active on African issues. This report is intended to introduce congressional readers to the region by providing an overview of Africa's history, a summary of U.S. policy toward Africa, and a listing of principal congressional actions affecting the region. The paper concludes with suggestions for further reading and a list of selected Congressional Research Service (CRS) products.

Sub-Saharan Africa in Brief

Population: 642.3 million (1999)

Number of countries: 45

GDP: \$332.7 billion

GDP per capita: \$316 (1998, excluding South Africa)

Foreign debt: \$231 billion (1999)

Male illiteracy: 31% (1999)

Female illiteracy: 47% (1999)

Sources: World Bank, *African Development Indicators 2000*, *Global Development Finance 2000*, and online data.

African History: An Overview

Human history is believed to have begun in Africa, probably in the eastern and southern part of the continent, as human ancestors evolved into the species *homo sapiens*, perhaps 200,000 years ago, and began peopling the sub-Saharan region.¹ About 50,000 to 100,000 years ago, according to most current scientific thinking, small bands of these fully modern humans crossed out of Africa into the Middle East, and became the ancestors of all human populations elsewhere.²

An internal African migration of great significance was launched perhaps 2,500-5,000 years ago, as the Bantu people of West Africa began to expand their area of settlement from a base that was probably in the northeast of present-day Nigeria or possibly Cameroon. The Bantu eventually became the predominant people over most of sub-Saharan Africa, although people speaking so-called Nilo-Saharan languages are widely found in the Sahel grasslands on the southern border of the Sahara and parts of eastern Africa. The Nilo-Saharan languages may have had their origins in the Nile valley, but the term "Nilotic" to describe peoples existing today has fallen out of favor with scholars because of the extensive intermingling of Bantu and Nilo-Saharan speakers over the centuries. Bantu tropical agriculture was not suited to the Mediterranean climate of extreme southern Africa, and this region continued to be inhabited by people known as "Khoisan" or "San."

Experts are uncertain about the origins of iron use in Africa,³ but by about 500 BC, it appears that the Bantu had become skilled in smelting iron and making the iron tools that created a highly successful agriculture and accelerated their expansion. When Europeans began to explore the African coast after 1450 AD, they found that farmers were growing a wide variety of crops, including grains as well foods unfamiliar to Europeans, such as bananas. Some of these had come into Africa through contacts with the Indian Ocean region and southeast Asia.⁴ Many African farmers also had cattle, although the tsetse fly kept cattle out of the wetter, central part of the continent. After the discovery of America, farmers quickly adopted New World crops, such as maize and peanuts.

By 1500, an estimated 47 million Africans were living in thousands of farming communities spread across the continent,⁵ although in particularly dry regions, such as Kenya's Rift Valley, some lived a purely pastoral life, herding cattle, sheep, and

¹Roland Oliver, *The African Experience* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 1-26.

²John Reader, *Africa: A Biography of the Continent* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 91-95.

³See, for example, Paul Bohannon and Philip Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, fourth edition (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1995), 146-147.

⁴Sorghum and coffee, among other crops, are believed to be African in origin. Coffee reached the wider world by way of Arabia.

⁵Reader, *Africa: A Biography*, 240.

goats. These were exchanged with farmers for grains and other essentials.⁶ Large towns and cities had not developed, probably because large settlements were likely to be struck down by the parasites and other disease-causing organisms that had evolved with *homo sapiens* in Africa.⁷ Human populations outside Africa, by contrast, had largely escaped these diseases and hence could more easily build cities.

Pre-colonial Society

There is wide agreement among Africanists that loyalties to large ethnic groups, such as "the Yoruba" in present-day Nigeria or "the Tutsi" of east Africa, were largely absent in pre-colonial Africa, even though they are a dominant feature of African politics today.⁸ Broadly similar languages were spoken over wide areas, and these language areas may have correlated with similar cultural practices and religious beliefs as well. But historians believe that Africans did not perceive that they had common interests with other members of these large, amorphous groups. Instead, African loyalties were embedded in extended families, clans, and patron-client relationships which offered protection and economic support. Some areas saw the emergence of powerful individuals or chiefs, sometimes termed "big men" by scholars, who exercised influence over wide areas through marriage ties and other means, such as control over a critical trade route.⁹

A number of African kingdoms developed as the more successful chiefs consolidated their authority through conquest and alliance. To the south of the Congo River estuary, for example, European explorers encountered the Kongo kingdom, where a powerful king ruled several provinces through royal relatives.¹⁰ Great artistic achievements also characterized many of these pre-colonial kingdoms, as evidenced by the naturalistic bronze castings of heads in the kingdom of Benin, in today's Nigeria, and the stylized Congolese masks and carvings that inspired Picasso and other modern artists.

The Slave Trade

The Atlantic slave trade is said to have begun in 1441, when a man and a woman were captured on the coast of Western Sahara and taken to Portugal.¹¹ During the 400 years that the trade lasted, between 10 million and 13 million people were taken

⁶John Lonsdale, "The Conquest State of Kenya, 1895-1905," in *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, ed. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale (London: James Currey, 1992), 19-20.

⁷William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Doubleday, 1977); Reader, *Africa: A Biography*, 240.

⁸Bruce Berman, "Ethnicity, Patronage, and the African State: the Politics of Uncivil Nationalism," *African Affairs* 97 (July 1998): 305-341.

⁹John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 79-80.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.80.

¹¹Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, 127; Reader, *Africa: A Biography*, 379.

from Africa, according to authoritative estimates,¹² with most going to Brazil and the Caribbean, and smaller numbers sent to the United States or the British North American colonies that preceded its formation in 1776. The peak of the trade occurred in the eighteenth century, as plantation agriculture expanded in the Americas. Annual totals reached 100,000 in some years late in the century,¹³ at a time when 3,000-4,000 were also being taken from East Africa in the lesser-known Indian Ocean slave trade.¹⁴

In 1807, the British parliament voted to end the slave trade, and over the next 60 years, the Royal Navy intercepted more than 1,600 ships off Africa's coasts and freed over 160,000 captives, sending most to Sierra Leone.¹⁵ But many ships evaded the British patrols, and large numbers of slaves continued to be exported until slavery was abolished throughout the Americas in the 1850s and 1860s. U.S. participation in the slave trade was banned by legislation passed in 1807 and strengthened in 1819. For a number of years, U.S. Navy ships were stationed off the African coast to participate in efforts to halt the trade, but with limited success.¹⁶

The Atlantic slave trade was conducted by European traders based on the West African coast. They purchased slaves from African owners by trading guns, alcohol, cloth, or other European-manufactured goods; as well as cowrie shells, which had monetary value in pre-colonial Africa. Slavery had long been practiced in Africa, where it was customary to enslave people captured during wars, together with condemned criminals, and, in some societies, convicted adulterers and enemies of the king.¹⁷ In addition, some of those sold into the Atlantic slave trade were kidnap victims.¹⁸ According to historians, slaves in traditional African societies were typically absorbed into families or local armies, and their treatment was generally less harsh than in the plantations of the New World. Moreover, the children of slaves in Africa often could not be sold.¹⁹

Effects. Scholars debate the effects of the slave trade on the politics and economies of African societies,²⁰ but the era was clearly associated with turmoil and

¹²Reader, 379-380; Iliffe, 131. Both authors cite Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹³Bohannon and Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, 184-185.

