

## **US Policies toward Africa: Strategic Interests and Divisive Strategies**

**Ikponwosa Ero  
University of Alberta**

---

*This paper analyses US-Africa relations from the end of the Cold War up to the current war on terror. It focuses on Washington's national and international foreign policies on development aid for sub-Saharan Africa. While it reviews some common criticisms levied against the United States' development policies, especially those centred on strategic state-interests, it also takes a parallel step into the field of development with the aim of examining the advice that the field has to offer for US-Africa policies. This appraisal finds that the field of development is characterized by internal divisiveness on a pragmatic agenda for US foreign policy. It goes on to explain how this internal debate contributes to and abets the US' ability to get away with strategic and self-interested behaviour in an area that calls, instead, for sensitised humanitarianism.*

---

## Introduction

“To influence US foreign policy [on international assistance] requires an understanding of the intricate labyrinthine world of policymaking in Washington. [There exists] a plethora of ethnic lobbyists and special interest groups seek[ing] to manipulate the policymaking process in their favour: the Jewish American lobby for Israel; the Cuban American lobby for increased immigration from their ancestral home among others” (Adekeye 2004: 5). A relatively out-leveraged “ethnic lobby” is that for African interests in US foreign policy. The overbearing influences of other ethnic lobbies such as the aforementioned vis-à-vis that for Africa can be traced to the unsettled issue of race and racism in America (Marcus 1998). Americans of African descent, unlike Jewish Americans or Cuban or Irish Americans, still believe that in the US socio-economic disadvantages affect disproportionately black citizens. As a result, Black Americans have thus been forced to “invest their lobbying power in furthering their domestic fight for equality” over a similar fight on the international scale, specifically that for blacks on the African continent (Marcus 1998).

Despite the domestic issues of race and its apparent impact on lobbying efforts, Africa is not voiceless in Washington. There is a bureau of Africa Affairs within the United States’ Department of State; a fifty-year old African Studies Association – a vocal conglomerate of people with a scholarly and professional interest in Africa<sup>1</sup>; the Africa Action group which lobbies the government on issues that fit into the broad goal of political, economic and social justice in Africa;<sup>2</sup> the Trans Africa Forum which advocates human rights and social justice on the continent<sup>3</sup> and a few other groups with varying influence and lobbying leverages in Washington.

Despite the presence of these Africa centred institutions, the United States’ interest in Africa has been weak at best reflecting a history of indifference towards the continent (Rothchild 2006: 251).<sup>4</sup> This weak relationship was fostered by the end of the Cold War

---

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.africanstudies.org/>

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.africaaction.org/about/index.php>

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.transafricaforum.org/mission.html>

<sup>4</sup> Peter J. Schraeder in *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa* offers another explanation for the relatively weak influence of Africa lobby groups on US-Africa foreign policy. This is linked to the mission specific nature of these organizations. Schraeder argues that the majority of these lobby groups arose out

in 1990 which elevated the US to a *de facto* global superpower with less need for strategic allies in developing countries. Moreover, the withdrawal from Somalia in 1993 also fostered a heightened hands-off policy on African affairs (Adekeye 2004: 10). The US' multilateral and international relations towards the continent through intergovernmental institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been marred with unsuccessful attempts to jump start the continent's faltering economies through neo-liberal shock therapies such as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and increased lending. The lack of progress in development from this latter initiative, which was also supported by various African lobby groups, sent African development strategists back to the drawing board to revise and search for improved strategies in order to move the Africa forward in all areas of development. With the US' current war on terror which includes the re-establishment of stronger relations with sub-Saharan Africa, more attention needs to be paid to the development proposals that are now emerging in the field.

Since the beginning of the current war on terror in 2001, US aid to Africa – both real and pending – has soared at record-breaking levels. Yet critics of US policy towards Africa argue that the US' increase in aid does not serve its intended beneficiaries but the strategic interest of the United States (Barry 2005). Indeed that US aid to sub-Saharan Africa is self-serving is not hidden in Washington and thus is often not contested in Washington or among Africa advocates. US political analyst, Donald Rothchild contends that the US is ultimately a realist state that holds a prime obligation to protect its interests (Rothchild and Keller 2006: 248). Yet, because the African foreign policy agenda put forward by development strategists – mainly to tackle poverty and improve quality of life and welfare – is divided on the strategy of execution, there is a need to see how this divisiveness plays into the hands of US interests. It is the divisive nature of the amorphous Africa lobbyists and African academics (whom I subsequently refer to as development strategists) in the United States that has contributed to hampering the realization of a single Africa-lobby group, and has also left the US with no option other

---

of and are known for specific missions. The Trans Africa Forum for example is known more for its fight against Apartheid in South Africa than its growing mission to work towards social justice. Schraeder explains that the mission dependent nature of these groups handicaps their capacity to be and to be seen

than to follow what appears more straightforward, less divisive and of use to US interests and that is strategic aid. Based on this argument, this paper charts the United States' post Cold War relations with Africa. In doing this, it will also examine the divisive nature of African development strategists with the intention of drawing a link between the often identified problems of US aid to Africa: strategic interest and the un-reconciled methodologies in the field of African development which ultimately leaves the US to their discretion, when building foreign policies toward Africa.

The analysis will proceed first by using the recent work of two American development strategists to outline two major contending methodologies of the development field in the US. These are Jeffrey Sachs' landmark work, *The end of poverty: economic possibilities for our time* (2005) and William Easterly's ground-breaking work, *The white man's burden: why the west effort to aid the rest has done so much ill and so little good* (2006). Thereafter the paper looks at some of the milestones in US-Africa relations mostly through national foreign policies and to a lesser extent, international policies, in an attempt to explain, first, why these are criticized as strategic and selfish by African development strategists and second, how disjointed plans of development amongst the developmentalists contributes to the identified flaws in US-Africa relations. A concluding section analyses some matters arising and ends with the re-iteration of the US' rationale for seeking first its own strategic interest while development strategists ask for the prioritisation of the interests of the African.

