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**African – American Influence on American Government’s Foreign Trade, Investment and Aid Policies toward Africa: Continuing Challenges**

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**Abstract**

This paper is timely because it critically examines the influence of African-Americans on U.S. trade, foreign direct investment and aid toward the Sub-Saharan African Countries in the late 1970s, a dimension that has been largely overlooked in foreign policy analysis, despite its critical significance. In fact, African-American influence in U.S. trade, foreign direct investment and aid policy toward Africa is an aspect that has so far received scanty attention regarding their ancestral homeland. For much of early 1960s, African-American community identified with African countries in their decolonization struggles, economic sanction against former apartheid South Africa and a complete withdrawal of U.S. military aid to the Tshombe administration in the Congo. The low priority given to African countries in the U.S. foreign policy raises question(s) on the place of African Americans in the U.S. foreign policy, especially in the realm of trade, foreign direct investment and aid between the late 1970s and early 1980s. In this paper, we argue that there is significant relationship between the volume of trade, foreign direct investment and aid enjoyed by African countries from the U.S. foreign policy regarding Sub-Saharan Africa, and the influence of African-Americans on the US-African foreign policy, especially in the late 1970s. The paper examined the active role played by the Congressional Black Caucus, NAACP, Trans-Africa, Africare, African-American political and religious leaders holding important positions in the U.S government. The methodology for this paper is mainly descriptive and relies on Government Documents, Journals, Newspapers, Reports from the United States Department of Trade and Commerce (USDTC), books and the internet, among others. The paper concludes that the activities undertaken by African-Americans have positive impact on the U.S. foreign policy toward their ancestral homeland like other ethnic groups, such as Jewish-Americans; Irish-Americans, Polish-Americans and Armenian-Americans. The conclusion is derived from the volume of trade, foreign direct investment and aid. The policy challenge for this paper is how to maximize the influence of African-American Community on U.S.-African foreign policy. The paper proffers some policy options/strategies to deal with the challenge(s).

**Key words:** African-Americans, Lobby, Influence, trade, direct foreign investment, aid.

**Introduction**

In order to influence the United States (US) foreign policy, there must be a clear

understanding of the policymaking process in Washington, including the lobbying capabilities of those who influence policy. There are a number of ethnic and special

interest groups seeking to influence United States the foreign policy directions in favour of their ancestral races or tribes. For example, Jewish-Americans and Irish-Americans lobby of US policies that are favourable economically, militarily diplomatically among others to yield benefits their ancestral home lands.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the United States' Foreign Policy affected disproportionately the African continent. As a result, African – Americans have thus been forced to exert requisite influence on the US – Africa Policy (Marcus: 1998). It is strongly argued that in recent times African-Americans have not been silent to lobby Washington to formulate policies that promote the interests of Africans on the continent and those in the Diaspora.

Our primary objective in this paper however, is to show the extent to which the African Diasporas play significant role in the US government's policy towards sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This will improve understanding of the dynamics of their influence on issues such as politics, trade and aid. It is intended to examine the implications of this influence on Africa's and African Americans' interests. The African-American cultural group is used as a case study that can shed new light on the influence of other cultural groups on the US foreign policy toward their ancestral homelands. The paper also enriches in a convincing way the discussion of a subject whose importance seems to have attracted particular attention in the area of foreign policy and aims at filling the gaps created by some research work on this subject.

### **Methodology**

The methods employed in this paper are basically historical and descriptive. The paper does not lend itself to testing any hypothesis other than the general assumptions that:

(i) The foreign policy of the United States government is a reflection of the interest and foreign policy preferences of cultural constituencies groups in the country.

(ii) The more effective the cultural groups' influence, the more likely the strength of US foreign policies for the ancestral country of the specific group;

(iii) United States foreign policy is not a product of ethnic influence. It may well reflect the personal ties and perceptions, or political philosophies of decision makers.

The paper also attempts to answer the following questions:

(i) To what extent do cultural groups influence the United States Foreign Policy?

(ii) What are the implications of the group's influence on American government's foreign policy?

(iii) What are the political resources and strategies employed by the African-American cultural group to sway US-Africa foreign policy in favour of their ancestral region?

These questions represent a major thrust of much of the literature on the level of African-Americans' influence on US foreign policy toward Africa in the post – Cold war period, especially in the areas of politics, trade and development (aid).

For relevant data, this paper relies on official documents of the United States. Some of these documents include statements of the US Chamber of Commerce. Congressional Research Service; World Bank Reports, US Department of Trade and Commerce (USDTC), Africa Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) Document, among others. Other are: journals books, the internet, newspapers and newsmagazines.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

The term influence connotes power political resources (money, information, support, votes, skills, etc). Nagel (1975: 29) formulated ideas that emphasize the foregoing features. According to him, influence refers to: A relation among actors such that the wants, desires, preferences or intentions of one or more actor(s) to affect the actions or predispositions of...others.

This is fundamentally true when we want to call attention to a causal relationship between, for example what 'A' wants and what 'B' does. In a similar fashion, a group's influence is defined as the: Ability of the group to make

official statements and how its actions conform to the group's foreign policy goals or promote the group's influence (Emerson, 1967: 31 – 32).

Influence is a form of causation, and since it is essentially about a causal relationship between what 'A' wants and what 'B' does. It is argued that each policy influencer makes certain demands and expects a certain amount of satisfaction as price for its support. To put this differently, influence involves a web of complex reciprocal relationships.

### **Common Arguments for and against Ethnic Group Influence on United States Foreign Policy**

Over the past several decades, the influence of ethnic groups on the United States foreign policy making has ignited intense debate in both political and other academic circles, thus giving rise to extensive research. Most of the existing literature which informs the predominant debate on the subject has come to conflicting conclusions. For example, while some analysts maintain that ethnic groups have insignificant influence on US foreign policy making, others stress that their influence is significant.