¹⁴Oliver, *The African Experience*, 123.

¹⁵Reader, *Africa: A Biography*, 42; Iliffe, *Africa: the History of a Continent*, 148.

¹⁶E.B. Potter, *The Naval Academy Illustrated History of the United States Navy* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1971), 59.

¹⁷Philip D. Curtin, *The Tropical Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1991), 15-19.

¹⁸Iliffe, *Africa: The History of a Continent*, 133.

¹⁹Bohannon and Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, 182. Reader, however, reports instances of slaves being used as human sacrifices in Africa. *Africa: A Biography*, 183.

²⁰Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the (continued...)

outbreaks of war affecting much of West Africa. The guns that flooded Africa in exchange for slaves helped fuel this instability, and the quest for European arms gave warring parties a powerful incentive to constantly seek new captives.²¹ It seems certain that warfare related to the slave trade, the loss of millions of people in their most productive years, and the psychological damage to individuals resulting from political instability and fear of capture, weakened Africa and left it ill-prepared to cope with the onset of direct European colonization.

The Colonial Era

As late as 1870, there was little indication that the European powers were about to leave their isolated positions on the coast and partition Africa among themselves. Instead, it seemed more likely that indigenous political entities would consolidate their authority and eventually develop into nation-states. In West Africa, for example, the kingdom of Ashanti (Asante) had profited from its wealth in gold and the slave trade, and had acquired a strong central government, an advanced system of roads, well defined boundaries, and a national language.²² It seemed destined to grow stronger. Buganda in East Africa, to take another example, had become the chief naval power on Lake Victoria and was known for its powerful king, the Kabaka; its strong army; and its growing trade.²³

Meanwhile, a number of "secondary empires" -- secondary in the sense that they relied on imported European military technology -- were emerging.²⁴ Many of these were based in Muslim societies, and their gains did much to promote the spread of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa. In earlier centuries, Islam had been spreading slowly in West Africa as a result of trans-Saharan trade contacts, and had made larger gains in northeastern Africa through trade and Arab immigration. Africans who wanted to associate themselves with the wider Islamic world often converted willingly, and Koranic schools had begun to introduce literacy in Arabic across the Sahel. But in the nineteenth century, a series of holy wars or *jihads* created a vast West African Islamic empire centered on Sokoto, in modern Nigeria. In East Africa, the sultans of the island of Zanzibar were extending their power on the mainland, and Egypt was expanding its control in northeastern Africa. With troops on Lake Victoria by 1876,²⁵ it seemed headed for an empire reaching into central Africa.

²⁰(...continued)

Literature," *Journal of African History* 30 (1989), 365-394. See also Reader, *Africa: A Biography*, 406-407.

²¹Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1750: the Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 345-350.

²²Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 76.

²³Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, *Africa Since 1800*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 81-83.

²⁴Bohannon and Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, 192-204.

²⁵Iiffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, 165.

In southern Africa, it was the "Boers" or Afrikaners, practicing a very conservative form of Christianity, who established a nineteenth century secondary empire. Descended from Dutch, Huguenot, and German settlers who had arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thousands of Boers trekked deep into the African interior to escape the cultural influences of the British. (Britain had taken control of the Cape during the Napoleonic wars.) With modern rifles and cavalry tactics, the Boers defeated the powerful Zulu in key battles, and established farms in grasslands areas recently depopulated by a series of African wars sparked by Zulu expansionism. The Zulu were acquiring modern arms themselves and remained a major force in the region under a king ruling through an aristocracy.

The Scramble. The development of Africa's indigenous political entities was halted by the European scramble for Africa, which began in competition over the Niger and Congo River basins in the 1870s. The scramble concluded in 1920, when British forces, making use of combat airplanes developed during World War I, ended the last resistance in Somalia. By this time, all of sub-Saharan Africa, except for Ethiopia and Liberia, was under European control. Ethiopia had thwarted Italian ambitions to make it a colony by inflicting a humiliating defeat on Italian troops at Adowa in 1896. However, Menelik II, the Ethiopian emperor, was unable to oust the Italians from the colony of Eritrea, which they had established along the Red Sea coast. (Italy invaded Ethiopia again in 1935, in what some historians regard as an opening phase of World War II. The Italians were driven from the region by British troops in 1941-1942.)²⁶

The scramble was made possible in part by advances in medicine, which for the first time gave Europeans a measure of protection against tropical diseases. Gains in military technology, particularly the development of machine guns and modern artillery, gave Europeans tremendous advantages over even very large African forces. In 1898, for example, an army of British and Egyptian troops killed 10,800 Sudanese in one day of fighting, while losing 48 officers and men themselves.²⁷ As a result of Europe's military advantages, many Africans chose not to resist the colonial invasion, although the Ashanti, the Zulu, the Boers, the Herero of German Southwest Africa (Namibia), and peoples in French West Africa did launch armed struggles against the colonizers.

Many European leaders were initially reluctant to seize territory in Africa because they doubted that potential financial gains would balance the likely cost. However, in Britain, France, and Germany there were imperialists and nationalists both in and out of government who brought popular and political pressure to bear in support of expansion. Anti-slavery activists felt that direct rule would end the slavery that continued to exist in Africa itself, and missionaries saw that their efforts could benefit as well.

²⁶Post-war Ethiopia took full control of Eritrea in 1962, setting off a long resistance struggle. Eritrea finally became independent in 1993.

²⁷Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912* (New York: Random House, 1991), 543-546.

Business interests seeking to develop and exploit Africa's resources were also influential, particularly with respect to southern Africa. Diamonds were discovered at Kimberley, in present-day South Africa, in 1871, and gold was found on the Witwatersrand (in and around modern Johannesburg) in 1885. (It was not until 1902, however, that British troops finally subdued the Afrikaners, in the second of the "Boer Wars.") The new colonial powers also valued Africa's agricultural potential. Germany, for example, sought to create a reliable source of raw cotton in its East African colony of Tanganyika.²⁸

The profit motive was perhaps strongest with King Leopold II of Belgium, but he successfully hid his real interests for many years amid a show of humanitarian concerns. Working closely with Henry M. Stanley, the British-American explorer and journalist, Leopold built a vast empire under his personal control by funding the exploration of the Congo River basin and persuading local chiefs to sign treaties, which they little understood, recognizing his authority. At the Berlin West Africa Conference in 1884-1885, Leopold won recognition of the sovereignty of his International Association of the Congo (IAC), which controlled Congo and has been described as Leopold's "one-man enterprise."²⁹ Britain and Germany had come to favor recognition of Leopold's IAC as a means of thwarting the growth of French influence in west and central Africa.³⁰ Leopold had also succeeded in winning the endorsement of U.S. President Chester Arthur for his plans, which were supported by a Senate resolution as well.³¹

The Berlin conference set rules for the future acquisition of colonies in Africa, requiring that countries exercise effective control of an area before claiming it. This had the effect of limiting most further colonization to the strongest powers -- Britain, France, and Germany, although Portugal secured territories in Angola and Mozambique, where Portuguese settlers had long been present. Germany lost its colonies in the First World War, and by that time it was clear that Britain was the dominant power in Africa, with colonies stretching from southern Africa through eastern Africa and Sudan to Egypt, and holding the Gold Coast, including the former Ashanti, as well as Nigeria in West Africa. France, however, also held large territories in West and in Central Africa.