Before proceeding however, it is important to point out that this analysis is in no way an apologetic attempt to vindicate the United States, the most powerful and influential country in the world, from the growing national and international consensus on the responsibility to assist sub-Saharan Africa (Bush 2002). Rather it is an attempt to understand the flaws of development strategists, who perhaps because of their appearance as "do-gooders" or perhaps because of the almost overwhelming importance of their task often do not get a critical appraisal or engage in a regular self-reflexive exercise (Christensen 2004). However, this analysis remains significant in so

---

as influential advisers in Washington on a range of simultaneous and connected issues affecting the continent (1994: 21).

far as it exposes the loopholes in the African development field, development processes and possible ways forward.

### **War of development strategies: Sachs vs. Easterly**

It is important to point out that until the collapse and abysmal outcomes of the World Bank and IMF's SAPs for development in Africa, development strategists sang the same tune –mostly a neo-liberal economic mantra anchored on a strong East Asia vindicated faith in industrial modernization, free markets, and the use of aid only as a secondary supplement.

However, since the failure of SAP policies, development strategists were forced back to the drawing board, thus marking a new era in the field now known as post-development. However the retreat of development strategists into what marked the first major self-reflexive exercise resulted in an unexpected outcome: division. On the one hand emerged strategists such as Jeffrey Sachs, a former advocate of SAPs, proposing a master plan centred on the need for increased aid from wealthy states like the US. On the other hand, strategists such as William Easterly emerged partly in response to Sachs and his advocates. Easterly and his colleagues formulated a stop-aid-g geared-for-development approach except in isolated cases or disaster. As indicated by the title of his work, Easterly sees development strategies based on foreign aid as an extension of the *White man's burden* and the centuries old racist philosophy that “we from the west are the chosen ones to save the rest” (Easterly 2006: 23). That development, a highly contested belief in a linear continuum towards progress often measured by similarity to the west, is intertwined with expectations linked to race or racism is an issue that has been comprehensively addressed by Sarah White (2002) and Uma Kothari (2006).<sup>5</sup>

The crux of Easterly's perspective is to encourage the search and support for organic African strategies for development. Although Easterly's solution leaves an unclear position for policy makers, he purports that official development aid to sub-Saharan

---

<sup>5</sup> See Sarah White. 2002. “Thinking Race, Thinking Development,” *Third World Quarterly*, (23) 3: 407-19; and Uma Kothari. (2002). “An Agenda for Thinking About ‘Race’ in Development,” *Progress in Development Studies*, (6) 1: 9-23.

Africa as advocated by Sachs has never and will probably never work. Thus, the crucial point of difference between the Sachs camp and that of Easterly is *how* they chart the path to fundamental progress for African development. While Sachs looks at foreign aid (the exogenous approach), Easterly looks at local self-help (the endogenous) approach.

### **Sachs and the Exogenous Strategists**

With his aid-centred rationale for ending poverty, Jeffrey Sachs articulated the budding views of those post-development strategists who began to make the shift towards the use of unconditional aid as opposed to conditional or strategic loans to end the plight of the underdeveloped in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Sachs' camp, the United States and other wealthy nations have a moral obligation to assist the underdeveloped who are caught in what he calls a "poverty trap" whereby they cannot develop themselves because they are poor and they are poor because they are underdeveloped (Sachs 2004b: 121-22). Other proponents of the exogenous approach include Michael Barratt Brown, whose assessment of *Africa's choices after thirty years of the world bank* (1995) argues that the failure of developmental strategies such as SAPs is not enough to dismiss all programs centred on exogenous systems of aid to sub-Saharan Africa.

In response to criticisms that the exogenous approach bears under-tones of interventionism reminiscent of colonialism, Sachs responds that at the heart of the exogenous approach is the strive for basic human rights that are now held to be a universal requirement. After all, he contends, no one would dispute the fact that schools, roads, electricity, ports, soil nutrients, clean drinking water are necessary for a life of dignity, health and economic productivity (Sachs 2005: 227).

Due to the exogenous nature of Sachs' development strategy, US-led international organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF and the United Nations (UN) have started to adopt programme and strategies which partially reflect Sachs' thinking. The World Bank, for example has taken the stance that sub-Saharan Africa can in the twenty-first century become more developed not only by improving its governance and national economic policies but also by strengthening its partnerships with international institutions (The World Bank, 2000). The United Nations, in an attempt to practice the

exogenous approach to development, launched in the year 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, like other projects inspired by Sachs, hinges on external aid for human development. The MDGs aims to, among others things, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and combat HIV/AIDS and malaria by the year 2015 (United Nations 2000). The goals of the MDGs are to be realized with the joint effort of national governments in sub-Saharan Africa and international assistance mostly in the form of aid which according to former Secretary General, Kofi Annan, “must more than double” if these goals are to be achieved (United Nations 2000).

Another key proponent of exogenous aid is Robert Calderisi (2006) who described past aid to Africa as based on loose conditions that were further weakened by a lack of appreciation of pre-existing problems in the recipient countries, problems that if taken into account would have revealed that aid was likely to fail. Past aid and ignorance of intra-state problems in sub-Saharan Africa was, according to him, similar to “giving money to a drunkard and expecting him to go and spend it on food” (Calderisi 2006: 220).

Calderisi’s agenda is similar to that of Sachs but perhaps more specific and stringent. It hinges on the use of aid as a double edged sword to, on the one hand, correct the pre-existing and persistent problems of the recipient state, for example, endemic corruption, while targeting on the other hand, specific problem such as the fight against malaria. Calderisi goes on to list some conditions that will render aid a more efficient tool in the exogenous approach to development. They include among other things, requiring all heads of state, ministers and senior officials of recipient states to open their account to public scrutiny; the introduction of a global mechanism for recovering looted public funds; and, the intensity of international supervision of internationally sponsored initiatives such as HIV/AIDS programmes.