The power of ethnic groups to influence U.S. foreign policy has been advanced by some scholars including Bernard C. Cohen (1973: 104-105), David M. Paul and Rachel Anderson Paul (2009), Jeffrey Blank-Fort(2006), among others. For instance, Roger Hills, a former US Department Intelligence Official under the Kennedy administration admitted that: It is obvious to even the most casual observer, for example, that United States foreign policy in the Middle-East, where oil export reigns supreme, has been more responsive to the pressures of the Jewish- American community and their natural desire to support Israel than it has to American oil interest 'Blank – Fort, (2006:11). Cohen (1973) corroborates this view. According to him, various Zionist organizations, for example, have played positive roles in influencing US foreign policy toward Israel (See also Earl Huff, 1972: 109 – 125). This point can also be made of other ethnic groups such as Irish-Americans, Polish-

Americans, Cuban-Americans and Armenian-Americans. One thing these ethnic groups commonly share is that they are well organised, effective and financed Washington lobbies. Occasionally, they can be important in an electoral contest, and sometimes can provide valuable assistance, and sometimes are in a position to apply coercive pressure, policy makers on certain issues that may be very sensitive to group viewpoints

However, other scholars hold contrary views concerning the influence of ethnic groups on the US foreign policy toward their ancestral regions. The scholars of this alternative proposition suggest that ethnic groups' influence on US foreign policy making is negative. For instance, they have argued that even with respect to the most powerful and organized ethnic groups, the key point remains; they seldom can compel the American foreign policy makers to depart from the U.S. national interest. This implies that ethnic groups' influence exists within the confines of the American national interest, and is limited to attempting to persuade the policy makers that what is in the best interest of their ancestral homelands is also best for policy makers and the United States.

David Truman (1951) had noted that American foreign policy making is extremely fragmented, meaning that policy decisions are made in a wide variety of places and circumstances by a number of difficult individuals and groups. This also implies that there are a multitude of points at which groups may gain access to the policy makers. Ethnic groups are quite aware of these and seek access to key and sympathetic policy makers. The net result of all this is that ethnic groups. May aspire to influence the U. S. foreign policy toward their ancestral homelands, but their ambition has not so far been achieved to any significant extent.

However, the differences of opinions about the influence of ethnic groups on foreign policy making notwithstanding, what is evident among majority of scholars, analysts and journalists is the recognition that there is increasing consensus that foreign policy in the United States reflects significantly the influence of major ethnic groups. Even when

they do not directly influence policy choices in some issues, ethnic groups are indirectly important as an agent to keep the foreign policy makers “on their toes”. For instance, in some issues that affect their ancestral homeland, ethnic groups are very significant, in some moderately so, and some they hardly matter.

### **United States Foreign Policy toward the Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review**

Compared with the European powers, the United States arrived late on the African scene, even though it established contacts with Sub-Saharan Africa in the early 19th Century in its search for slaves. Until the 1950s, American interest in Africa was limited. It has been noted that neither the American government nor the people had displayed any significant interest in Africa. The United States had no specific policy toward Africa, but allowed colonial powers to exercise primacy in those areas. In short, Sub-Saharan Africa was an area of secondary, rather than primary interest to the United States (See Rupert Emerson, 1967).

The causes of America’s low level of concern in its foreign policy toward Africa have been a source of debate. Analysts cite geographical features, historical conditions such as colonialism, level of development in the international economic system, economic underdevelopment, political instability, military incapability, among others. Whatever the underlying causes of the United States’ lukewarm attitude in its foreign policy toward Africa, we present some of these causes below.

Emerson (1967), argues that prior to 1960, most African states were under colonial powers. In other words, they enjoyed colonial status which in a significant way, constrained the United States from operating in those countries. The United States had to interact with African States through their colonial masters many of who felt threatened by the presence of the United States in Africa. Indeed, as observed by Emerson (*ibid*), France expressed fear that the United States with its economic power would displace it from its colonies in Africa.

The United States has continued to treat some African countries as the exclusive preserve of their colonialists. The second explanation for the United States’ low profile in Africa was the development in the international arena. For example, the America’s serious involvement in the cold war and the communist confrontation which diverted its energy and resources to the containment of the former Soviet Union and communism in Indo-China, rendered the African continent essentially a low priority area in American foreign policy. This trend was reinforced by conflicts within the Atlantic Alliance, deep-seated crises in Cuba, America’s closest neighbour in the Western hemisphere, Berlin and Vietnam, and the informal détente between America and the former Soviet Union which resulted in phenomenal decrease in the United States attention toward Africa as one of its areas of focus in its foreign policy agenda.

In addition, the importance of Africa to the US foreign policy reached its lowest ebb because the former Soviet Union and China did not show any significant interests in Africa. Emanating from this fact was the absence of competition for sphere of influence in Africa between the US and the Communist Countries. The third explanation is that Africa was considered a major non-crisis region. This necessitated for example, the non-inclusion of the continent or part of it in any major defence alliance, such as the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), among others. Although African countries claimed to be non-aligned during the Cold War between the East and West, there were in practice, pro-western thereby obviating any serious anti-Communist concern on the part of the United States (Emerson, 1967).

Lastly it was noted that Africa was not only the region of crisis of poverty and economic misery but also the least industrialized (Mkandawire 1991: 80). Africa’s prolonged economic under development and its attendant costs detracted potential investment opportunities and the formation of a realist foreign policy toward the continent. Coupled with all these was the fact that Africa was not capable of playing an active role in global politics (Emerson, 1967).

