



sur le site web de la BCEAO, dont les statuts n'ont pas non plus été modifiés, ne serait-ce que pour prendre en compte les évolutions relatives à la présence française dans ses instances.

- L'accord et la convention de garantie n'ont pas été soumis aux parlements des pays de l'UMOA. Il semblerait que ce

passage devant les instances démocratiques ne soit pas nécessaire, car il s'agirait d'un « accord en forme simplifiée ». Pourtant, le régime d'émission de la monnaie est une prérogative parlementaire dans la plupart des constitutions des pays francophones d'Afrique de l'Ouest.

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Africa-United States Relations under the Biden Administration: Room for a Pan-African Agenda?

The inauguration of Joe Biden as the new president of the United States (US) on 20 January 2021, the broad contours of his vision and the strategic construction of his administration sent a wave of optimism globally that America will return to a trajectory of promoting diplomacy, inclusivity, multilateralism and democracy. Biden and his vice president, Kamala Harris (the first woman and African American and Asian American to occupy this position), ensured that they put forward a diverse cabinet broadly representative of their society. They recognised the strong African-American support received during the election and in return made key senior appointments of black people. Gen. Lloyd Austin has been appointed to lead the Department of Defense, Linda Thomas-Greenfield is the new Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), and many other black men and women have been appointed into key positions.

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Similar to the election of former president Barack Obama, Biden's victory was seen as providing new opportunities for Africa-US relations and for strengthening ties between African Americans and Africans. The ties that bind the diaspora and Africa are deep. They are rooted in descent and in the shameful past of slavery, and these factors, to a greater or lesser extent, permeate relations between Africa and the US. Pan Africanism emerged in the diaspora before embedding itself within the ideology and practice of Africans on the continent. In 2003, the diaspora was constituted by the African Union (AU) as its sixth region. Does the inauguration of the new Biden Administration hold out the possibility that Pan

Africanism could underpin Africa-US relationships, and if so in what form? This article reflects on the possible contours of future Africa-US relations, by focusing on:

1. The idea that 'America is back', and that the new government can restore more harmonious diplomatic relations as well as resume global leadership;
2. The African continental context and its current needs;
3. Areas in which the US can strengthen relations with Africa;
4. Reviving Pan Africanism through Africa-US relations.

It is a truism that domestic and foreign policy are intertwined. America, in the era of Trump, demonstrated this yet again. During the four years of Trump's rule the cleavages within American society were heightened. The racial, class and ideological divides resurfaced because of a narrow ethnonationalist politics that was being pursued. This form of politics also found expression in

US foreign relations in which there was a discernible tendency towards isolationism, hierarchisation and racism. Multilateral bodies were being shunned and non-democratic militarily strong states were being wooed. Simultaneously, the US was trying to keep the 'foreigner' out, and an 'othering' and marginalization of peoples and countries was taking place, noticeably with the infamous dismissal of Africa as a continent with 'shithole countries'. It has also been touted that there was 'minimal senior level engagement with Africa' (Schneidman 2019) during Trump's reign. Trade, though, increased and we saw a continuity of emphasis on issues of security and health.

Africa has never been central to US foreign policy. Africa has and continues to be engaged with in as far as it presents a source of threat for the import of violent extremism (hence the emphasis on peace and security) and because of its natural resources and potential markets (hence the African Growth and Opportunity Act). The US focus over the last few years has been on limiting China's trade, investment and influence, and Africa, too, has been affected by its growing competition with China. Trump's 'Prosper Africa' initiative was aimed at 'countering China's commercial, security and political influence' (Schneidman and Signé 2018). Trump also sought to use some African countries in his attempts to assist Israel to normalise its foreign relations, Sudan being a recent example.

The Trump regime exposed the underbelly of American society: the continued racism, lack of respect for democratic principles (as highlighted by the storming of the Capitol), the fragmentation of American society, and a bullying

practice internationally. This genie one cannot easily put back into the bottle and/or erase from the international community's memory. These flaws will for a long time to come alter the way in which America is perceived and how others relate to it, as opposed to merely how the US relates to them.

America's influence was waning before Trump ascended to the presidency, and it has continued to decline, primarily because there are a number of new international actors to contend with. Trump's administration sought to work with countries bilaterally (hence his popularity in Kenya and Nigeria), undermining African multilateral institutions and their consensus agreements. He was beginning to employ the classic tactic of divide and rule to gain an advantage.