Exogenists would also support the pending Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which is aimed at lowering and in many cases removing trade barriers that hinder free trade with developing countries (Elliot 2006: 116; Lake et

al. 2006: 112-114). Although the Round is not yet concluded it is important to note that because it largely depends on efforts external to Africa – it is an exogenous approach to development. On the other hand, the reasons why a ratified Doha Round might not work is among the issues taken up by Easterly and the endogenists as discussed in the next section.

Aid is thus central to Sachs and his supporters. It can move mountains of poverty and cure just about any disease. African development will be accelerated if wealthy nations fulfil their pledges like those made at the 2002 Monterrey Conference in which wealthy developed countries pledged to increase aid to 0.7 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Indeed, the US was also in Monterrey (Fowler 2003: 2-4) where it pledge to take practical steps towards the 0.7 per cent of GDP target and promised additional aid through a Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) which, as latter discussed, is criticized for serving US and not those of the beneficiaries.

### **Easterly and the Endogenous Strategists**

Endogenous development strategists argue that aid, no matter how benevolent, cannot bear the interest of its beneficiaries. The interest of beneficiaries, they argue, can only be kindled and nurtured in the long-term by the beneficiaries themselves. This is the argument made by William Easterly and others who criticise Sachs and his aid-centred exogenous development scheme.

Easterly and his advocates believe less in aid and more in the ability of the poor to find what works for them. He calls Sachs and his proponents the “planners” or strategists that believe “outsiders know enough to impose solutions...they announce good intentions but don’t motivate anyone to carry them out...raise expectation but take no responsibility for it, plan what to supply to the poor while lacking the knowledge of what the poor truly need” (Easterly 2006: 6-7). Meanwhile, Easterly labels himself and proponents of his approach as the “searchers”. Unlike planners, searchers “find things that work and get some reward” they “accept responsibility for their actions, find out the reality at the bottom and what is in demand in an attempt to find out what to

supply...Moreover, they also find out and ensure that the beneficiary is satisfied” (Easterly 2006: 7).

In Easterly’s camp, planners are criticized for covertly reproducing the racism embedded in the white man’s burden. The fallacy of this self-imposed burden is in its under-estimation of the capability of the poor African. Planners whom Easterly accuses of re-producing the white man’s burden see the Africans as not having meaningful histories or institutions to draw upon for their own advancement. Moreover, the planners’ programmes and policies lack mechanisms through which beneficiary satisfaction can be evaluated – bearing in mind that beneficiary satisfaction can only be at a maximum when development is engineered endogenously. Elliot (2006) makes a similar argument, commenting that even if the Doha Round is ratified in favour of developing countries, it will not have any real effect unless endogenous changes within those countries are made; for example, the development of infrastructure, the curbing of corruption and so on. Hernando de Soto (2000) and David Moore (2001) among others, also argue for the necessity of endogenous transformations as a foundation for development.

Meanwhile, aid, according to this camp is not the “big push” needed for development. Why is this so? Between 1950 and 2001<sup>6</sup>, countries listed by Sachs as part of the poverty trap are not consistent from decade to decade. This shift in identity of members of Sachs’ poverty trap, Easterly argues, is indication that the trap is not much of a trap. Moreover, in the same time period, countries that received above average foreign aid, and those that received foreign aid below average, produced nearly identical growth rates while poor countries without aid had no trouble producing positive growth trends (Easterly 2006: 39-40). Drawing support from the development success of East Asian economies like South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore who helped themselves with little or no foreign aid, Easterly makes the case that development ought to run like a laissez-

---

<sup>6</sup> Easterly uses this (extended) span of time to disprove the Sachs’ Poverty Trap which is based on a shorter length of time which runs from 1981 to 2001 (Easterly 2006: 38-41)

faire market where necessity will breed innovative ways for survival and aid would serve only as a supplemental buffer of last resort.<sup>7</sup>

The respective camps of Easterly and Sachs are thus involved in a dance of sorts, whereby one contends that the poor in sub-Saharan Africa are capable and should rely on their own local abilities, while the other contends that the poor of the region are incapacitated and need to rely on aid for their development. While engrossed in the rhythms of their debate, foreign policy analysts of the United States act in the interest of their electorate and in defence of their status as the most powerful nation of the world. Moreover, because the development strategy debates continue without any kind of unification on pragmatic strategies, US relations to Africa continue to be set in accordance with US interests. As expected, this approach has been heavily criticized by the majority of development strategists as being not only selfish but also detrimental to the welfare of the poor.

### **U.S. aid as self-interested and strategic**

One year after the 9/11 attacks, Washington produced a *National Security Strategy Paper* (NSS) that ultimately mapped out the US' new international foreign policy strategy. Aside from an expected and arguably unprecedented plan to fight the amorphous threat of global terror, the document asserted that "poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders" (NSS 2002). This statement prompted two responses in regards to Africa and development. First, it roped the US into active responsibility in the area of poverty alleviation and ultimately into the field of development. Moreover, it placed on the US shoulders, a self-created responsibility to support neo-liberal and democratic institutions around the world (Haley et al. 2005). It therefore emerged as less of a surprise that Washington, in the same strategy paper, tasked itself with "expand[ing] the circle of development by opening societies and building infrastructures of democracy' on the international front" (NSS 2002: 2). Second, the statement which

---

<sup>7</sup> Although Easterly points out that the colonial experiences of Asian economies differ (in that it was generally less intense) from that of sub-Saharan Africa, he uses this point for his main argument that development is inversely related to foreign interventionism (Easterly 2006: 348).

links weak states with terrorism ultimately brought the issue of development in LDCs under the US security mandate. Poverty outside the US was thus not a foreign problem but a direct threat to American security.