It has also been observed that prior to the late 1970s and early 1980s African States were still lagging behind and were not competitive in the areas of macro-economic environment, political stability and infrastructural development, among others. As many scholars have argued, Africa has not been economically viable, like its counterparts (other continents). Although most Sub-Saharan African countries achieved political independence from colonial domination in the 1960s, they have continued to be dependent on the colonial powers for trade on the export of their primary products and import of manufactured goods. Faced with dependent economy, Africa has not been able to compete favourably with the industrial economies.

Politically, majority of Sub-Saharan African countries were faced with the problems of nation-building arising from ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversities in these countries. This was coupled with undemocratic rule, lack of political accountability and transparency in governance. Closely related to the foregoing was the emergence of military rule in Africa which exposed the continent to the state of lawlessness, and human rights abuses, and denial of justice. The precarious political environment in Africa deprived the continent of the United States attention and presence.

Africa has had the lowest level of education compared to other continents in the world. In most African countries, education is regarded as luxury rather than a right and the literacy rate in African countries has been below average. For example, the literacy rate (access to secondary education) in some African countries has been less than 15% of the population, while the proportion of people with access to higher education has been as low as about 3% of the total (Takyiwaa Manuh, 2002: 42-43). In the case of transportation, Africa suffers immense transport problems. Individuals and collective transport systems are inefficient and poor.

#### **African-American Influence on US-African Foreign Policy**

We now proceed to examine three particular aspects of African-American influence on US

– African foreign policy. These refer to three clusters around which this influence are anchored: factors that militate against African-American influence prior to the late 1970s; exploring issue realms in which African-Americans have attempted to influence the U.S. foreign policy makers; and the strategies employed. Since the late 1970s, informed public opinion on African – American influence on American government's foreign policy for the Sub-Saharan Africa has tended to cluster around the three extreme points of view. The first view point holds that African – Americans ought to act as a major lobby for U.S. foreign policy that should be favourable to Africa, (their ancestral home land), just like other ethnic groups in the United States such the Jewish-American the Irish-Americans and the Polish-Americans, among others. The logic behind this argument derives from the premise that the African-American influence has the potential to raise the awareness of African problems and to propel the U.S. foreign Policy makers' decisions that would be favourable to Africa.

The second view point maintains that the efforts of the African-Americans to influence the American government's policy for example in the areas of aid and trade, would serve as reparations for the unjust and inhuman treatment of Africans arising from Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. It is then noted from this perspective that Africans contributed immensely to build the American economy with their labour. In this regard, it is argued that African-Americans should put pressure on the U.S. government to address Africa's aid and trade interests.

Additionally, it is argued that African-Americans would not be accorded the respect and dignity they deserve in the United States and elsewhere until the poor perception of Africa in the minds of westerners is expunged. This would be realized when many countries of the continent might have drastically improved their economies, become democratic, reduce the rate of poverty, diseases and political crises.

**Factors militating against African-American influence on US-African Foreign Policy prior to the 1970s**

Some scholars and analysts have raised questions about the power of African-Americans to engage in collective effort to shape American foreign policy for Sub-Saharan Africa, especially prior to 1970s. Rupert Emerson (1967: 52), rightly noted that; Negro American has not yet attained the full potential of his ability to influence African relations.

Without doubt, the contention for the apparent inability of African Americans to influence the U.S.-African foreign policy before 1970s is supported by a number of reasons. First, in the early 1960s, African-Americans were confronted with the challenges of racial discrimination and social injustice, the impact of which was a feeling of alienation, deprivation and discontentment. These developments were responsible for violent racial protests in a number of cities in the U.S. that were predominantly inhabited by African-American Communities, particularly in the mid-western and southern states (Alabama, Illinois, Tennessee, Georgia, among others).

The racial discrimination against Blacks in the United States was compounded with economic marginalization, and low level of political participation, thus reflecting their low capacity to influence American-African foreign policy, particularly in the areas of diplomacy, aid and trade.

The second reason was the failure of African countries to open their hands to African-Americans. For example, African-Americans feel that by selling them or allowing them to be taken into inhuman slavery, they were rejected by fellow Africans in their ancestral homeland. An observation suggesting this was made by Andrew Young United States' former Secretary of State, himself an African-American, during one of his visits to Nigeria. Young noted that: Although African – Americans spend billions of dollars in air travel and investment in other continents, Africa continues to wallow in poverty and dire need of investments because it has not opened

its arms to its children in the diaspora (Uya, 2001).

The third point is linked to the mission specific nature of lobby groups in the United States. For example, Schraeder (1994:21), argues that majority of those lobby groups were created for specific missions. The Trans-Africa Forum was known more for its fight against apartheid in South Africa rather than to undertake another mission involving work toward achieving social justice such as to emancipate either African-Americans or Sub-Saharan Africa for previous misdeeds. Schraeder is of the opinion that the mission dependent nature of these groups adversely affects their capacity to influence the policymakers in Washington on issues concerning Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Exploring the issue realms in which African-Americans have attempted to influence US Policy Makers**

Americans have made several celebrated attempts to articulate their concerns regarding American foreign Policy making. They have mobilized and attracted the attention of the US government and people on issues affecting the interests of their ancestral homeland (Africa) to be reflected in the United States foreign policy. As Benita Johnson (2007: 1), has noted, African –Americans have in recent times become “mere voices in the wilderness”. From Johnson’s statement, African-Americans see themselves as significant in their conscious effort in influencing US African foreign policy. However, they have changed their lukewarm attitude over U.S. foreign policies affecting the interest of the African continent, especially in the areas foreign trade, investment and aid.