The United States did not have colonies in Africa, but the U.S. Navy assisted the American Colonization Society as it began to settle former slaves on the West African coast in 1820. The first permanent settlement was achieved in 1822, after arduous struggles and near-defeat by disease and unfriendly local warriors. The settlers issued the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Liberia in 1847, and in subsequent decades, the Americo-Liberians used firearms to conquer indigenous peoples and extend their control into the hinterland. Some scholars argue that this expansion did not differ significantly from the actions of the European

²⁸Reader, *Africa, A Biography of the Continent*, 597.

²⁹Reader, *Africa: A Biography*, 539.

³⁰On Leopold in the Congo, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998). See also Pakenham's *Scramble for Africa*.

³¹Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 75-82.

colonizers,³² and that it set the stage for the violent disintegration of Liberian society in the late twentieth century. In April 1980, indigenous soldiers from the hinterland killed the Americo-Liberian president, William Tolbert, setting off a decade of political violence and human rights violations, followed by a 6-year civil war.³³

Effects. The effects of the colonial era on Africa and its peoples, like the effects of the slave trade, are a subject of scholarly debate. The consequences of Leopold's rule in his vast Congo colony, however, were quite clearly negative. Human rights activists and missionaries, including American missionaries, gradually made known the vast scale of the abuses that were taking place in Congo as Leopold tried to extract the maximum profit from his enterprises. Forced labor, beatings, mutilations, summary executions, and the use of starvation as an instrument of policy³⁴ were commonplace in Congo and the subject of Joseph Conrad's novel, *The Heart of Darkness*, published in 1902. The situation in Congo became an international scandal, forcing the Belgian government to remove the colony from Leopold's personal control in 1908, and to institute reforms.

In the British and French-controlled territories, the colonial era did provide a backbone of infrastructure, including roads and telephone systems, although rural areas generally benefitted far less than towns and cities. Standards of public health improved, and some elementary education began to be provided. Christian missions protected by the colonial authorities played a major role in promoting education and literacy -- winning millions of converts as a result.³⁵ Opportunities for higher education, travel, and employment in the modern sector, though limited, empowered a number of Africans who later became leaders in independent Africa. Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, for example, studied at the London School of Economics, and Nkrumah also attended Lincoln University in the United States, as did Nigeria's Nnamdi Azikiwe. All were later presidents of their respective countries.

At the same time, European investment in Africa was limited, and colonial governments generally expected African colonies to pay their own way in terms of development. In order to generate the necessary revenue, the colonial state was heavily involved in the economy, influencing decisions on what crops should be planted and regulating prices as well as investment. Many statist systems based on the colonial model persisted after independence, retarding the evolution of market economies. Colonial economic policies also made Africa dependent on the export of primary products -- minerals, agricultural products, and timber -- to the developed world in exchange for manufactured goods. The prices of primary products have fared poorly relative to manufactured goods in the post-colonial world, contributing to Africa's problems.

³²Curtin and Bohannon, *Africa and Africans*, 221-222.

³³CRS Issue Brief 96025, *Liberia: Issues for the United States*, by Nicolas Cook.

³⁴Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 225-234.

³⁵Iliffe, *Africans: the History of A Continent*, 222-229.

Colonial governments had no interest in promoting democracy or developing democratic traditions, which would have complicated their efforts to rule Africa with a minimum of expenditure. In the words of one expert, "the colonial state in Africa was an authoritarian bureaucratic apparatus of control and not intended to be a school of democracy."³⁶ As pressure for political rights and independence mounted after World War II, colonial regimes often imprisoned their critics and took other authoritarian measures that set unfortunate precedents for post-colonial rulers. Most Africans had no opportunity for political participation until the very end of the colonial period, when elections began to be held.

While Britain and France discouraged popular participation for most of the colonial era, they did work closely with local chiefs and other big men, because the cooperation of these traditional authorities was essential in obtaining the labor and tax revenues the colonial regimes required. Some contend that in strengthening big men, whose influence rested on kinship ties, the granting of favors, and the suppression of dissent, the colonial authorities contributed significantly to the problems independent Africa has suffered with respect to corruption, nepotism, and authoritarianism.

Colonial practice, many scholars believe, shaped Africa's present-day ethnic divisions by intensifying language and cultural differences among African peoples. In their view, this came about in part because Europeans of the colonial era tended to view the world in terms of "tribes" and "nations," and encouraged Africans to do likewise. Moreover, the colonial authorities, particularly the British, found it administratively convenient to group peoples together as "tribes" and rule indirectly through "tribal chiefs," whom they strengthened and in some instances created.³⁷ Africans found that they could most effectively advance their interests in the colonial era if they worked through tribal organizations and sought the patronage of tribal leaders, and this tended to strengthen tribal loyalties. Today, these ethnic divisions are the source of much of Africa's violent politics. Even where civil war does not occur, ethnic divisions typically weaken political institutions and undermine economies.³⁸

The colonial partition of Africa often had the effect of imposing artificial boundary divisions on Africa, separating peoples that had been linked by culture and trade. After the partition, roads and railroads were built to link the capitals of the new colonial states to their hinterlands, rather than to one another; creating difficulties in transport between African countries that remain to this day. Moreover, by imposing the bureaucratic colonial state on African societies, the Europeans suppressed the diverse indigenous political arrangements that had governed Africa before the partition. Whether some of Africa's pre-colonial political entities could have continued to develop in ways that avoided or minimized the problems that confront the African state today is one of the unknowns of history. The fact that they were

³⁶Berman, "Ethnicity, Patronage, and the African State," 329.

³⁷Iliffe, *Africans, The History of a Continent*, 200-202.

³⁸For a recent statement of this view, see Berman, "Ethnicity, Patronage, and the African State."

denied the opportunity to develop further is regarded by historian Basil Davidson as the "black man's burden."³⁹

End of Colonialism. World War II (1939-1945) severely weakened Britain and France, and hastened the end of the colonial era in Africa. The war aims of the western powers tended to undermine the ideological basis of colonialism by stressing the importance of democracy and resistance to aggression -- ideas that resonated with Africa's emerging nationalists. At President Roosevelt's insistence, the United States and Britain had agreed on a set of war aims in the 1941 Atlantic Charter that affirmed "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live."⁴⁰ The United Nations Charter signed at the end of the war committed the colonial powers to developing self government and free political institutions in the territories under their control (Article 73).

With the coming of peace, Africans who had been educated abroad during the 1930s, returned to Africa and began to organize opposition to the colonial regimes. Their thinking had been influenced by European intellectual currents of the day, and many had become socialists. They had also studied the revolutionary movements sweeping Asia and the struggle of black Americans to achieve social justice. Nkrumah and other African nationalists were greatly inspired by the work of W.E.B. DuBois, the black American sociologist and civil rights leader.⁴¹

By the end of the 1940s, British policymakers, who had granted independence to India in 1947, generally recognized that the African colonies would one day be independent -- but they tended to see that day as many decades in the future. France, by contrast, was following a policy of "assimilation" that in theory was to lead to the integration of its colonies into a greater France. Individual Africans could be assimilated as French citizens once they had achieved a certain standard of French education, and some, such as Leopold Senghor, poet, philosopher, and future President of Senegal, represented French Africa in the National Assembly.