This securitisation of development is a key criticism levied against US development aid. Critics contend that the securitisation of development indicates that the United States will engage in development assistance only within the context of its own gain and to preserve its own security. Consequently, what could have been argued as George Bush's revival of African relations for pure development concerns could, instead, be read as a response to new security threats to America, namely terrorism. What this means, developmentalists argue is a disregard for long-term development initiatives and a reactive policy re-orientation towards crises as they emerge at home (Lake et al. 2006: 7, 118; Dudley 2000: 132).

Barry (2005) argues that this response to development needs as they arise and only if relayed in the context of American interests is the only way that officials in Washington are able to "sell" their initiatives to congress. One such initiative is the new *Millennium Challenge Account* (MCA). Developed in 2002 by the Bush administration, the MCA is part of Washington's development plans to strengthen developing states in the war against terror. The MCA is built to deliver greater development assistance to "nations that govern justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom" (NSS 2002). Starting in 2002, the United States was to increase its core development aid through the MCA by 50 per cent over the next three years; these increments translated into about \$5 billion by the year 2006 (The White House 2002).

In tandem with the MCA was another initiative to combat HIV/AIDS. This was later consolidated in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) which was to be allocated a \$ 15 billion budget for the period between 2003 and 2008. The plan also saw the beginning of the distribution of generic anti-retroviral drugs even in the face of harsh criticism from intellectual property pundits with patents on such medications (PEPFAR 2007).

Although the MCA and the HIV/AIDS have benefited some people in some places, critics from the Africa Action lobbying group (2003), Radelet (2003), Adekeye (2004) as well as others argue that these programs are designed not to assist states that truly need development assistance. They contend that although these programs have a considerable component of charity, access to funds are debarred by difficult eligibility criteria which reveal that US aid is more self-interested than charitable.<sup>8</sup> The Africa Action group goes a step further by calling these eligibility criteria ‘imperialistic’ not only because they trivialise the needs of others through standards for development assistance but also because they allows the US to meddle in the execution of programs like PEPFAR and use it as a proselyting tool of Christian conservative ethics such as abstinence from sexual activity and intra-marital fidelity (The ABC program in Lake et al. 2006: 18).

There also seems a general fear among African development strategists that the intended and actual beneficiaries of MCA and PEPFAR programmes, which are often said to be democratically inclined countries of the developing world have, because of the global war on terror, become strategic “assets” to the US (Foster 2007). The Trans Africa forum suggests that the MCA and PEPFAR can be regarded as little more than a “hoax” given that monies promised have only emerged in fractured forms (Africa Action 2003a). For example in 2004, of the \$ 3 billion originally promised for PEPFAR initiatives for the year, only 450 million was approved by congress (Africa Action 2003b). Moreover, since 2004 in what has been argued to be an attempt to extend strategic aid to other strategic states, the PEPFAR originally created for Africa and the Caribbean has now been extended to the world at large (Africa Action 2003b). As a consequence of this criticism other development strategists contend that the continuance of this strategic trend in the near future will reveal that the apparent benevolence of the MCA and PEPFAR were no more than PR campaigns for the ongoing war on terror (Booker et al. 2003). Before explaining what role development practitioners play in easing the

---

<sup>8</sup> Radelet (2003) presents a more exhaustive criticism of the criteria for qualification for MCA and PEPFAR. He explains that these criteria marginalize very poor countries and approve too few – far below the capacity of the US. The focus of these criteria tends to be on countries with socio-political and economic policies heralded by the US including a democratic style government, an open market and a significantly solid platform for economic growth. The difficulty in these expectations they cannot be fulfilled in poor countries where aid is needed the most.

US into a strategic and in Jeffrey Sachs' word "selfish" role on aid, it is also important, for the sake of analytical balance, to mention important post-cold war and pre-9/11 Africa-US development milestones that have also earned the US the criticism of being strategic.

First, a look at the qualitative character of the major pre-9/11 institution in charge of African development, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), suggests that US strategic interest has been historically linked to Washington's foreign policy interest as opposed to a moral obligation to give. The Director of USAID for example, is hand picked by the President of the US. Moreover, the Act that governs the agency's processes, the *Foreign Assistance Act* (1961), is about fifty years old and contains clauses tied to development philosophies that have not evolved with time. Instead of radically reforming the Act, which would consequently lead USAID into a much-needed radical reform, the government has instead created new development initiatives that are arguably agencies onto themselves, as they also tend to have their unique administrative apparatuses with unclear linkages to USAID. Examples include the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) created for the Millennium Challenge Account and the Office of the US Global AIDS coordinator created for PEPFAR. Consequently, USAID, a humanitarian aid organisation that has been left largely unreformed, has become an open slate for various governments in Washington to express partisan outlooks on what development assistance should be. The post-9/11 climate permitted the Bush administration to write on the USAID slate that "foreign assistance [through this agency] will be used as effectively as possible to meet broad foreign policy initiatives" which, in context, refers to initiatives for the ongoing war on terror (USAID 2006). The USAID has also been used by the current administration to impose highly controversial genetically modified food on starving African states amidst other criticisms that the distribution of food aid itself, which has tripled since 2001, be overhauled in favour of distribution of financial aid (Esipisu 2002; Lake 2006: 118).

Furthermore, the Clinton administration's African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of 2000 also deserves to be mentioned. The AGOA, which is still in effect, was designed to facilitate duty-free and generally low barrier trade in textile and apparel between

Africa and the United States. However, like the MCA and PEPFAR, the AGOA requires African states to meet certain qualifying standards. These criteria include the establishment of a market-based economy, efforts to combat corruption, policies to increase health care and universal education, efforts to reduce poverty among others (AGOA 2004). According to the US Department of Trade and Commerce, since AGOA came into effect in 2000, exports of goods, mostly textiles, from sub-Saharan Africa to the US has increased by 40 per cent as more states are becoming eligible (USDTC 2006: 1). Between 2000 and 2002, African apparel exports to the United States exceeded \$100 million while 200,000 new jobs were created in Africa within the same period as a result of increasing exports (Adekeye 2000: 12). With the help of AGOA, the US has risen to be the third largest importer of goods from Africa, after Germany and France (USDTC 2006: 5).