To some extent, it can be said that the efforts of African-Americans to articulate their views on U.S foreign policy were not unconnected with some significant legal, political and economic gains they have made in recent times. The African-Americans have proved successful in the development sweepstakes since 1970s, despite minor cases of economic and racial discrimination. A cursory look at their profile shows that they are in politically and economically advantaged positions for example, majority of them are holding crucial

positions in US government. According to the 2002 US Census, the median household income for Afro-Americans was US\$29,483 between 2000 and 2002. Today, businesses owned by Blacks in the U.S have multiplied tremendously. In addition, Black-owned businesses in 1977 employed about 718 people and generated \$71billion in revenue (Akukwe and Jammeh, 2004: 35). In general we see US' growing activity on the continent as a potentially positive force for economic development there. From their profile, African – Americans have become much more pragmatic and focused to exert a larger influence on American foreign policy towards sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the areas: trade, investment and aid. Therefore the quantity of US foreign trade, investment and aid toward Africa will provide the baseline for assessing the level of influence of African – Americans on the American foreign policy in these issue areas. As can be gleaned from this section of the paper, foreign trade, investment and aid have become major economic sectors in which the United States relations with the sub-Saharan Africa can be appreciated. In other words, they have become an integral part of U.S. African foreign policy. Each of these issue areas are carefully discussed below.

#### **U.S. Trade Engagement in Africa**

Since the late 1970s, the United States has demonstrated strong trade interests with Africa. For example, in his farewell message to the US Congress on leaving the White House in 1980, President Jimmy Carter admonished the US to regard sub-Saharan African nations as the fastest growing markets for African goods and major sources of fuel and raw materials which the U.S. must keep under control at any cost (Foreign Affairs (Bulletin), 1981: 215).

In the early 1990s, President Clinton initiated several measures that dealt with bilateral trade between the United States and Sub-Saharan Africa. The U.S. Congress for instance approved a new trade and investment policy for the region in May 2000 through the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA). AGOA authorized new U.S. Trade and Investment Policy in Africa and provided

increased trade cooperation between the U.S. and African countries.

President Bush's visit to Africa in August 2003 brought cheery news to the African people. In a statement to delegates at the African Growth and Opportunity Forum in Mauritius in January 15, 2003, he declared: All of us share a common vision for the future of Africa. We look to the day when prosperity for Africa is built on trade and market (Langton, 2006:1).

As reflected in the above statement, President Bush took measures to improve U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa by implementing the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which provides about 90% duty-free market, and access for African imports to the U.S. (Cross Roads, 2005: 5)

#### **Size, composition and significance of Trade with Sub-Saharan Africa**

According to U.S. Department of Trade and Commerce, since AGOA was established in 2000, export of goods, for example textiles from sub-Saharan Africa has increased by 40% as more states are becoming eligible (U.S.D.T.C 2006:1). US trade and commercial engagement with Sub-Saharan Africa has dramatically increased and diversified during the last forty years. Statistics from the U.S. International Trade Commission shows that Africa's exports to U.S. under the U.S. Generalized System of Preference Programme (GSP), and AGOA increased from about US\$ 682 million to \$8.166 billion in 2001. Out of this increase, about \$ 7.52 billion represents U.S. imports from Sub-Saharan Africa and AGOA (Nwoji, 2003: 17). With the help of AGOA, the United States has become the third largest importer of African products after Germany and France (USDTC, 2006:5).

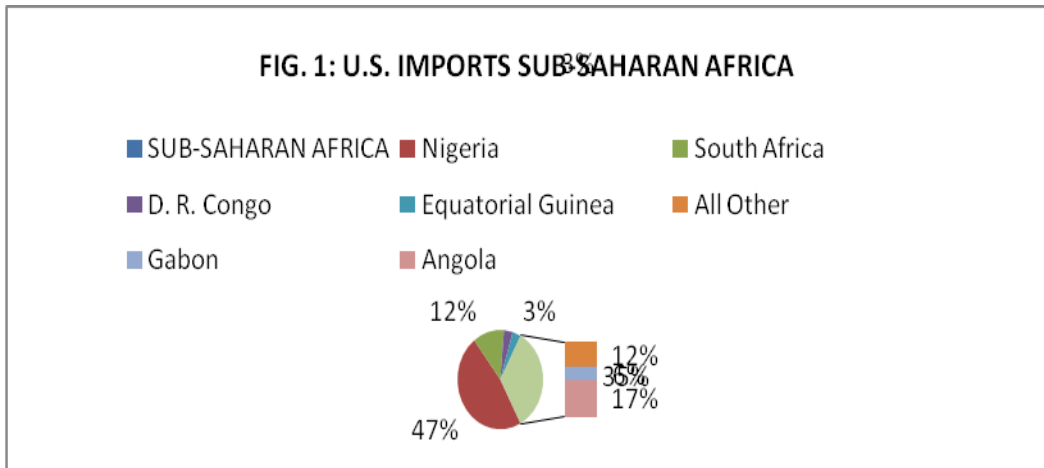
A breakdown of total U.S. trade with Sub-Saharan African reveals that U S export to this region in 2005 stood at \$9.9 billion which translated to 1.2% of its total global exports of \$804 billion, while U.S. imports from sub-Saharan Africa were \$49.9 billion or 3% of its total imports of \$1.662.3 billion. Total trade (exports and imports) between U.S. and Sub-Saharan Africa jumped between 1990 and