America's interaction with Africa also veered towards being biased and punitive rather than constructive: for example, siding with Egypt during negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and threatening to reduce aid to Ethiopia because it dared to build a dam on its own; forcing Sudan to pay the US compensation because of Al-Qaida's attacks before it would take Sudan off the terrorist list, and 'persuading' it to acknowledge friendly relations with Israel.

There was therefore a sigh of relief when Joe Biden was announced as the winner of the presidential race, and, momentarily, a sense of shock when somewhat familiar tactics to those used by some African leaders were on display in a bid to prevent him from assuming the helm of the Oval Office. President Biden seeks to put an end to this rather bleak chapter of America's history, to reunite the nation, reinstall America's core values and rebuild its

alliances. The rallying phrase of his campaign was 'America is Back'. But, which America is back, where? This will be no mere "pressing of a reset button" (Naidoo, 2021). His administration has a big task ahead of it. The world has not been sitting and waiting for a new president in America. It has moved on despite it.

This will not be the same America we knew in the 1990s or when President Barack Obama assumed power in 2009. It is fractured in many dimensions and, therefore, in terms of soft power, it is weaker. Biden's administration will also find that the world, and/or Africa, has changed. So it will have to think through a new approach to that which it adopted in the 1990s when it basked in its triumphalism as it became the uncontested global leader. Biden's America will soon discern that there has been a global rise in conservatism; a decline in the quality of our democracies; a rise in hybrid democracies; a rise in violent extremism in Africa; a world in which the COVID-19 pandemic has taken us back into laager mentalities and increased economic hardship; a world where climate change is accelerating; and a world where military might cannot fight against the current key threats of cybersecurity, energy insecurity, water and food shortages, health insecurity, poverty and unemployment. In short, America will re-emerge from its isolationist politics into the global arena to find that countries are more inward-looking, ethnocentric and autocratic, this at precisely the time when stronger global governance, a common sense of purpose and more solidarity are needed.

President Biden's administration is not oblivious to these global trends and hence his wanting to return to a focus on democratisation, inclusivity and multilateralism.

However, can America reassert leadership in this context when it is itself wracked by internal challenges and where its leadership is no longer uncontested? The new Scramble for Africa, for example, has long been underway and so there are many more actors in Africa that play agenda setting roles. America will therefore need to work hard to restore trust and credibility it will have to engage more collaboratively even with those that it is framing as its enemies, i.e. China. This is the more so since these countries are not necessarily Africa's enemies and Africa has the choice of collaborating with a number of different actors, and it will, and should, use this choice to its own advantage. Africa, hopefully, will not be caught up again in hegemonic power rivalries.

In trying to restore diplomatic relations, Biden's message of 'America is Back' is primarily directed at Europe, for these relations became strained under the Trump regime. Africa has not been, and will not be, a priority for the US no matter the ideological disposition or hue of the US president. But then Africa may not want to celebrate America being back too quickly either, especially if it's the same one that in its quest to bring democracy to everybody caused destabilisation that continues to persist in, for example, Libya. So when America says it's back, Africa would want to be clear on the what, where and how thereof!

It was encouraging to see that Biden took the time to address the AU virtually on 4 February 2021. This sent a strong signal of a willingness to reach out to strengthen relations with continental institutions and demonstrated a level of respect. In his address to the AU, Biden noted that his administration was

opting for 'a future committed to investing in [American and African] democratic institutions and promoting the human rights of all people, women and girls, LGBTQ individuals, people with disabilities, and people of every ethnic background, religion and heritage', and emphasised health security, climate change, entrepreneurship and peace and security. He stressed the mutuality of the relationship, wanting America to 'be your partner in solidarity, support and mutual respect'.

The US has had a diplomatic mission at the AU since 2006. It has since the Clinton Administration defined its partnerships in Africa as based primarily on peace and security, democracy and governance, and trade and development. This will continue to be its focus even if the rhetoric and emphasis within these categories may differ. President Biden has, for example, already provided a clear indication that his focus is on democratisation and inclusivity. Alas, here Biden would have to begin his work in the US first, then in the global governance institutions (all of whom remain in need of reform), and perhaps also deal with the racism and narrow nationalism that have re-emerged in Europe, before he embarks on this quest in Africa. Thus Biden will have his challenges cut out for him in his quest to reclaim America's seat at the head of the table of global leaders.