Critics of AGOA point to the eligibility criterion that requests the prospective beneficiary to lower barriers to US trade and investment which implicitly calls for an open door policy to US businesses in ways that increase US market shares in Africa (Adekeye 2004: 12). Critics further contend that although AGOA is often pitched as a win-win situation governed by neo-liberal market forces, actors in free markets are not equal on any terms because the winners and losers are more often than not, pre-determined by historical and socio-political forces (Chowdhury 2006: 128). They also argue that the idea of an objective market where actors should live and leave better off than if they were outside of the market altogether is a “global imaginary” – a dream that might never come true for structurally and historically disadvantaged states (Philips, 2006: 44).

Finally, critics of AGOA also point out that the time is ripe for its trading scope to expand beyond apparel and textiles into other areas that might benefit Africa such as agricultural produce (Adekeye 2004: 16). However, this criticism has been silenced albeit temporarily in hope that the WTO’s Doha Round initiated for the purpose of lifting global trade barriers will be materialized. At the same time however, African development strategists lament the fact that the Act represents a meagre 1 per cent of US global trade while growth in areas that serve US oil interests are remarkable (Adekeye 2004: 9; Africa Action 2003b). For example, trade with Nigeria, Gabon, and

Angola – all oil producing states – has intensified in recent years with Nigerian crude accounting for 10 per cent of US intake and that of Angola currently at 4 per cent but set to increase by 100 per cent in the next three years (Foster 2007). AGOA is thus deemed strategic although arguably less so than the MCA, because AGOA was established under different circumstances which could be understood as a genuine attempt to help the poor as opposed to a securitised will to help the United States in its new war.

According to development scholars, the strategic nature of US-Africa relations especially that under George W. Bush is illustrated by the short span of two years that separates the Bush who had mentioned during his campaign trail in 2000, that he had no interest in Africa (and on one occasion, referred to the continent as a country) to the Bush that has taken up an apparent moralistic interest in the region (Adekeye 2004: 13; Carter 2004). This shift, development strategists argue, is too quick, a knee-jerk reaction so to speak, and hence is likely to be an unsustainable and inconsequential relationship which, in the long term, will most likely work against US aid beneficiaries.

### **U.S. strategic aid and the role of intra-development debates**

As Jerel Rosati (1997) contends, the United States' foreign policy is more dependent on exo-Washingtonian forces as opposed to organically selfish or inward looking initiatives. President Bush's pre-9/11 ignorance of the characteristic of Africa is arguably spurred by development discourses which tends to portray the continent in general terms of erroneous proportions. More often than not, an entire continent of 48 states, and thousands of distinct ethnicities and languages are often tied up by development scholars as one people (African) based on an apparent similarity in poverty and impoverishment (Lake et al. 2006: 4). As intellectual vanguards of the poor, development strategists have a responsibility to construct language in ways that represent the diversity of peoples as well as the diversity in impoverishments – from the severe (Somalia) to the those that appear in traces similar to those of developed states (Botswana). The failure to make these distinctions has rendered the word "Africa" synonymous with poverty, diseases, strife, war, chaos and other vices that detract potential investment opportunities and the formation of realistic foreign policy initiatives

for the continent. From renown development scholars such as Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum to pop stars such as Bono and Bob Geldof, Africa is used as a geo-strategic landmass, a problematique of continental proportions to serve the particular interest of a given development strategy (Lake et al. 2006: 5). Development strategists, in fervent pursuit of their particular agenda thus seem to loose the responsibility of doing justice to a heterogeneous Africa. Indeed, most development strategists seem to forget that many countries of the continent have drastically improved their plight in the past decade as more countries have become democratic and are also improving economically (Dudley 2000: 120). The homogenisation of Africa is a misnomer and a fallacy that supports the common assumption – and the presumption as indicated at opening of this paper – that any lobby can adequately represent a continent made up of many states. An active recognition of the heterogeneity intrinsic to the word Africa would better reveal the challenges and assess the pragmatic im/possibilities of creating a united front for the continent in Washington (Adekeye 2004: 5). However, it is important to mention that although the use of a homogenous Africa is necessary for analytical purposes such as this paper, it is important that there emerge a parallel language that speaks of the diverse nature of Africa, just as discourses on Europe often entail the use of language that speak both to their unification as well as their distinct national characteristics. To aid US security efforts and more importantly, genuine aid efforts, development strategists have both the knowledge and the power to begin the necessary use of language and discourses that not only serve their particular agendas but also help to pragmatically inform US foreign policy in ways that might shift it from non-contextualised strategic policies to those that contextually targets various African interests (Dudley 2000: 120).

In what may be argued as a consequence of the homogenisation of Africa, most development strategists are quick to criticize the US criteria for the dissemination of aid through AGOA, MCA and PEPFAR mostly because – and this is particularly true of the Easterly camp – development strategists tend to underestimate the differences in governing quality and political will among different African states. Sachs and other members of his camp such as Robert Calderisi make a better effort at differentiating endemically corrupt African states such as Nigeria, Chad and Kenya for example from

relatively non-corrupt states such as Senegal, Botswana and Ethiopia (Sachs 2004a: 2). It is also partly due to this lack of a nuanced understanding of particular African states and the improvement some have made at establishing good government that Easterly and his fellows are quick to dismiss the utility of aid or other development assistance. As Dudley (2000) argues, a closer look at the efforts of certain African states will reveal that there is nothing to lose from aid, independently of whether aid is strategic or not. In fact there are mutual gains in the sense that while the donor fulfils its strategic goals the beneficiary receives tangible assistance for furthering development initiatives. Both the giver and the receiver are thus engaged in relations mediated by mutual self-interest that ultimately leaves both sides with some (not necessarily equal) gains (Dudley 2000: 127).