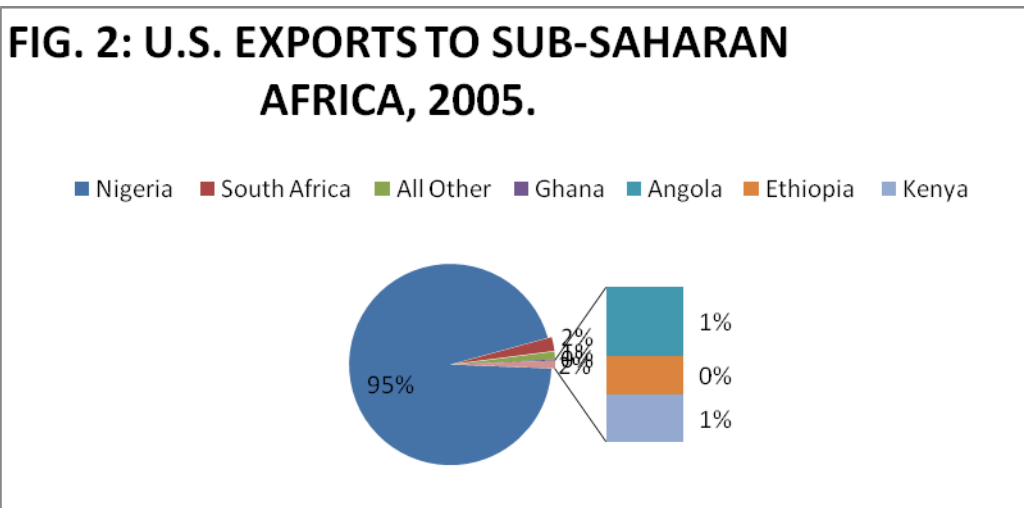


2005 from \$ 17 billion to \$ 60 billion representing 3.5% increase. In 2006, US – African relations moved a step further when the total trade between the two regions continued to rise. In the first seven months of that year, US exported \$6.9 billion worth of goods to sub-Saharan Africa (i.e. 1.1% of total U.S exports of \$605.5 billion) during the same period. Imports from sub-Saharan Africa in the first seven months of 2006 also rose to \$39.8 billion -3.3% of total U.S. imports of \$1,216.9 billion (Langton, 2006: 2).

Although U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa is a limited share of its major trading partners, it is comparable to its trade with many other developing regions. The U.S. trade in the year 2005 with the Andean Pact countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) amounted to \$67.8 billion; \$48.1 billion with the Mercosur countries (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay) \$60 billion with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, \$33.8 billion with the countries of the US – Central

American and Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (Costa Rica, EL-Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic), and \$16.9 billion with the countries of South-Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Regional Trade Figures Compiled by CRS from Data on the U.S. International Trade Commission Data, accessed at: <http://dataweb.usitc.gov>). It should be observed that U.S. trade with sub-Saharan African is highly concentrated in a small number of countries. For example, The U.S. imported 86% of raw materials from five countries in the year 2004, including Nigeria (46%), South Africa (17%). Angola (13%), Gabon (7%), and Equatorial Guinea (3%). Sixty seven percent of U.S. exports were also to four countries: South Africa (36%), Nigeria (18%), Angola (7%), and Ethiopia (6%), while the remaining countries each accounted for less than 6% of U.S. exports to the region (ibid.,) (see Figures 1 and 2).

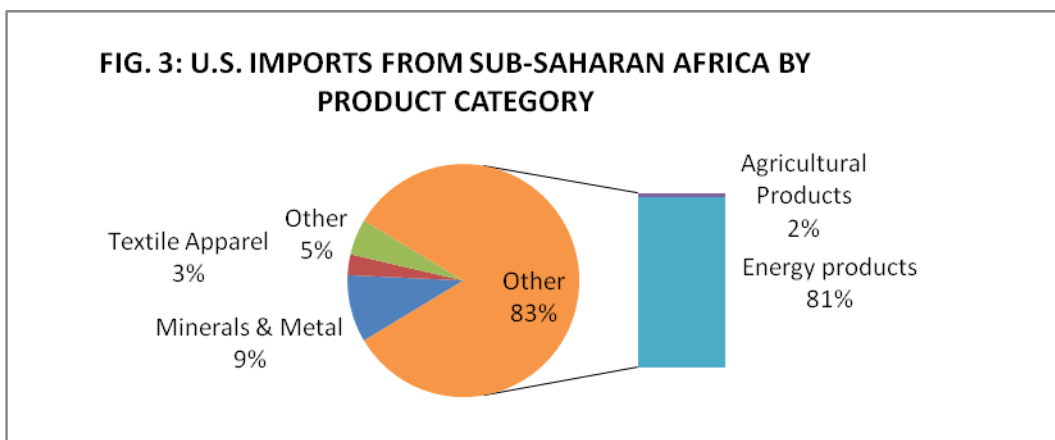




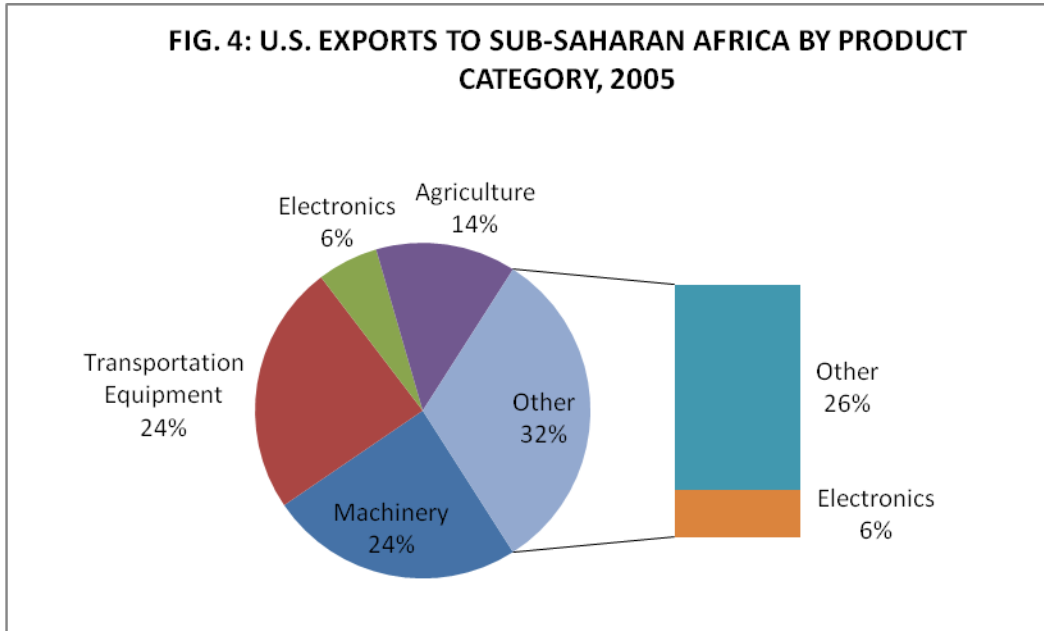
**Source:** U.S. International Trade Commission Data. Accessed 12th April, 2012 at: ([http://data web.usite.gov](http://data.web.usite.gov)).