All around Africa, however, nationalist sentiments were mounting, and by the early 1950s, the British faced a guerrilla uprising known as Mau Mau among the Kikuyu of Kenya. New political parties were organizing and staging anti-colonial protests in Gold Coast (Ghana) and Nigeria. British decision-makers soon concluded that their weakened country could ill-afford the cost of suppressing rising African nationalism, and the independence timetable was moved forward. Ghana became independent in 1957, followed by Nigeria in 1960, Tanzania in 1961, and Kenya in 1963.

³⁹Hence, the title of his book, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, cited above. On the negative political consequences of colonialism, see also Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴⁰James McGregor Burns. *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1970), 130.

⁴¹Oliver and Atmore, *Africa Since 1800*, 217-218.

Political parties were organizing in the French colonies as well, but President Charles de Gaulle was shocked when, in 1958, the little territory of Guinea voted in a referendum for independence rather than close association with France in a proposed new French Community. In the face of agitation for independence elsewhere, de Gaulle decided that France would cut its losses, and 14 independent countries emerged from French-held Africa in 1960. Demands for independence sprang up unexpectedly in the Belgian Congo in 1958, and with little power to resist, Belgium granted Congolese independence in 1960 as well.

Southern Africa. In most of southern Africa, independence was long delayed because of the presence of substantial white populations which generally opposed majority rule. In several countries in the region, Africans had to resort to armed struggle to win their freedom. In 1965, the tiny white minority of British-descended settlers in Rhodesia issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain, which was pushing for democratic reforms. This led to United Nations sanctions against the Rhodesian regime, and Africans launched a civil war. Rhodesia finally became the independent country of Zimbabwe under a majority-elected government in 1980. Guerrilla wars broke out in Angola and Mozambique in the 1960s, and independence came only in 1975, after Portuguese military dictator Antonio Salazar was ousted in a 1974 coup in Lisbon. Armed struggle also took place in Namibia (South West Africa), which South Africa had taken from Germany in 1914, but independence did not come until 1990, following a U.N.-supervised election.

In South Africa itself, whites of both English and Afrikaner descent had enjoyed self-government since 1910, when Britain had granted what would later be known as Commonwealth status.⁴² Opposition to white minority rule had existed for decades, but in 1948, the National Party (NP), representing conservative, nationalistic Afrikaners, came to power and imposed an institutionalized system of racial segregation known as apartheid (apart-ness).

Protests against apartheid mounted in the late 1960s, and in the 1970s, an increasingly violent resistance campaign was met by ever harsher government repression. In the 1980s, as resistance continued to grow, South Africa launched a number of military strikes and covert operations beyond South Africa's borders against bases and personnel of the opposition African National Congress (ANC). Late in the decade, however, South Africa's white-controlled government was facing international isolation, and many Afrikaner leaders came to realize that the costs of defending apartheid would be unsustainable in the long run. Consequently, the regime undertook secret discussions with the ANC on the outlines of a majority-based system that would include protections for minority interests. ANC leader Nelson Mandela was freed from prison in February 1990, and difficult constitutional negotiations concluded in November 1993. Universal-suffrage elections were held in April 1994, and Mandela became President in May of that year.

⁴²Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 667.

Independent Africa

In the first years of the 1960s, the future for western and eastern Africa seemed quite bright. Heavy-handed colonial governments had departed, and a new African elite including many individuals with excellent educations and global experience had come to power. GNP per capita was rising at about 1% per year, on average,⁴³ and Africans as well as foreign development experts expected that the construction of roads, universities, hospitals, hydro-electric dams, and other projects would soon result in faster growth. In May 1963, the heads of 30 African states signed the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to promote African solidarity and intensify efforts to improve living standards. Member states pledged to respect the principles of non-interference and respect for territorial integrity in their relations with one another.

Even in these early years, however, serious problems were beginning to emerge. The former Belgian Congo fell into civil war from 1960-1964, and its mineral-rich Katanga province attempted to secede. In January 1963, the president of Togo, Sylvanus Olympio, was assassinated in the first of dozens of military coups and attempted coups that would plague the region. Nkrumah, who had made Ghana a socialist, one-party state was overthrown in 1966, and the first of Nigeria's many coups occurred that same year. Ethnic tensions mounted in Nigeria as a result of the coup, and when the Ibo people of eastern Nigeria attempted to secede, a civil war broke out that lasted until 1970.

Sub-Saharan Africa's annual rate of per capita economic growth fell to .8% in the 1970s, and plunged to a negative 2.2% per year in the 1980s, more than wiping out all previous gains.⁴⁴ In these decades, most African countries were governed by authoritarian regimes, and a few, such as Idi Amin's government in Uganda (1971-1979), were quite violent. Civil wars broke out not only Uganda, but also in Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and Chad, as well as in Angola and Mozambique, where long civil wars followed the wars for independence. When drought struck wide areas of the continent in 1982-1984, the highest death tolls occurred in the war-torn countries, particularly Ethiopia and Sudan, where international relief agencies could not reach the hungry.

The underlying causes of Africa's problems in the post-independence era have been the subject of much discussion and analysis. The impact of the colonial era, which is blamed for inciting ethnic divisions and creating traditions of authoritarian rule as well as bureaucratic interference in the economy, has already been mentioned. Colleges and universities began to appear in African colonies only at the end of the colonial period, leaving very small indigenous elites to deal with the challenges of independence. Independent Africa confronted a major population challenge as well.

⁴³Donald George Morrison and others, *Black Africa: A Comparative Handbook* (New York: The Free Press, 1972), 52.

⁴⁴John Ravenhill, "A Second Decade of Adjustment: Greater Complexity, Greater Uncertainty," in Thomas M. Callaghy and John Ravenhill, eds. *Hemmed In: Responses to Africa's Economic Decline* (New York: Columbia University Press), 18.

In 1950, there were an estimated 200 million people in the sub-Saharan region, but by 1990, the number had grown to 600 million.⁴⁵

The Cold War

The Cold War has also been blamed for many of Africa's problems. Vast quantities of arms came into Africa during the Cold War, fueling African conflicts. Most of these arms came from the Soviet Union and its allies, and went to self-proclaimed Marxist regimes in Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique. In reaction, the United States provided far lesser quantities of weapons, but focused much of its economic assistance on authoritarian regimes in Zaire, Sudan, Liberia and elsewhere that were perceived as anti-Soviet. This competitive Cold War involvement, critics maintain, tended to strengthen governments on both sides that were anti-democratic and following inefficient, state-oriented economic policies, often marked by considerable corruption.⁴⁶

Effects of French Policy

The degree to which French policy may have contributed to Africa's problems is a matter of debate. France had remained actively engaged in Africa because French policy makers believed that a major African role would help give France great power status at a time when the two superpowers were dominant elsewhere. By overt and covert means, they cultivated a "special relationship" with the elites of their former colonies, which they regarded as France's "*chasse gardée*," or "exclusive hunting ground."⁴⁷ In addition, France capitalized on the tie of language to forge close relations with the "francophone" regimes in Zaire and Rwanda, former Belgian colonies.