Thus, despite development-coated knee jerk reactions, the current development strategies of the US appear to bear *some* benefits that the endogenous or Easterly dismiss while insisting on bottom-up approaches or policies like those which launched the flight and the steady soar of the rising economies of South East Asia, China and India. However, while we are to wait for Africa to engineer its own take off, Sachs and his camp advise Washington that it cannot afford to wait because as the most powerful and wealthiest country in the world has a moral duty to act in favour of the poor. Further, they argue that Washington cannot stand by or look on in anticipation of a take off that would never occur without a supportive runway paved with western, and mostly US aid. Besides, while we wait, the take off may never occur but instead pre-existing conditions might worsen as the sub-Saharan region tops all others in its level of vulnerability to holistic development collapse (Lake et. al. 2006: 107).

Washington is thus faced with, on the one hand, development strategists tugging at its governmental sleeves seeking attention on behalf of the poor African masses, yet wielding almost contrasting agendas. On the other hand, Washington needs to preserve the security of the country. The administration confidently claims that “it enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence,” yet, it also knows that “no nation can build a safer, better world alone” (NSS 2002). Thus Washington must grapple with the question of how can the US sustain support

from weaker states for security interests without fostering mistrust. In response, the endogenous route of Easterly calls for a minimalist Washington in development politics but this does little to build sustainable support for weak states. Sachs' exogenous approach would enable the US to build trust by creating opportunities which could benefit African states, but Sachs condemns the attempts made to date as being more strategic than helpful to African beneficiaries (Sachs 2005b). However, Sachs is able to reach such a criticism because his camp more so than that of Easterly avoids taking into consideration the fact that the effect of aid is extremely difficult to evaluate. Thus a condemnation of attempts at aid begs the questions: how was the failure evaluated? How would the success of aid be evaluated in light of the contingency of development on time and its subjectivity to the controversy intrinsic to indices aimed at measuring quality of life? (Easterly 2006: 51). This is especially tenuous because aid is expected to qualitatively improve the lives of the ordinary person, yet such non-empirical change is hard to assess. Moreover, it is increasingly challenging to evaluate aid investments that have been put into long-term goals and projects which largely depend on good governance over time (Fowler 2002; Dudley 2000).

Sachs' camp does not adequately address the classic realist notion of the inextricable link between power and self-interest: the more power a nation-state possesses, there emerges a corresponding need to sustain it through the tool of self-interest. That the US, a historically realist state, a world power with un-matched capabilities and capacities would be keen to prioritize or pre-occupy itself with the un-certainty-seeped strategies and wars of developmentalists over the certainty of its own interests on the African continent, is an impossibility that the Sachs camp ought to factor into their critique of US aid (Rothchild 2006: 251).

### **The criticism of U.S. self-interest in international development initiatives and the sustaining role of intra-development debates**

Development strategists as well as their sympathizers frequently criticize the United States for abusing or under-using their un-matched power in those international organizations that have development plans for sub-Saharan Africa. This contention is often backed by facts such as the US' annual budget that ranges in the trillions of

dollars as well as its worldwide military bases which are nearing a thousand according to conservative estimates (Cobb 2003; Chowdhury 2006: 148; Chalmers 2001). With its world dominating power and might, the US can and in some cases is mandated to donate relatively larger amounts to the operational budgets of international institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF (Lake et al. 2006: 64). As a result, the US' stakes in these institutions translates into the ability to wield a relatively high coercive or veto power in manners that can promote Washington's foreign policy interest with or without the oversight or deliberative approbation of both congress at home and the membership bodies of these international institutions (Chalmers 2001; Africa Action 2003b). Washington has thus been accused of using these international institutions to make selective and calculated decisions and indecisions on critical cases. For example, development scholars contend that the World Bank and IMF sustain themselves by loaning heavily to developing countries that have to repay these loans with interest over the long-term in a ritual of debt service that could be cancelled solely by US pressure (Chowdhury 2006; Africa Action 2003b). Moreover, development strategists decry the apparent complacency displayed by these institutions and their drivers such as the US when facing facts that show how annual debt repayments in developing countries such as Mozambique could cover that country's health and education needs beyond current measure; and how sub-Saharan African states in general, spend billions of dollars annually on loan remittances (Chowdhury 2006: 145 Africa Action 2003b).

Furthermore, development strategists criticize the US for failing to use a "coalition of the willing" in chronically underdeveloped and war-ravaged states such as the Sudan, the same way it justified the use of such coalitions in states of strategic interest in the Middle East and in Europe. These include interventions in Kuwait and Iraq, both with large oil deposits, as well as the intervention in the war of the Balkans which was about to destabilize Europe – a large market for US goods (Lake et al. 2006: 24). Furthermore, the US is also criticized for using the G8 to pursue its interests. At the 2005 G8 summit for example, the US proposed and subsequently won approval for an initiative to train 40,000 African Union (AU) peacekeepers with G8 funds. Although this initiative arguably serve African interests, its timing, namely after the 2001 attacks,

render the US vulnerable to the criticism that it is a strategic attempt to militarise the region for America's new war (Lake et al. 2006: 7).

The US is also accused of strategic inconsistencies that fulfil its own interests; for example promoting civil rights globally through international organizations without simultaneously paying sufficient attention to economic development (Dudley 2000: 34). Another example is the United Nations' convention to combat corruption which has not been ratified by the US, despite the fact that its development initiatives are purported to reward countries fostering good governance including efforts at mitigating corruption (Lake 2006: 108).

It is because of the aforementioned criticisms against US-Africa international foreign policy that Elliot (2006) for example, contends that the Doha Round will be successful only if the European Union and the US ratify it (Elliot 2006: 35-62). As talks on Doha arguably begin to fade before our eyes, pressure on the US by development strategists and NGOs to respond to Doha in favour of poor states is on. Yet, the pressure is arguably not as strong as it could be and will remain limited because of the dissent in the field regarding how an exogenously sponsored initiative could impact the lives of the poor. While Easterly-like thinkers do not see Doha as holding a future of developmental promise (Easterly, 2006: 157), Sachs stresses the importance of Doha as a promising way to aid and a way to catalyse development processes.