The Current African context

Africa's conflict context is changing. There are also shifts in the geopolitical power of particular countries and a weakening of African intergovernmental institutions. There is, for example, a broadening of the scope of, deepening of the intensity of, violent extremism on the

continent. The increase in violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, since 2017, means that it has become a threat in all five regions of Africa. Obviously, if it is spreading then we need to question the methods employed to counter terrorism. These have been adaptations of counter-terrorism templates developed in different contexts as if there were a one-size-fits-all approach to countering violent extremism.

African countries are receiving and spending billions on military reinforcements, high-tech equipment and training at the expense of development. The conditions that enable the spread of violent extremism are well known. They relate to the nature of the state, particularly extractive states with weak regulatory mechanism of natural resources and a proliferation of transnational crime and power networks. These states usually have porous borders, a weak presence of security forces which often, too, are engaged in predatory behavior and exert undue force on citizens. Violent extremism emerges in states where some citizens are marginalised and excluded and where there is large scale poverty and underdevelopment. In communities living under these conditions there is a loss of hope in the prevailing governance systems and armed groups emerge and begin to assert alternative governance. Youth are attracted to these extremist armed formations in search of belonging and meaning (see Vlassenroot et al 2020) and a better life—real or imagined. These conditions cannot be addressed through increased militarisation. If the AU and its member states are serious about 'Silencing the Guns' they need to transform the state structures and/or state society relations that

provide the opportunity structure for violent extremism to flourish.

More local-level conflicts induced by climate change as well as interstate tensions can also be seen in Africa, for example the herder–farmer conflicts in West Africa and the conflict over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Fights over access to water will become more frequent and point to the need for us to revisit old treaties and agreements and to revive and/or repurpose the mechanisms that were set up to deal with this issue but then shifted to tackle violent extremism, as happened in the Lake Chad Basin. The recent conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, as well as secessionist struggles in Cameroon, point to the unresolved issues of nation-building, the continued use of force to settle disputes, and to broader governance challenges. The Horn of Africa remains fragile and a return to conflict in Ethiopia will be a major source of continued regional instability.

Band-Aid strategies continue to be used to resolve conflicts in Ethiopia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan and many other countries, and hence the lack of sustainable peace. To build sustainable peace there is a need to rethink forms of state-building, representation, social contracts and/or the provision of human security. Governments of National Unity can no longer be the solution for deep cracks in the foundation of these societies. Through them we merely keep adding layers and layers of diverse actors in government (many of them non-democratic, who we expect to convert to being democratic once in power). Many of these actors are simply intent on eating from an already empty state trough rather than providing

inclusive democratic governance and sustainable development in which all prosper. They present a no-brainer for why the states remain dysfunctional and why peace agreements do not hold.

Other countries in Africa continue to be bedevilled by a lack of service delivery, corruption, one-party and/or one-leader dominant states, and the like. The COVID-19 pandemic once again lay bare the extreme vulnerabilities of many countries in Africa: not just inadequate healthcare, which has been apparent for decades, but inadequate education, reform of the security sector, parliamentary oversight, social protection, and so on. More importantly, though, the response to the pandemic could also showcase the resilience and innovation of Africa's people (as opposed to states), for they have actually been surviving without state support for decades. How do we build on their resilience strategies?

A more positive note for state intervention was the stepping up of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention during the pandemic, highlighting what can be achieved when states work together to address a mutual challenge. The AU suddenly became an important source of information and co-ordination on the pandemic and for access to vaccines. More of these kinds of co-ordinated responses to address common challenges are needed going forward.

Areas in which the US can strengthen relations with Africa

The AU adopted Agenda 2063 in 2015. Central to the Agenda is the quest for 'Silencing the Guns' and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Africa–US relations

must be informed by the context and needs of Africa as well as by its development frameworks. The guns have not been silenced and appear to be echoing louder in some parts, and the AfCFTA is still at the beginning stages of implementation, with many foreseeable challenges. The AU has extended the roadmap for silencing the guns to 2030, with no serious reflection and evaluation on its execution. This evaluation should be supported by the US as part of its engagement in peace and security on the continent. Much needs to be done to ensure the success of the AfCFTA if it is not to suffer the same fate as previous regional integration roadmaps, such as the Lagos Plan of Action. The AfCFTA needs enabling environments: supportive regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, investment, etc. Here, too, America can play a key role.