These special relationships with France usually brought both military and economic assistance, as well as a promise of French intervention to protect friendly regimes from violent unrest. Several thousand French troops were stationed at African bases. French businesses, meanwhile, gained privileged access to trade and investment opportunities. Critics maintained that French policy was perpetuating corrupt and authoritarian regimes in many countries, but defenders argued that France was contributing to stability and, as a result, facilitating development. France began to reduce its military and financial commitments in Africa after the Socialist Party won legislative elections in May 1997, but the future direction of French policy is not yet clear.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, 243.

⁴⁶Zaire, a major beneficiary of U.S. assistance over many years, is often cited as a case in point. See CRS Issue Brief 96037, *Congo (Formerly Zaire)*.

⁴⁷Peter J. Schraeder, "France and the Great Game in Africa." *Current History* (May 1997), 207. On the French covert role, see Kaye Whiteman, "The Man who Ran Francafrique," *The National Interest* (Fall 1997).

⁴⁸Roland Marchal, "France and Africa: the Emergence of Essential Reforms?" *International Affairs* (April 1998), 355-372.

The 1990s

In the later 1980s and early 1990s, as the colonial era fell farther into the past and the Cold War waned, scholars began to focus on characteristics of the African state and African societies to explain the continent's difficulties. This line of analysis led to a number of discouraging conclusions about the continent. Some scholars concluded that African states were too weak to promote societal change and economic development, largely because the institutions of the state had been corrupted. The personal ambitions of leaders, ethnic favoritism, and "pathological patrimonialism,"⁴⁹ were blamed by some for diverting state resources to the personal fortunes of ruling cliques, and to the police and military officials who kept them in power. There was much academic discussion of the "failed state" in Africa, amid extensive media coverage of famine and conflict in Somalia, Sudan, and other countries.⁵⁰ Economic difficulties continued as well. Despite a growth spurt in mid-decade, overall GDP growth for the years 1990 through 1998 was 2.0% per year, less than the population growth rate of 2.6%.⁵¹

At the same time, there were several positive developments affecting Africa in the early 1990s that gave rise to hopes for a better future. With the end of the Cold War, some noted, Africa's authoritarian rulers would no longer be able to play the superpowers against one another to perpetuate their hold on power. The momentous changes in South Africa were also highly encouraging because they averted a widely expected and potentially very violent revolution. Many anticipated that a stable South Africa would soon become an "engine of growth" for the economies of much of the sub-Saharan region. Several African countries were already well-advanced in free market economic reforms that they had undertaken at the behest of western aid donors. Consequently, by the mid-1990s -- despite slow growth in the region as a whole -- GDP growth rates in several countries were exceeding population growth rates, and some were achieving annual GDP increases of 5% or better.

Political reforms were also beginning in many of Africa's authoritarian states because of mounting demands for democratization from opposition movements and donors. In some countries, national political conferences convened, and diverse interests in Africa's growing "civil society" were represented, including human rights organizations, nascent political parties, and churches. Multiple political parties were permitted in countries that had been one-party states for years, and elections that seemed generally free and fair began to be held. These developments brought favorable reactions from a number of analysts. In 1991, for example, U.S. scholar Richard Joseph, who had been a critic of Africa's patrimonial politics, published an

⁴⁹Zaki Ergas, ed. *The African State in Transition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 9. Articles in this edited volume elaborate the critique of the African state.

⁵⁰For recent contributions to the discussion of the African state, see Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, cited above, and Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: the Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁵¹*African Development Indicators, 2000* (Washington: World Bank, 2000), 7, 17.

article entitled "Africa: The Rebirth of Political Freedom," which noted that a "virtual miracle" seemed to be underway.⁵²

Afro-Pessimism v. Afro-Optimism

For many observers, the hopes of the first half of the 1990s have faded, in part as a result of disappointment over the course of African democratization. Some of Africa's authoritarian leaders learned to manipulate the electoral process and divide the opposition, creating what one authority, Larry Diamond, calls "pseudo-democracies." Diamond argues that the governments of Kenya, Gabon, and Cameroon have played a "cat-and-mouse game with international donors, liberalizing politically in response to pressure while repressing as much as they can get away with in order to hang on to power."⁵³ A disappointed Richard Joseph wrote in 1998 that Africa's democratic opening at the beginning of the decade had resulted, with few exceptions, in "virtual democracies." These may have the surface characteristics of liberal democracy, such as regularly scheduled elections, but "their governments systematically stifle opposition behind a mask of legitimacy."⁵⁴

More recently, events in Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire, two countries with significant economic potential if political stability could be achieved, proved particularly discouraging to advocates of democratization. In Côte d'Ivoire, a Christmas 1999 military coup, followed by the exclusion of a highly qualified candidate from the Muslim north from presidential and parliamentary elections held in late 2000, left the country sharply divided along ethnic and religious lines. In Zimbabwe, the opposition made gains in June 2000 parliamentary elections, but the campaign period was marred by political violence, and several members of the opposition were killed. Government tactics in its campaign to take over farms owned by whites also led critics to charge that the rule of law was being destroyed in Zimbabwe.⁵⁵

Sub-Saharan Africa's AIDS epidemic continues to intensify.⁵⁶ According to a December 2000 United Nations update, some 25.3 million adults and children are infected with the HIV virus in the region,⁵⁷ which has about 10% of the world's population but more than 70% of the worldwide total of infected people. The disease, much like the slave trade in earlier times, takes away young adults in their most productive years. Uganda and Senegal have managed to slow the disease with effective prevention campaigns, and there are indications that such campaigns are beginning to show results elsewhere. But the overall infection rate in Africa is about 8.8% as compared with 1.1% worldwide, and in some countries in southern Africa,

⁵²*Journal of Democracy* 2 (Fall 1991), 11-24.

⁵³"Is the Third Wave Over?," *Journal of Democracy* (July 1996), 31-32.

⁵⁴"Africa, 1990-1997: From *Abertura* to Closure," *Journal of Democracy* (April 1998), 6.

⁵⁵See CRS Issue Brief IB10059, *Zimbabwe: Current Issues* by Raymond W. Copson.

⁵⁶CRS Issue Brief IB10050, *AIDS in Africa* by Raymond W. Copson.

⁵⁷Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *AIDS Epidemic Update*, December 2000. Available at [<http://www.unaids.org>].

20% or more of the adult population is HIV-positive. An estimated 17 million people have already died in the African epidemic, and mortality is rising.