In 2008, U.S. exported \$18 billion to sub-Saharan Africa or 1.6% of total U.S. global exports of \$86.1 billion from the region or 4.1% of its total imports of \$2,090 billion. Between 1990 and 2007, U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa quadrupled from \$17 billion to \$ 81 billion. (Jones, 2009:6). In terms of product significance, machinery and mechanical appliances ranked first in 2005 as U.S. exports to sub-Saharan Africa. (26%), followed by transportation equipment (25%), agricultural products (14%), and chemicals (4%). Mining equipment was also an important export sector,

followed by aircraft and aircraft parts, wheat, automobiles and telecommunication equipment. (See Figure 5). US imports from sub-Saharan Africa are mostly natural resources. Almost all the broad categories of products imported from the region in 2005 were energy products (18%), which were mainly petroleum and metals (9%), (Langton, 2006: 8). With new markets in which to sell their products and alternative sources of financing, African countries have been able to lower their dependence on traditional partners in the United States.



**FIG. 4: U.S. EXPORTS TO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA BY PRODUCT CATEGORY, 2005**



As Simon Freemantle recently noted, the major variables that make sub-Saharan Africa an attractive investment destination include a sizable and growing market; Africa’s urban swells, which is bringing people closer to economic opportunities; leapfrogging through technology, Africa’s resources potentials; and deepening financial sector (Nwokoji, 2011: 64).

**Foreign Direct Investment**

Although statistics about U.S. engagement with sub-Saharan Africa point to increasing economic relations in terms of (trade, commerce and investment), social development (health and education), and technical advancement. The composition of U.S. Foreign Direct investment (FDI) in Sub-Saharan Africa is tilted toward natural resources. In 2008, seventy seven percent of total U.S. investment in the region (including Egypt) spanned different areas of African economies. Prominent among them are those in mining especially petroleum extraction, manufacturing in primary and fabricated metals, and related ones (Jones, 2009: 11).

The estimates of FDI flow from U.S. to sub-Saharan Africa were \$12, billion in 2005, \$14 billion (2006), \$18 billion (2007), and \$20 billion (2008) respectively. However, in 2009,

U.S investment in Africa was a paltry \$4 billion. The major explanation that can be adduced for this development was the 2007-2009 global financial-economic crises. The U.S. investment in sub-Saharan Africa once again increased to \$6 billion in 2010 and \$ 11 billion in 2011. Economist Intelligence Unit, (EIU) market indicators and forecast cited in Vivian Jones (2009). Nonetheless, U.S. investment in Africa has a host of advantages, including transfer of technology, Knowledge, skills, complementing domestic capital employment and enhanced output, export and revenue performance.

**U. S. Development Aid to Africa**

Apart from foreign trade and foreign direct investment, (FDI), African – Americans have enjoyed significant influence on American government’s foreign aid policy for the Sub-Saharan African states. Both the executive and legislative branches of government have continued to respond positively in the direction of foreign aid to the African continent. For example, technical aid in the form of advisory services; personnel assistance usually professional experts in various fields; financial supports for projects contribute to economic growth, as well as financing of small and medium-scale enterprises are the common areas

development assistance in the U.S. foreign aid agenda to Africa.

Foreign aid is invariably seen as one supplementing those domestic resources (skills, savings, foreign exchange, etc) whose scarcity constitutes bottlenecks to African governments to be responsive to their people's needs. In other words, foreign aid is considered to be complementary to Africa's development goals and development aspiration. It was because of the importance that wealthy developed countries attach foreign aid to African countries that they pledged to increase aid to the continent by 0.7% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the 2002 Monterrey Conference. Expectedly, the United States also in Monterrey promised to take the necessary steps toward the 0.7% of its GDP target, and pledged additional aid through a Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), even though this initiative, arguably has come under attack because US has more to gain than African countries (Ero, 2008: 1).

The United States, in the year 2002 also promised to increase its development aid by 50% through MCA for the next three years. In monetary terms, the increment, in effect, amounted to US \$ 50 billion by the year 2006 thus, making Africa the major recipient of the MCA (White House, 2002).

In line with the MCA, the George W. Bush, Jr. administration pledged \$15 billion over five years to tackle HIV/AIDS in 14 African countries– (Redding, 2003: 74). This development was consolidated in the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR). President Obama more recently said to the Vanity Fair that as President, he plans to provide at least \$1 billion to expand PEPFAR a year. The plan was also to distribute generic anti-retroviral drugs (PEPFAR, 2007).