The US has engaged Africa on issues of peace and security largely through its Africa Command (AFRICOM). It has between 6,000 and 7,000 troops on the continent in about twenty-nine bases, mostly scattered in North Africa, Sahel, West Africa and the Horn of Africa (Turse 2020). There are around 1,200 special forces involved in countering violent extremism in Somalia and Niger. The US has provided support to the African Union Commission's Peace Support Operations Division (in the form of equipment, logistics support, training, etc). It has assisted peace missions in CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mali, Somalia, Sudan-Darfur and South Sudan, and it has supported capacity-building for peacekeeping in many African countries (White House 2014; CRS 2019). The US has also been engaged in supporting peace processes in, for example,

Cameroon, CAR and South Sudan. It therefore has a formidable presence in the resourcing of peace and security efforts in Africa.

This will most probably be continued, especially because of the growing threat of purported ISIS-affiliated extremist groups. However, the form of the support should be revisited so that it deals more directly with the hard security and human security needs of African citizens, i.e., responds more appropriately to the context sketched earlier. The US needs to provide support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in addition to that of peacekeeping. It should provide support so that the AU can undertake the necessary evaluations of its roadmaps and so that it, and member states, can redesign more context-appropriate, citizen-oriented strategies. Providing Africa with high-tech military weapons and setting up military bases may leave Africa with bigger problems in future, if not fuel further violent extremism. Already we see the remilitarisation of African societies and the concomitant decline in democratic forms of governance.

The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) needs to be renegotiated by 2025. The implementation of AGOA must be evaluated to see in which ways it has benefited Africa and the US. Francis Kornegay has noted the need for a renegotiated AGOA that is in harmony with that of the AfCFTA, and therefore the need for senior US management to effectively interact with the secretariat of the AfCFTA, UNECA and other stakeholders (Kornegay 2021).

Health and education remain the key levers for prosperity in Africa, and the US should therefore continue to invest resources in these sectors, the more so in the midst of the

COVID-19 pandemic. Access to the technology for remote learning and to vaccines has become paramount in addition to the continued call for support of infrastructure, resource and pharmaceutical needs.

Gender-based violence remains a scourge across the continent and more holistic interventions are needed to change behaviour. African countries are now only starting with data collection (beyond that collated by administrative statistics), so that there is a more evidence-based assessment of the extent of the problem. Acquiring these datasets costs huge amounts of money and effectively dealing with the challenge needs an investment in appropriate structures, programmes and processes to assist the legal frameworks already in place. Perhaps here the US can also help by supporting the security sector in countries to establish sexual misconduct centres, since many members of the security sector are part of the problem they are charged with responding to.

Reviving Pan Africanism though Africa–US relations

Pan Africanism is the underlying tie that binds Africa and the US and it should underpin their relations. In particular, African Americans should be at the forefront of ensuring that American foreign policy does not sow further division in Africa, through promoting bilateralism or through supporting one country against another, as was the case with Western Sahara and Ethiopia. It is imperative that African Americans ensure that multilateral institutions, such as the AU and its Regional Economic Communities, which have been established to promote Pan Africanism, are not only supported, but respected and engaged with through principles of

mutuality. The US should ensure that their representatives to the AU and to key African countries are ambassadors who also believe in Pan Africanism and the African Agenda so that there is a common goal to be pursued, in the interests of both Africa and the US.

This year's AU theme is dedicated to Arts, Culture and Heritage. Here, too, African Americans can play an important role in promoting the arts and heritage as another important aspect for development, the building of a cultural economy. There is much to learn from each other and much innovative growth that can be attained in this sector, including the revival of Pan-African cultural festivals. Culture may be rooted in the past but it is dynamic and oriented towards the future and it is therefore the vitality that we have seen in the art forms of African and African-American youth that should be the focus of building these cultural interactions.

The US should also be cognisant of the new ways in which countries are seeking to engage Africa, such as through co-operation forums. However, the US should not compete with other countries by replicating this model. Africa does not need another forum for all its leaders to attend. The state-to-state co-operation model should rather be replaced with people-to-people exchanges that promote broader cultural interaction, respect, tolerance for diversity, dignity and solidarity that will inform future Africa–US relations on all other issues of trade, peace and security, environment, health and the like.

The appeal, by way of conclusion, is for the US to listen more to what Africans say their needs are and the kinds of engagements they seek. To identify these needs requires that the necessary dialogues and

conversations are held with a broad range of stakeholders. It is not sufficient for the Biden Administration to assert ‘America is Back’. It must be a different America, one that thinks anew, innovatively and collaboratively; an America that practises leadership, rather than seeks to lead; an America that captures and articulates a vision for the growth, prosperity, equality and dignity of all.

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