The armed conflicts that continue to afflict Africa, particularly the vast Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and several of its neighbors at the heart of the continent, are another concern. The Rwanda genocide of 1994, which saw perhaps 500,000 to one million people killed, followed by the first DRC upheaval in 1996-1997 and a new DRC civil war starting in 1998, have set back development prospects and created serious refugee problems for several countries.⁵⁸ A number of countries have troops in Congo pursuing a variety of causes and interests, and creating fears of a wider war. Armed conflicts are also taking place in Angola, Sierra Leone, Sudan⁵⁹ and other countries

Meanwhile, Africa's economic performance continues to disappoint many observers. According to World Bank data, the region's GDP grew by 2.1% and 2.3% in 1998 and 1999 respectively, while population grew by 2.6% and 2.4%⁶⁰ – leaving the region economically stagnant. South Africa's economy grew by just .6% in 1998 and 1.2% in 1999, postponing the day when it might be able to spark an economic expansion in southern Africa. Academic authors, looking at sub-Saharan Africa's small share of global trade and investment, describe the region as “marginalized” in the global economy.⁶¹

"Afro-pessimists" consider the totality of these trends and conclude that for at least the next several years the continent's political and economic prospects are not very bright. A study of global trends in the year 2015, published by the U.S. National Intelligence Council in December 2000,⁶² concluded that:

The interplay of demographics and disease—as well as poor governance—will be the major determinants of Africa's increasing international marginalization in 2015. Most African states will miss out on the economic growth engendered elsewhere by globalization and by scientific and technological advances. Only a few countries will do better, while a handful of states will have hardly any relevance to the lives of their citizens. As sub-Saharan Africa's multiple and interconnected problems are compounded, ethnic and communal tensions will intensify, periodically escalating into open conflict, often spreading across borders and sometimes spawning secessionist states.

⁵⁸CRS Issue Brief IB96037, *Congo (formerly Zaire)* by Raymond W. Copson.

⁵⁹CRS Issue Brief 98043, *Sudan: Humanitarian Crisis, Peace Talks, Terrorism, and U.S. Policy* by Ted Dagne.

⁶⁰Sub-Saharan Africa Data Profile, available at [<http://devdata.worldbank.org>].

⁶¹Thomas Callaghy, “Africa and the World Political Economy: More Caught Between a Rock and a Hard Place;” and Nicolas van de Walle, “Africa and the World Economy: Continued Marginalization or Re-engagement?;” both appearing in John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild, eds. *Africa in World Politics: The African State System in Flux* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000).

⁶²Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future with Nongovernment Experts. NIC 2000-02, December 2000. Available at [<http://www.cia.gov>].

This way of thinking about Africa, however, is rejected by many other observers, including some with long experience in African affairs, who argue that Afro-pessimism results from stereotyped views of Africa and a media tendency to focus on violent, dramatic events. In a 1998 article, two experts with Capitol Hill backgrounds argued that there is a "new reality" in Africa "in which governments are becoming accountable to citizens; in which economic policies are empowering a growing private sector; in which real progress is being made in addressing difficult but tractable problems."⁶³ An International Monetary Fund Issues Brief, released in December 2000, acknowledged "two decades of economic stagnation and little progress in poverty reduction" in Africa. But the brief took an upbeat approach overall, affirming that as a result of economic policy reforms, "the seeds of an economic renaissance in sub-Saharan Africa, with faster growth and less poverty, have been sown...."⁶⁴ President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa has himself repeatedly advanced the idea that an African Renaissance is beginning,⁶⁵ and in a December 1997 speech, then U.S. Ambassador to South Africa, James Joseph, endorsed the African Renaissance concept, saying that "nothing can stop Africa now."⁶⁶

The optimists, while accepting that there have been setbacks, maintain that the dominant political themes of the 1990s were reconciliation in several formerly conflict-torn countries, most notably South Africa, and widespread gains in democratization through the electoral process. Particularly significant, they argue, were the democratic transitions that took place in South Africa, which held successful universal suffrage elections in 1994 and 1999, and in Nigeria, where an elected civilian regime took office in May 1999, ending years of military rule. Nigeria is home to more than 120 million people, or nearly one-fifth of sub-Saharan Africa's population. A recent book in the optimistic school, sponsored by the American Assembly, pointed out that in 1996 and 1997 alone, national elections were held or scheduled in 28 African countries.⁶⁷ The optimists argue that the wave of elections in Africa in recent years has established precedents that will be difficult to erase, thus making further democratization possible in years to come.

⁶³David F. Gordon and Howard Wolpe, "The Other Africa: An End to Afro-pessimism," *World Policy Journal* (Spring 1998). Wolpe is a former Member of Congress and former Chairman of the House Africa Subcommittee. He served as President Clinton's special envoy to Africa's Great Lakes region. Gordon had served as a professional staff member with the House Africa Subcommittee and was a Senior Fellow at the Overseas Development Council when this article was published.

⁶⁴*Policies for Faster Growth and Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Role of the IMF, an Issues Brief*. International Monetary Fund, December 2000.

⁶⁵Peter Vale and Siphos Maseko, "The African Renaissance," *International Affairs* (April 1998), 271-287.

⁶⁶"The Idea of African Renaissance: Myth or Reality?" *Vital Speeches* (December 15, 1997).

⁶⁷David F. Gordon, David C. Miller, Jr., and Howard Wolpe, *The United States and Africa, a Post-Cold War Perspective* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 42. The American Assembly is a non-partisan organization affiliated with Columbia University that promotes policy discussion.

Optimists also accept that there have been disappointments in the economic sphere, but note that several African countries, such as Botswana, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Uganda had projected annual GDP growth rates of above or near 5% in 2000, following comparable performances in 1999. With continuing economic policy reforms, improved governance, and support from the international community, optimists argue, many other countries could begin to lift per capita incomes, enhancing opportunities and the quality of life for their people. Debt relief in support for poverty reduction programs has a particularly important role to play, many argue.⁶⁸ Africa's natural resources, including vast, newly-discovered oil deposits off the West African coast, as well as the continent's minerals, tourism potential, and environmental resources, also encourage the optimists to anticipate a brighter future.

U.S. Policy

The Clinton Administration's policy toward Africa had a decidedly Afro-optimist tone. President Clinton made an extensive trip to Africa in March-April 1998, visiting six countries in 11 days.⁶⁹ He told the South African parliament that he was seeing "what Deputy President Mbeki has called an African Renaissance,"⁷⁰ and in a speech in Ghana, the President said that "democracy and peace and prosperity are not slogans, but the essence of a new Africa."⁷¹ The President acknowledged during his visit that Africa faced continuing economic problems and disruptive conflicts in a number of countries, but insisted that "from Ghana to Mozambique, from Cote d'Ivoire to Uganda, growing economies are fueling a transformation in Africa."⁷²

In August 2000, President Clinton again traveled to Africa, visiting Nigeria to underscore U.S. support for what National Security Advisor Sandy Berger called "the most important democratic transition in Africa since the collapse of apartheid."⁷³ President Clinton warmly praised Nigeria not only for its progress in democratization, but also for its cooperation with the United States in combating international crime and its leadership in regional peacekeeping. In addition, he emphasized the importance of combating the African HIV/AIDS epidemic, which had not been a subject during his 1998 trip.

The Clinton Administration stressed Africa's potential as a U.S. trading partner, citing possibilities for increased trade and investment and emphasizing the growing

⁶⁸*Policies for Faster Growth and Poverty Reduction*, cited above. For background on debt forgiveness, see CRS Report RL30214, *Debt Reduction: Initiatives for the Most Heavily Indebted Poor Countries*, by Larry Q. Nowels.

⁶⁹CRS Report 98-420, *Africa: President Clinton's 1998 Visit*, by Raymond W. Copson.

⁷⁰Address by the President to the Parliament of South Africa, March 26, 1998.