By the late 2009, sixteen sub-Saharan African countries signed compact or Threshold Programme agreements. These countries include: Madagascar (US \$ 110 Million), Cape Verde (\$ 110 million), Ghana (\$307 million), Mozambique (\$506.9 million), Lesotho (\$362.6 million), Liberia (\$ 15 million), Burkina Faso (\$480.9 million), Kenya (\$12.7 million), and Namibia (\$304.5 million). Others are: Niger (\$23 million), Rwanda (\$24.7 million), Sao Tome and Principe (\$8.6 million), Senegal (\$540 million), Tanzania (\$698 million), Uganda (\$10.4 million), and Zambia (\$22.7 million) for MCA programme. In 2008, the Millenium Challenge Corporation (MCC) got \$1.5 billion, \$ 875 million in 2009, and \$1.1 billion in 2010 for improving health care, schools, broadening immunization and other domestic infrastructure projects. The Obama administration requested \$ 1.2 billion for 2011 (Dagne 2011: 5).

**Table-2:** Leading U.S. Assistance Recipients in Africa

Country	FY2011 Request	FY2010 Estimate	FY2009 Actual	FY2008 Actual
Uganda <sup>a</sup>	480.3	456.8	404.1	389.7
Kenya <sup>a</sup>	713.9	687.6	829.4	634.4
South Africa <sup>a</sup>	586.3	577.5	544.8	574.2
Nigeria <sup>a</sup>	647.7	614.1	594.2	496.4
Zambia <sup>a</sup>	408.7	392.9	308.1	293.5
Ethiopia <sup>a</sup>	583.5	533.2	864.8	659.1
Tanzania <sup>a</sup>	549.6	462.5	464.9	361
Sudan	439.9	427.7	924.1	666.3
Mozambique <sup>a</sup>	415.0	386.9	317.9	284.3
Somalia	84.9	133.8	403.8	NA

Liberia	224.0	226.1	224.0	161.1
Rwanda <sup>a</sup>	240.2	208.1	195.8	157.8
Namibia <sup>a</sup>	102.9	102.8	112.0	108
Botswana <sup>a</sup>	77.4	77.3	81.4	79.5
Mali	169.0	117.8	102.6	59.6
Dem. Rep. Congo	213.2	183.0	296.5	161
Ghana	174.7	138.8	147.5	80.8
Malawi	178.9	145.7	115.6	105.9
Senegal	136.9	106.3	93.7	57.8
Côte d'Ivoire <sup>a</sup>	137.5	133.6	113.7	100.8
Madagascar	80.0	86.4	71.0	57.6
Angola	77.1	84.2	55.9	42.2
Guinea	18.3	22.0	13.3	14.2
Benin	33.4	36.4	30.9	29
Zimbabwe	99.0	89.0	292.3	82.6
Djibouti	6.6	9.4	5.8	5.1
Sierra Leone	30.3	31.1	20.0	22.8
Burundi	40.4	40.4	39.4	21.1

**Notes:** NA = Not Available. *Source: Congressional Research Service*

A cursory look at the figures in the above table shows that US assistance to the Sub-Saharan Africa witnessed a major increase from 2008 to 2011 with Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia and Tanzania taking the lead, followed by Uganda Sudan, Mozambique and Zambia. The Obama administration has placed conditionalities for U.S. aid to Africa in 2011 to include: good governance, economic development, transparency and accountability, health care, food security and climate change (Dagne 2011: 1).

For a successful implementation of the United States interventionist aid programmes in Africa, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides funds for various technical assistance programmes throughout the African continent. These programmes are aimed at improving trade within the region and between the region and the United States. Additionally, USAID supports regional efforts through its regional

missions and the four Regional Hubs for Global competitiveness, which are located in Ghana, Senegal, Kenya and Botswana. USAID bilateral missions support projects in individual African countries, including programmes to improve trade, visible and much-needed infrastructure, such as transportation and energy. Finally, USAID has gone a long way in providing funds to build international business linkage programme, South African International Business Linkages, which is implemented by the Corporate Council in Africa. (Jones, 2009: 20).

**African-American Influence and Strategies on American Trade, Investment and Aid Policies with regard to Sub-Saharan Africa**

Over the last few decades since the African-Americans started exercising some influence on American foreign policy (trade, foreign direct investment and aid) toward sub-Saharan Africa, some strategies have been adopted to

progressively play this role. One of such strategies is lobbying. Kwabena A-Manager (2010) defines lobbying as: A form of advocacy with the intention of influencing decisions made by legislators and officials of government by individuals, other legislators, constituents, or advocacy groups. Indeed lobby has been used as a leverage to influence American foreign policy on certain issues of interests. To the African-Americans, it may be on issues relating to foreign trade, foreign direct investment and aid in Africa. African – American lobbies for instance have a strong presence in Washington, D. C., and play a significant role in swaying policies affecting U.S. trade, US direct investment and development assistance policies towards the Sub-Saharan African countries. In other words, lobbies serve as a vehicle for articulating foreign policy voices for Africa.

Given the number of African Americans holding important political and economic positions in the US Congress, State Departments, State Houses of Assembly, State and municipal governments and the Judiciary, African-Americans have rallied to support specific issues affecting African countries. For example, as an African-American, President Obama was particularly vocal in the US Senate on U.S. – Africa foreign policy. With senator Chris Dodd, Obama co-sponsored the March 2007 Bill to amend the foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to increase public health efforts in Africa, although that bill is yet to be voted for in the senate ([www.Cfr.org/experts/world/barack-obama/611603](http://www.Cfr.org/experts/world/barack-obama/611603)).

#### **The Contribution of the Congressional Black Caucus (1970s-Present) and its Allies**

Gregory Meeks, a US congressman and a member of the Congressional Black Caucus has contributed to bolster African involvement in his congressional District in New York. In a statement, Meeks noted that: Unlike in the past, more African-Americans in the U.S. Congress were getting interested in joining the African Sub-Committee on International Relations (Akande, 2003: 80).