Indeed, Jeffrey Sachs along with a litany of NGOs such as OXFAM, SOLIDAR<sup>9</sup> and CIDSE<sup>10</sup> march fervently behind the promise of Doha as the principles behind this pending agreement represents what this camp envisions for US foreign policy on development: the intervening hand of the west in the lives of the poor. Unlike US national development initiatives, Sachs and his advocates see the potential for higher gains for Africa through the international effect of Doha. In making this case, they point at the success of Ghana, which was once declining in its own developmental weakness

---

<sup>9</sup> SOLDAR is a Europe-based alliance of various international NGOs supporting international cooperation in labor relations as well as other relevant areas, see: [www.solidar.org](http://www.solidar.org).

<sup>10</sup> Stands for Coopération Internationale pour la Développement et la Solidarité. A Europe-based International NGO supporting development in poor states of the global south see: [www.cidse.org](http://www.cidse.org).

but was soon resuscitated by the effective implementation of the World Bank and IMF's Poverty Reduction Strategy (IMF 2006).

Yet, William Easterly and his co-proponents scorn at the Sachsist idea contending that international interventions such as Doha are likely to fail because they are outlandish and have no historical backing. Development they argue has only arisen and has been sustained where it emerged from endogenous and home grown reasons (Easterly 2006: 345-6). For example, the worst GDP per capita growth rates between 1988 and 2002 were from countries with high IMF and World Bank tutelage, for example Cote d'Ivoire averaged minus 1.9 per cent growth (the 6<sup>th</sup> worst in the world), Zambia averaged minus 1.8 per cent (the 4<sup>th</sup> worst in the world) (Easterly 2006: 347). Meanwhile some of the best GDP per capita growth rates in the same period came from countries without exogenous or interventionist aid. The best growth rate came from South Korea which sustained an average growth of 5.9 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

The ideas of Easterly and Sachs converge into an ideological bickering over an agenda for development, which fragments the efforts to pressure the US to pursue the realization of Doha for example. In the absence of such union, the US has more to gain from pursuing its own interest. Washington can defend a self-interested international development stance to its electorate but would find it enormously challenging to defend a development strategy that could appease its electorate and meaningfully contribute to development.

### **Conclusion: On development strategies vis-à-vis the strategic state**

Once the failure of SAPs became exposed in the late 1990s, the field of development concerning sub-Saharan Africa has been left to reconsider where to go and what strategy to pursue. The US has consequently become caught in a war of words between factions struggling to find a plausible "direction and character for development" (Pieterse 1998: 370). What the divisions in the field imply is that African development is highly complex. As Lake et al. argue, the fielding of practical solutions to the region's

---

<sup>11</sup> Although Easterly points out that the colonial experiences of Asian economies differ (in that it was generally less intense) from that of sub-Saharan Africa, he uses this point for his main argument that development is inversely related to foreign interventionism (Easterly 2006: 348)

problems is a daunting task made complicated by a “legion” of historical and governmental processes which have significantly diminished the capacity or agency of Africans themselves (Lake 2006: 106). Yet the extent to which African capacity has been diminished is a question that cannot be answered definitively by anyone.

Let us leave the development debates aside for a moment and consider the general consensus among development strategists that Africa does need some help. This consensual argument leaves the United States foreign policy on African development two options: to either centre on a humanitarian and moralistic foreign policy approach or to remain in its current strategic approach (Rothchild 2006: 248).

According to Rothchild (2006), most US scholars and policy makers would rather pursue a mixture of the humanist and the strategic approach but such a *mélange* will be the ultimate challenge for a country not only entrenched in realist ideologies of self-interest, but also one historically detached from African affairs (Rothchild 2006: 251). This also means that it might take a bit longer, time-wise, for the US to ease itself into consistent Africa-friendly policies that would slide its actions from the strategic end towards the humanist end (to the extent that it eventually strikes the preferred middle ground or mixed approach between the two ends). In the meantime however, the process of this shift might be further delayed by the divisive nature of development strategists.

For a global power like the United States, both Sachs and Easterly cannot provide adequate or complete rationales to Washington as to why it should make a significant shift away from strategic interests to humanism. Sachs and his proponents cannot provide significant evidence, either historical or empirical, that aid will work differently when issued on more stringent conditions. Moreover they do not seem to differentiate between their agenda and colonialism – an issue that remains sensitive in the development field, and indeed in sub-Saharan States as well (Chigodo 2002). Easterly and his advocates also do not seem to have complete answers for Washington on the following questions: while the U.S. awaits for work of local “searchers” to emerge so they might be supported, what assurance is there that the ongoing degradations in poor

states would not escalate into more degradations or war? Moreover, is this local searcher-dependent view hinged on an overestimation of the capacity of the poor?

What does all this mean for a powerful state striving for its own interest and also for that of allies in the war against terror (NSS 2002)? If development strategists cannot unite on a method for development as they once did with SAPs then the search for a development strategy remains anyone's game so to speak. Moreover, because an inquest into international development strategies is likely not to take precedence over a pursuit of state-based and war-on-terror-related interests in Washington, US foreign policy on development is likely to remain infused with strategic interests both nationally and internationally.

## **Bibliography**

Adekeye, Adebajo. 2004. "Africa, African Americans, and the Avuncular Sam," *Africa Today*, 50 (3): 93-110.

Africa Action. 2003a. "Bush Administration on a Collision course with Africa," available at: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45/213.html> (Accessed April 14, 2007).

Africa Action. 2003b. "Talking Points on President Bush's Trip to Africa and on the Bush Administration's Africa Policy," available at: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45/213.html> (Accessed April 14, 2007).

AGOA. 2000. "Country Eligibility," available at: [http://www.agoa.gov/eligibility/country\\_eligibility.htm](http://www.agoa.gov/eligibility/country_eligibility.htm) (Accessed March 12, 2007)

Barry, Tom. 2005, "U.S isn't stingy, it's strategic," available at: <http://www.irc-online.org/content/commentary/2005/0501aid.phpretrieved> (Accessed March 12, 2007).