⁷¹Remarks by the President to the People of Ghana.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Press briefing, August 24, 2000. The President also visited Arusha, Tanzania, during this trip to show support for the Burundi peace talks that were taking place there under the leadership of former South African President Nelson Mandela.

importance of oil imports from the region. Officials repeatedly argued that Africa was already supplying 16% of U.S. oil imports and that it was projected to surpass the Persian Gulf as a U.S. supplier within the decade.⁷⁴ The Administration gave strong endorsement to a congressional trade and investment initiative, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, noted above, which first passed the House in 1998 and became law (P.L. 106-200) in May 2000. Administration spokesmen argued that the United States has a number of other interests in Africa as well, such as preventing weapons proliferation, preserving environmental resources of global importance, and combating the drug trade and international terrorism.

To further its objectives in Africa, the Administration launched a number of Africa assistance initiatives, such as the Leland Initiative, aimed at enhancing Africa's access to the Internet, and the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) intended to reduce perennial food insecurity over much of eastern Africa. In July 1999, the Administration launched a major new effort against the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa and worldwide, known as the LIFE (Leadership and Investment in Fighting an Epidemic) Initiative. These and other Administration initiatives involved a range of U.S. agencies apart from the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development, including the Departments of Transportation, Labor, and Commerce, as well as the Centers for Disease Control of the National Institutes of Health – all of which, as a result, boosted their Africa-related capabilities.

Administration policy encountered some difficulties, however, and a defining moment came early, when in October 1993, 18 U.S. soldiers were killed while participating in a United Nations humanitarian relief operation in Somalia.⁷⁵ In reaction to this incident, the United States and the United Nations hesitated in sending peacekeepers when the Rwanda genocide broke out in 1994, and President Clinton later acknowledged to Rwandans that "we did not act quickly enough after the killing began."⁷⁶

In the wake of the Somalia and Rwanda experiences, the Administration sought to strengthen Africa's own peacekeeping capabilities through the Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), which trains units of African armed forces for peacekeeping duties. Moreover, the Administration launched a "train and equip"

⁷⁴See for example, Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, "U.S. and Africa in the 21st Century," speech to the Seattle World Affairs Council, November 9, 1999. Also, Rosa Whitaker, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Africa, "The New Millennium and Africa: American Interests in Expanding Trade with Africa," speech to the Africa Roundtable Series, Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., January 24, 2000. This figure is evidently based on 1998 data, when Africa oil imports exceeded 15.5% of total imports. The African figure included imports from Algeria, which were about 2.7% of total U.S. petroleum imports. In 1999, petroleum imports from Africa dropped to about 13.3% of total imports, which amounted to about 7.4% of total U.S. petroleum consumption. Based on data appearing in U.S. Department of Energy, *Monthly Energy Review*, November 2000.

⁷⁵For a recent critique of Clinton Administration Africa policy, see Chris Alden, "From Neglect to 'Virtual Engagement:' the United States and its New Paradigm for Africa." *African Affairs* (July 2000), 355-371.

⁷⁶Remarks in Rwanda, March 25, 1998.

program to help at least five Nigerian battalions prepare for peacekeeping duties in Sierra Leone.⁷⁷ U.S. officials often assumed roles as mediators in African conflicts and claimed the peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, signed in Algiers on December 12, 2000, as a particular success. Secretary of State Albright attended the signing ceremony. Nonetheless, Africa's many other conflicts were a source of frustration to Administration policymakers, since they undermined efforts to promote economic growth and political reform.

Trade results during the Clinton years were mixed. U.S. imports from Africa grew by an annual rate of 2.7% from 1995 to 1999, but this pace was considerably slower than the overall 8.4% annual increase in U.S. imports over the same period.⁷⁸ Similarly, exports to Africa grew at an average annual rate of .9%, as compared to a 4.4% annual growth rate for all U.S. exports.⁷⁹ Most trade took place with only a few countries, notably oil producers and South Africa, and more than half of imports were accounted for by petroleum. African imports and exports accounted for about 1% of the U.S. totals in 1999, while according to 1998 data, U.S. investment in the sub-Saharan region, also heavily focused on the petroleum sector, was about 1.2% of total U.S. foreign direct investment.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, Administration officials pointed out that U.S. firms had made major investments in Africa, including Southwestern Bell's acquisition of a share in the South African telecommunications industry and the establishment of Caterpillar Inc. dealerships in 15 countries.⁸¹

Policy in Previous Administrations

Sub-Saharan Africa became a distinct item on the foreign policy agenda in 1958, when President Eisenhower authorized the creation of a Bureau of African Affairs in the Department of State.⁸² Over the years, Africa policy has often been the subject of controversy, with debate typically centering on whether a particular Administration was doing too much or too little with respect to an issue, such as apartheid in South Africa, African development, or the Soviet/Cuban role. These controversies cannot be reviewed in any detail here, but the principal issues faced by successive Administrations can be briefly noted.

The Eisenhower Administration confronted its first African crisis in 1960, with the Congo rebellion, which it feared would be exploited by the Soviet Union. The Administration supported the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force, which the Soviets initially agreed to, but then turned against. The Kennedy Administration

⁷⁷CRS Report RS20659, *U.S. Military Training of West African Forces for Peacekeeping*, by Nicolas Cook.

⁷⁸CRS Report RS20063, *U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Investment: Programs and Policy Direction*, by Lenore Sek.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Susan Rice address to the Seattle World Affairs Council, cited above.

⁸²Peter Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1.

(1961-1963) was more favorably disposed toward African nationalists than the Eisenhower Administration, although Cold War pressures limited Kennedy's policy options. President Kennedy did approve funding for a large and controversial dam Nkrumah sought for Ghana, and toward the end of his Administration Kennedy began to press the white regimes of southern Africa for reforms.⁸³ In 1963, The United States backed a U.N.-sponsored voluntary arms embargo against South Africa, over the objections of Britain and France.

Africa policy during the Johnson Administration (1963-1969) focused on Congo (Zaire), where the United States gave extensive covert aid to suppress rebellions thought to be communist-inspired or of potential benefit to the Soviet Union.⁸⁴ It was during this period that Mobutu Sese-Seko, with U.S. backing, solidified his position as Zaire's president -- a position he would hold until 1997. While Washington gave limited military assistance to Congo (Zaire), in addition to covert aid, congressional concerns over the emergence of "another Vietnam" prevented deeper involvement.

In the Nixon and Ford Administrations (1969-1977), the Africa policy focus shifted to southern Africa and the violent upheavals affecting Angola, Mozambique, and Rhodesia. Political controversy over Africa policy sharpened considerably in these years, as critics came to believe that policymakers were too sympathetic to the white minority regimes. However, Henry Kissinger, the most influential policymaker of the period, believed that the Soviet Union was following a policy of "ruthless opportunism" and "adventurism" in Africa and elsewhere, and this view goes far toward explaining Africa policy during the period.⁸⁵ When Congress banned further involvement in Angola in 1975, Kissinger claimed that it was unwilling to confront Soviet expansionism.⁸⁶

President Jimmy Carter's Administration (1977-1981) brought a new emphasis on human rights to U.S. foreign policy, resulting in a strong push for majority rule in Zimbabwe, advocacy of independence for Namibia, and heavy criticism of apartheid in South Africa. Mobutu was also pressed for economic and political reforms, but Zaire policy, like Africa policy generally, continued to be constrained by Cold War considerations. The Administration did not react to the Liberia coup in 1980, perhaps because reports of human rights violations and corruption had discredited the Americo-Liberian regime.