According to Meeks, African-Americans are now looking out for African interests the way

the Jewish lobby acts for Israel in the United States. Apart from individuals of African descent holding important positions in U.S. acting as spring board to influence U.S. foreign policy government and business enterprises, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), has been the most influential lobby group in the U.S. Congress since the 1970's, regarding sub-Saharan Africa, especially in terms of funding. The CBC was formed in the 1970s when thirteen black members of the U.S. Congress came together as a group to pursue legislative concerns on Africa. As Bernard M. Marabe notes: These members believed that a Black Caucus in Congress speaking with a single vote would provide political influence and visibility far beyond their individual members (CBC Pamphlet, 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress: 1).

Recently the CBC was made up of about 40 members, including 36 associate members strongly supporting CBC programmes and projects. CBC organizes annual legislative weekend Dinners which attract top black leaders including notable personalities throughout the country and sometimes from elsewhere. In prosecuting his aborted campaign for reparations for Africa arising from grievous damages inflicted on the continent due to the inhuman trans-Atlantic slave trade, the presumed winner of Nigeria's 1993 presidential elections, late Chief MKO Abiola, attended several of their meetings in the early 1990s and late 1980s. In 1993, for example, President Bill Clinton was the keynote speaker in a CBC event. In his remarks, President Clinton praised the CBC for its outstanding leadership, support of his administration and the important contributions made by African-Americans to the success of his administration. (Administration of William J. Clinton, Remarks at the CBC Diner September 18, 1993: 1812-1816).

In its role in U.S.- Africa foreign policy, the CBC influenced president Clinton's budget request for Africa to Congress by increasing it from US\$800 million to \$100 million (Marable, 1994). The House sub-Committee on Africa also made efforts to propose legislation to beef up the amount to at least \$ 1 billion (ibid.).

CBC works closely with other groups in foreign policy and domestic affairs. Prominent among such groups is Trans-Africa, a non-profit lobbying organization incorporated in Washington, D. C., With Randall Robinson as the executive director. Trans-African among other things is a potential political force in lobbying for favourable US foreign policy for Africa. In addition, Trans Africa has been instrumental in persuading successive American administrations and congressional leaders to make policies to strengthen U.S. commitments toward the sub-Saharan Africa.

Other African-American groups that have joined forces to create a collective voice, to garner much support for progressive U.S. foreign policy for Africa, especially in the areas of trade, FDI direct investments and foreign aid are: the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP); the Africa – American Institute; Africare; The Nation of Islam, the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues, various think tanks, and church groups.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The discussion of African-American influence on US government’s foreign policy on trade, investment and aid toward the sub-Saharan Africa since the late 1970s has been elucidated. In this paper focused on foreign policy behaviour comprising various forms of official statements or actions intended to represent the response of the US government on African issues, particularly foreign trade, investment, aid among others. Its highlights that African-American influence may take any of the following forms:

- (i) Changing the attitude and behaviour of U.S. foreign policy makers and government in favour of Africa;
- (ii) Serving as an important direct source of information or input into the decision-making system by articulating their concerns regarding American policy formation to become more than ‘mere voices in the wilderness’.

An evaluation of African-American influence on the U.S. – African foreign policy in the realm of trade, investment, and aid is a

challenging task. The authors are of the view that even though the success of the African-Americans’ influence on U.S. foreign policy toward Africa cannot be measured by the same bench-mark as those of Jewish-Americans, Irish-Americans and Polish-American, among others. However, African-Americans have certainly exerted strong influence on U.S. trade, investment and aid policy towards sub-Saharan Africa.

This point is evident from analysis of data on the volume of trade and investment between U.S. and Africa as well as U.S. aid to Africa. African-Americans have used and continue to employ lobbies as instrument of politics to influence the passage of bills that call for more trade, investment and aid from the U.S to Africa. For example, in 2000, President Clinton pushed African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), bill through the US Congress. This was a bill that authorized new U.S. Trade and Investment policy in Africa and provides trade and economic cooperation between the U.S. and African countries. The result of this bill can be seen from the increasing quantum of trade and investment between U.S. and Africa. The study also found that the African-Americans are in minority usually lacking significant representation within the policy making process, but with the cooperation of the various lobby groups (Congressional Black Caucus, NAACP, Trans-Africa, political and religious leaders, African-Americans have, like their counterpart racial and ethnic groups been able to sway U.S. foreign policy to favour the development of African countries through trade, investment and foreign aid.

Under this context, this paper seeks to make some recommendations as to what measures should be taken to increase the tempo of African-Americans in their efforts to successfully influence on U.S. foreign trade, investment and aid to sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Recommendations and Strategic Policy Options**

To increase the tempo and interest of African – Americans in their efforts to articulate their concerns regarding American government’s foreign trade, investment and aid policy to

sub-Saharan Africa, the paper recommend as follows:

- (i) There is need to organize and mobilize various African-American lobby groups in almost every significant city in the limited states. This sort of organization and mobilization makes it easier for the lobbyists to reach the American public in every part of the USA, and to use “grassroots” pressure tactics on the congress. This mobilization strategy was effectively applied during the civil rights movement in the 1960s;
- (ii) The need for African-Americans to cultivate the friendship of politicians who champion the cause of African-Americans and their ancestral homeland. Annual fund-raising dinners should be organized from time to time during which congressmen and White House Staff are invited as key-note speakers supported by strong media coverage.
- (iii) Trade and Investment under the African growth and opportunity Act (AGOA) created by President Clinton in 2000 and President Bush Jnr.’s administration in 2003 provide policy facilities for further deepening US-Africa foreign policy.
- (iv) In various public fora, there is the need for African-Americans to draw individually and collectively the attention of U.S. foreign policy makers and American people to accelerate the flows of trade, foreign direct investment and aid to Sub-Saharan African.
- (v) There should also be effective coordination of the various African-American policy constituency groups in their attempts to exert influence on the formulation of U.S.-African foreign policy.

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