Booker, Salish; Minter, William; Colgan, Ann Louise. 2003. "Africa Policy Outlook," available at: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45/241.html> (Accessed April 14, 2007)

Brown, Michael B. 1995. *Africa's Choices: After Thirty Years of the World Bank*. London: Penguin.

Bush, George W. 2002. "President Outlines U.S. Plan to Help World's Poor," Remarks by the

President at United Nations Financing for Development Conference, Monterrey, Mexico. Available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020322-1.html> (Accessed April 15, 2007).

Calderisi, Robert. 2006. *The Trouble with Africa: why aid isn't working*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Carter, Philip. 2004. "U.S.-Africa Relations at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/29993.htm> (Accessed August 24, 2007)

Chigodo, Tim. 2002. "Bush's Visit a Non-Event," *The Harare Herald*, 27 June, 2002.

Chowdhury, Kanishka. 2006. "Interrogating Newness: Globalization and postcolonial theory in the age of endless war," *Cultural Critique*, 62: 126-161.

Christensen, Jon. 2004. "Asking Do-Gooders to Prove That They do Good," available at: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/credib/2004/0103good.htm> (Accessed March 12, 2006).

Cobb, Charles. 2003. "Larger U.S. Troop Presence in Africa," available at: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45/213.html> (Accessed April 14, 2007).

De Soto, Hernando. 2000. *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*. New York: Basic Books.

Dudley, William. 2000. *Africa: Opposing Viewpoints*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press.

Duffield, Mark. 2005. "Getting Savages to Fight Barbarians: Development, Security and the Colonial Present," *Conflict, Security & Development*, (5) 2: 141-159.

Easterly, William. 2006. *The White Man's Burden*. New York: Penguin Press.

Elliot, Kimberly. 2006. "Prospects for reform: Lessons from U.S. and European Experience," *Delivering on Doha: Farm Trade and the Poor*. Washington, D.C.: Institute of International Economics.

Ellis, Stephen and Killingray, David. 2002, "Africa after 11 September 2001," *African Affairs*, 8 (108): 5-8.

Esipisu, Manoah. 2002. "Eat GM or Starve, America tells Africa," available at: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45/213.html> (Accessed April 14, 2007).

Fowler, Alan. 2002. "Assessing NGO Performance: Difficulties, Dilemmas and a Way Ahead. Michael." Edwards & Alan Fowler (Eds). *NGO Management*. London: Earthscan Publications.

Fowler, Alan. 2003. "International Development Frameworks, Policies, Priorities and implications: A basic guide for NGOs," available at:

<http://www.oxfam.ca/news-and-publications/publications-and-reports> (Accessed April 2, 2007).

Foster, John Bellamy. 2007. "Africa: A warning for the continent," available at: [www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com) (Accessed March 1, 2007).

Haley, George, Akukwe, Chinua and Jammeh, Sidi. 2005. "Re-energizing United States-Africa Relations," <http://www.worldpress.org/Africa/2050.cfm> (Accessed March 1, 2007)

International Monetary Fund. 2006. "Ghana and the IMF," available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/country/gha/index.htm> (Accessed April 15, 2007).

Johnoson, Chalmers. 2001. "Blowback," [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Sept\\_11\\_2001/Blowback\\_CJ\\_article.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Sept_11_2001/Blowback_CJ_article.html) (Accessed April 2, 2007).

Lake et al. 2006. *More Than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach Toward Africa*, (Independence Task Force Report No. 56). New York: Council on Foreign Relations.

Marcus, Jonathan. 1998. "African Americans watch Clinton odyssey," Available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special\\_report/1998/03/98/africa/69047.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/03/98/africa/69047.stm) (Accessed October 6, 2007).

Moore, David. 2001. "Neoliberal Globalization and The Triple Crisis of Modernization in Africa: Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa," *Third World Quarterly*, 22 (6): 909-929.

Nussbaum, Martha. 2002. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

PEPFAR, 2007. "About us," available at: <http://www.pepfar.gov/about/> (Accessed April 15, 2007).

Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. 2000. "After post development," *Third World Quarterly*, 21 (2): 175-91.

Philips, Lynne. 2006. "Food and Globalization," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35: 37-57.

Radelet, Steven. 2003. "Bush and Foreign Aid," *Foreign Affairs*, 82 (5): 104-117.

Rosati, Jerel. 1997. "United States leadership into the next millennium: a question of politics," *International Journal*, 52 (2): 297-315.

Rothchild, Donald and Keller, Edmond. (Eds). 2006. *Africa-U.S. Relations*. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Sachs, Jeffrey. 2005. *The end of poverty: Economic possibilities of our time*. New York: Penguin Press.

Sachs, Jeffrey. 2004a. "Doing the sums on Africa," *The Economist* 20 May, 2004.

Sachs, J. et al. 2004b. "Ending Africa's poverty trap," available at: [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/brookings\\_papers\\_on\\_economic\\_activity/v2004/2004.1sachs.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/brookings_papers_on_economic_activity/v2004/2004.1sachs.pdf) (Accessed April 15, 2007)

Sen, A. 2002. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.

The White House. 2002. "National Security Strategy," available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf> (Accessed March 16, 2007).

The White House. 2002. "The Millennium Challenge Account," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/developingnations/millennium.html> (Accessed April 14, 2007).

The World Bank. 2000. *Can Africa claim the twenty-first century?*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

U.S. Department of Trade and Commerce (USDTC). 2006. "US-African Trade Profile," available at: <http://www.agoa.gov/resources/US-African%20Trade%20Profile%202006.pdf> (Accessed March 12, 2007).

USAID. 2006. "U.S. Foreign Assistance Reform," available at: [http://www.usaid.gov/about\\_usaid/dfa/](http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/dfa/) (Accessed March 31, 2007).