The Carter Administration was faced with apparent Soviet and Cuban gains in the sub-Saharan Africa, and came under domestic political pressure to respond. An oppressive, pro-Soviet regime had emerged in Ethiopia, and in response, the Carter Administration forged ties with Somalia, Ethiopia's neighbor. Somalia then complicated the situation by invading a province it claimed in Ethiopia, precipitating the 1977-1978 "Ogaden War." Cuba sent troops to assist Ethiopia, and many feared

⁸³Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 223-243.

⁸⁴Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 74-80.

⁸⁵Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), 119, 1257.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 1257.

that the United States might become militarily involved if Cuban and Ethiopian troops crossed into Somalia. Cuba and Ethiopia did launch a successful counteroffensive against the Somalis, but their advance halted at the Somalia border, averting a crisis. Cold War concerns also played a role in the Carter Administration's opposition to mandatory sanctions against South Africa.⁸⁷

Cuban troops were also in Angola, where they were assisting the Marxist regime in fighting the UNITA resistance movement. This Cuban deployment became a major concern for Africa policymakers in the Reagan Administration (1981-1989). There was strong support in the Reagan Administration for resuming covert aid to UNITA, and a publicly-acknowledged covert aid program was launched in 1986 after Congress had repealed prohibiting legislation in 1985. Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa in those years, favored a policy of "linkage," intended to secure Cuban withdrawal from Angola in exchange for independence for South African-held Namibia. Crocker has written that he faced heavy political opposition from all sides on this issue, but a 1988 regional peace agreement, negotiated under U.S. leadership, finally achieved the goals he sought.⁸⁸ With respect to South Africa, Administration critics believed that the United States was not pushing hard enough for political change, and in 1986, Congress enacted sweeping sanctions legislation, over President Reagan's veto.

Africa policymakers in the George H.W. Bush Administration (1989-1993) directed much of their attention to the Horn of Africa. Rebel forces in Ethiopia were poised to overthrow the regime in 1991, and Bush Administration diplomats, working with both the government and the rebels, managed to arrange a peaceful transition, avoiding an ethnic and political upheaval of the sort that devastated Liberia after the 1980 coup.⁸⁹ Somalia, however, had fallen into an era of clan violence, which, combined with drought and famine, had created a humanitarian disaster by 1992. Consequently, just before leaving office, Bush sent U.S. troops to launch a massive, multi-national humanitarian intervention. The move was credited with saving thousands from starvation,⁹⁰ despite the loss of American life that occurred in 1993. With Cold War tensions easing, the Bush Administration also pushed Mobutu for reforms. This was part of a broader policy of promoting democracy and economic liberalization in Africa generally.

⁸⁷Cyrus Vance, Carter's Secretary of State, wrote that mandatory sanctions would have harmed "important Western economic interests." *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 275.

⁸⁸Chester A. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

⁸⁹Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 172

⁹⁰Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1996), 84-85.

Principal Congressional Actions

As noted at the beginning of this report, Congress has dealt with a wide range of issues related to Africa. This section lists principal actions in recent decades.

- ! **2000.** The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA, P.L. 106-200), aimed at boosting U.S. trade with Africa as well as U.S. investment, became law.
- ! --- Under the Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-264) Congress authorized \$300 million in FY2001 and also in FY2002 for a comprehensive HIV/AIDS effort worldwide. The FY2001 Foreign Operations Appropriations (P.L. 106-429) provided \$300 million in Development Assistance for HIV/AIDS and slightly more than half of the amount was expected to go toward African programs.
- ! **1998.** Congress enacted the Africa: Seeds of Hope Act (P.L. 105-385) to promote African food security through U.S. assistance programs and other measures.
- ! **1994.** The African Conflict Resolution Act (P.L. 103-381), authorizing U.S. assistance to promote the peaceful resolution of African conflicts, was enacted.
- ! **1993.** The South African Democratic Transition Support Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-149) committed the United States to supporting the consolidation of democracy in South Africa.
- ! **1990.** Congress created the Development Fund for Africa (DFA), which became Chapter 10 of Part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. The DFA, which was first mentioned in FY1988 report language, was intended to protect Africa aid levels in the wake of the Cold War.
- ! **1992.** The Horn of Africa Recovery and Food Security Act (P.L. 103-274) was passed. The Act set policy objectives for U.S. assistance in the Horn and included provisions to promote democracy.
- ! **1986.** Congress enacted the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (P.L. 99-440) over President Reagan's veto. The Act set policy objectives for the United States in South Africa, imposed a number of sanctions, and provided for "positive measures" to improve the lives of black South Africans.
- ! **1985.** Congress passed a large emergency supplemental appropriation for African famine relief (P.L. 99-10). The move followed extensive media coverage of famine in Ethiopia and Sudan, and some criticism of the adequacy of the executive branch response.
- ! --- The International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985 repealed the Clark Amendment (see below, 1976).

- ! **1980.** Congress created the African Development Foundation to promote grassroots development through small grants to African self-help organizations (P.L. 96-533).
- ! **1977.** Congress, in effect, repealed the Byrd Amendment (see below, 1971) by ending its application to Rhodesia.
- ! **1976.** The "Clark Amendment," Sec. 404 of the International Security Assistance Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-239, later Sec. 118 of P.L. 96-533), prohibited aid that would help any group in Angola conduct military or paramilitary operations. The prohibition could be waived by a joint resolution. The amendment was sponsored by Senator Dick Clark of Iowa. (The Clark Amendment followed an earlier, temporary ban known as the "Tunney Amendment.")
- ! **1971.** The "Byrd Amendment," named for its sponsor, Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr. of Virginia, was passed. This amendment to the Armed Forces Appropriation (P.L. 92-156) partially exempted the United States from participating in U.N. sanctions against white-ruled Rhodesia by prohibiting the President from enforcing the U.N. trade embargo with respect to imports of critical and strategic materials, such as chromium and nickel.

Suggested Additional Readings

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Gordon, David F., David C. Miller, Jr., and Howard Wolpe. *The United States and Africa: A Post-Cold War Perspective*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

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Pakenham, Thomas. *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912*. New York: Random House, 1991.

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Schraeder, Peter J. *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Selected CRS Products

Africa: U.S. Foreign Assistance Issues. CRS Issue Brief IB95052, by Raymond W. Copson. Continuously updated.

AIDS in Africa. CRS Issue Brief IB10050, by Raymond W. Copson.

Congo (Formerly Zaire). CRS Issue Brief IB96037, by Raymond W. Copson. Continuously updated.

Liberia: Issues for the United States. CRS Issue Brief IB96025, by Nicolas Cook. Continuously updated.

Nigeria in Political Transition. CRS Issue Brief IB98046, by Theodros Dagne with the assistance of Amanda Smith. Continuously updated.

Sudan: Humanitarian Crisis, Peace Talks, Terrorism, and U.S. Policy. CRS Issue Brief IB98043, by Theodros Dagne. Continuously updated.