

## President Bush's Africa Trip

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President Bush's five-country Africa tour reminds us that presidential travel to Africa has become a new norm, following President Clinton's visits (in 1998 and 2000) and President Bush's 2003 trip. It brings to our attention just how much U.S. engagement in Africa has expanded over the past seven-plus years and asks us to ponder what has been gained, what leverage does the United States truly possess, and what more can and should be done to strengthen the U.S. approach to Africa.

When President Bush entered office in 2001, there were low expectations that Africa would merit much if any attention. This month's tour, near the end of President Bush's tenure in the White House, highlights four signature policy initiatives that have had significant impact in Africa, changed the pattern of U.S. foreign assistance delivered to the continent, and generally enjoyed broad bipartisan support among Americans. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) will have expended over \$18.8 billion by the end of September, at the close of its first five year phase, will have put close to 2 million persons on life-sustaining therapies. Some 65 to 70 percent of resources and persons reached are in Africa. The President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), a three-year \$1.2 billion program centered in Africa, has brought dramatic gains in several focal countries; in 1997, U.S. malaria programs in Africa were \$1 million per year. This year it will be \$338 million. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), an experiment in forging five year compacts with reasonably well-governed states, the majority in Africa, has substantial programs in 11 Africa countries, accounting for 65 percent of the over \$5.5 billion committed worldwide. Liberia, the fourth priority focus of the president's trip, involved U.S. military support to a regional intervention in 2003, followed by support to a UN peace operation, an electoral transition, and ongoing efforts at postwar reconstruction, including U.S.-led reform of the security sector.

What brought about this surprising shift? A multitude of factors: 9/11 fundamentally changed the U.S. foreign policy view of poverty, weak or failing states, and the threat of unchecked global infectious diseases. These were no longer strictly humanitarian considerations, but rather factors integral to global security. America's religious conservatives rallied increasingly on humanitarian grounds for a more expansive U.S. approach to Africa, joined by new celebrity advocates such as Bono and new powerful foundations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. U.S. hard interests—energy security, counterterror, competition with China—rose steadily and became more visible. At home, Africa occupied an unusual space politically, generally free of partisan rancor. A bipartisan consensus on doing more in Africa, strengthened during the Clinton era, endured into the Bush years, even as polarization worsened on multiple other fronts, borne of Iraq, Abu Ghraib, and Guantanamo.

Has this shift brought major rewards, in terms of support within Africa for the Bush administration and American interests? The results are fluid and mixed.

President Bush does not have the same star power that President Clinton enjoyed in Africa. Many Africans have taken offense at Bush administration policies in such areas as Iraq, the International Criminal Court, and the Kyoto treaty on climate change. Many openly question U.S. counterterrorism actions in Somalia, actively oppose placing a U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) presence on the continent, and have already begun to look past President Bush to the next administration. More positively, Africa's opinion climate vis-à-vis the United States, as documented by the Pew Global Attitudes survey and other instruments, has held better than other regions, where opinion of the United States has deteriorated precipitously. Liberians, historically linked to the United States, have been enthusiastic toward President Bush, and we can expect during his visit to Monrovia public outpourings of support, though not likely on the scale of the half-million Ghanaians who gathered for President Clinton in 1998. And many African leaders still look to the United States to apply leadership in resolving conflicts in Africa, in Kenya and Sudan in particular.

President Bush was wise to dispatch Secretary Rice to Kenya on February 18 in support of former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's mediation efforts. He was wise also to highlight in his pre-trip Smithsonian speech the continued importance of attending to Sudan's ongoing Darfur crisis, and earlier in the year to appoint Ambassador Richard Williamson as the new U.S. special envoy to Sudan.

But in Kenya and Sudan alike, the United States has significant untapped leverage. Additional sustained high-level engagement by the United States is essential if there is to be progress in each of these countries. It is the United States, not the Chinese or the French or the British, who have the special status and power to press Khartoum and the government of Southern Sudan to move forward the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2005 and avoid an utter breakdown: to hold a census, pass a new electoral law, complete troop withdrawal agreements, and settle outstanding administration and security issues in the special Abyei zone. It is the United States more than other powers that is best positioned to see the steady deployment of the 26,000 strong AU/UN force into Darfur. For the United States to be effective in this regard, Ambassador Williamson has to be empowered to bargain: to bring to the table in discussions with Khartoum real carrots and real sticks, free of undue interference from campaigners and advocates with a narrow, single issue focus on punishing Khartoum.

Kofi Annan's mediation efforts are essential to a solution in Kenya—the parties cannot resolve this crisis on their own—and require an intensive, sustained effort over several months, followed by strong oversight and monitoring. Secretary's Rice's intervention is important in raising pressure for interim governing arrangements, a change of rhetoric, an audit of the December elections, and constitutional reforms. That visit now needs to be matched by the appointment of a prominent American figure to work alongside Annan on a close, regular basis.

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