

29 October 2009 - Wolpe Trust - Obama

1 hour 56 minutes

Introduction:

We would like to say that we are very happy that this evening's session can be done in partnership with the US consulate in Cape Town and we hope that this will be the first of many.

Prof Adekeye Adebajo

He has had a rich experience working on issues in and around Africa, doing policy work throughout the continent. Executive Director, Centre of Conflict Resolution

Introduction

Thank you for inviting me this evening. I wanted to sketch the historical background a bit before I get to Obama himself and since my co-presenter is an insider, I think I can be as rude as possible because we are not here to listen to an official position of US. We need to hear how we have been impacted on by USA.

The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Barack Obama, the first African-American president of the United States, is rather similar to his Africa policy. In both cases, the data is still to be generated after barely nine months in office, and both represent more promise than practice, a triumph of hope over experience.

The presidential campaign that run by Barack Obama in 2008 to become the first black man in the White House was nothing short of phenomenal. With a father from Kenya and white mother from Kansas, this 47-year old Harvard-trained lawyer defied all expectations. In the South African context, Obama's win would have been as improbable as Helen Zille – the white leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) – becoming president of a black majority South Africa. Blacks constitute 13 per cent of the United States population, and Obama – a first-term Senator from Illinois - was only the fifth-ever black senator in US history.

A wave of 'Obamamania' swept across the African continent, its Diaspora, and the world. Former South African president Nelson Mandela noted that: 'Your victory has demonstrated that no person anywhere in the world should not dare to dream of wanting to change the world for a better place;' then South African president Kgalema Motlanthe opined: 'Your election....carries with it hope for millions....of people of ...African descent both in Africa and in the diaspora;'

I went to listen to Obama speak in Cape Town as a Senator in August 2006. I was somewhat disappointed by his performance. He seemed like a machine politician, and dodged difficult questions, sometimes giving vacuous responses. His biographer, David Mendl, subsequently confirmed that he was jetlagged because I subsequently followed the rise and rise of Obama, and seen some of the most eloquent and inspirational performances given by any politician. His soaring, often biblical oratory promising a vision of a better America espoused by prophets like Martin Luther King who had gone before him, provided hope and succour to a pre-recession US desperately in

need of both. Barack appears to have a profound sense of justice and empathy, and wants to speak for the voiceless and powerless: people who are usually invisible to mainstream American politicians. As he himself put it, he wants to 'give voice to the voiceless, and power to the powerless.'ⁱ

One of the most important aspects of Obama's campaign is his attempts – evident in his 2006 book *The Audacity of Hope*ⁱⁱ – to try to educate Americans about their country's past sins, which many prefer to forget. While praising his country's greatness, Obama also exposed its historical 'gunboat diplomacy' in Latin America and the Caribbean; its proxy wars that propped up corrupt autocrats throughout the Third World; its ill-conceived and illegal war in Iraq in 2003; and its 'extraordinary rendition' of terror suspects to countries in which they could be tortured.

I lived in the US for a decade and noted that many Americans are instinctively generous people who want to help other people and other countries in distress. Many Americans in Peoria (in 'middle America', not Pretoria) are also, however, spectacularly naïve, parochial and ill-informed. They are often ill-served by a compliant media, parochial intellectual class, and timid political class that seems to pander more to corporate interests than explain the world to its citizens. This highlights the importance of a politician like Obama - a Kenyan-Kansan who was raised in Honolulu and Jakarta – and is perhaps the first truly global citizen who has run for, and won, the most powerful office on earth. One cannot imagine any of the 43 white men who occupied the presidency before Obama listing radical Martiniquan scholar, Frantz Fanon - author of *the Wretched of the Earth* – as one of his formative intellectual influences

So, that is the importance of Obama and that is as kind as I am going to be to America this evening. I am going to divide the talk into five sections. First, it is importance to acknowledge at the ignominious roots of US policy towards Africa. Second, it is importance of the cold war and the legislators and lobbyists in the US system of organised corruption. Third, we look at Clinton's African safari and we know that someone next to me served in that safari. Fourth, it is important to look at Bush's 'Black doves and white hawks' and then I will look at Obama's evolving policy towards Africa, which is barely nine months old and there is really not much there yet

Four centuries of a sordid trade in human cargo of Africans by American slave masters was followed by a century of colonial enslavement by European imperialists. These two defining events have shaped the relationship of African Americans and Africans with the West and no serious examination of US policy towards Africa can avoid focusing on the blighted legacy of slavery and colonialism both of which created a bond between African Americans and their ancestral home resulting in their efforts to influence US policy towards Africa. The early pan-African movement was led by William Du Bois who was the famous father of pan-Africanism and a lot of demands that were made at this time were basically limited to education, economic development and racial equality for Africans. But by the time of the 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester, its prophets were boldly demanding African independence and the torch was passed by Du Bois to leaders like Nkrumah and Kenyatta.

After the Second World War ended in 1945, the US at first portrayed itself as an anti-colonial power, urging decolonization in Africa and Asia. With the onset of the Cold War by the 1950s, Washington changed its anti-colonial rhetoric and talked instead of a global struggle for 'containment' and 'anti-communism.' The US no longer urged its European allies to surrender their African possessions, but instead came to regard the ubiquitous presence of France in Africa as a useful way of keeping the

Soviet bear out of large parts of the continent. Washington also provided military assistance to its NATO ally, Portugal, which helped it to continue its colonial presence in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau until a military coup in Lisbon in 1974.

US policy during the Cold War often ignored principles as basic as democracy and development and focused parochially on containing the 'red peril' in Africa through protecting and providing military and financial assistance to often brutal and undemocratic clients in exchange for political support and military bases. The cases of three American Cold War 'Emperors' in Africa – Liberia's Samuel Doe, Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, and Somalia's Siad Barre – illustrate the sheer expediency and cynical calculations involved in US policy toward Africa.

After the end of the Cold War, Barre, Doe and Mobutu were revealed to be Emperors without clothes, political dinosaurs living out their last days in a Cold War museum, humiliated out of power and abandoned by an errant, avuncular paymaster.ⁱⁱⁱ

In order to influence US foreign policy towards Africa effectively, it is important that one understands the intricate, labyrinthine world of policymaking in Washington D.C. A plethora of ethnic lobbyists and special interest groups seek to manipulate the policymaking process in their own favour. Jewish American groups have lobbied for Israel; Cuban Americans have lobbied against Fidel Castro; and Polish Americans have lobbied for Poland's entry into NATO.

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and TransAfrica had their greatest success in influencing US policy when sanctions were imposed on South Africa's apartheid regime in 1986 after two thirds of the US Congress had overridden a reactionary Reagan veto.

However, in order to influence US policy toward Africa, it is also important to understand the different government agencies and departments involved in this process. Some of the most important decision-making bodies include the Policy Coordinating Committee for Africa and the Deputies Committee at which representatives from the State and Defence departments, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Information Agency (USIA), the National Security Council, and the Treasury gather to discuss what to do about Africa. The debates in these fora are often crucial in influencing US policy towards Africa. The American decision to intervene in Somalia in 1992 and its decision not to intervene in Liberia in 1990 emerged largely from these policy debates. Africa policy is often left to mid-level officials, with senior administration officials tending to focus on more strategic areas of the world. As Michael Clough, one of the closest observers of US policy towards Africa, noted that Africanists in the State Department often follow three basic rules: don't spend much money; don't create situations that could lead to domestic controversies; and don't let African issues complicate policy in more strategic parts of the world.^{iv}

Bill Clinton has often been embraced by African Americans as one of their own. A myth even developed that Clinton was one of Africa's best friends based on two brief African diplomatic safaris in 1998 and 2000. You will remember that Toni Morrison, the otherwise brilliant African-American Nobel Literature Laureate, once described him as 'America's first black president'. Once Clinton and his wife started whipping up racial animosity, he revised that theme and then the first real black president got elected.

It is important to demythologize Clinton's Africa policy as one that in fact followed in the shameful neglect of his predecessors. Clinton, in fact, was no better friend of Africa than previous presidents. His democratization record was abysmal. Policy often resembled the Cold War era as strategic rationale was found to justify a failure to support multi-party democracy in various African countries. During one of his safaris, Clinton arrogantly dubbed as 'Africa's new leaders' Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi, Eritrea's Isais Afwerki, and Rwanda's Paul Kagame. These were effectively war lords who had taken power through the barrel of a gun and no sooner had he declared them Africa's new leaders did they go to war and turn their guns against each other. Eritrea and Ethiopia fought a bloody war between 1998 and 2000 resulting in 100 000 victims with no clear interest as to what the strategic interests were. It was described as two old men fighting over a comb. Then we had Rwanda and Uganda turning the DRC into a battleground fighting three times in Kisenge and killing dozens of Congolese.

Clinton failed to provide support for the UN mission in Somalia in 1993 after a botched US intervention, which was planned entirely from the Pentagon (mythologised by 'Black Hawk Down'). The US did not even tell the UN. As soon as the 18 US soldiers were killed, the US turned tail and the UN mission collapsed by 1995. We know 12 years later that Somalia was as anarchic as it was left.

However, the biggest US failure was the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 when the US blocked action in the UN Security Council to prevent genocide. There were 2500 troops on the ground with the UN. The US was not being asked to send troops but was asked to bolster the force. But, because Somalia had happened six months earlier, the US under Clinton decided that Congressional elections were coming up and you could not afford to have any Somali-type scenes and they blocked action. One of the best accounts is Linda Melvyn's account on Rwandan genocide which was able to get the secret Security Council briefings and you can see who said what. The US and Britain made sure that there was no UN action to stop the genocide.

The fact that \$2 billion of US aid annually goes to autocratic Egypt, while 48 sub-Saharan African states, comprising some of the poorest countries in the world, have to share less than \$1 billion of US excluding humanitarian assistance, was the clearest sign that political and strategic considerations, rather than poverty and democratic considerations, continue to drive US aid policy.

During the presidential campaign in 2000, George W. Bush Jr., coached by the first female African-American National Security Adviser, the horrible Condoleezza Rice, reiterated his lack of interest in Africa and subsequently spoke about Africa as if it were one country rather than a continent. As Bush noted in June 2001: 'Africa is a nation that suffers from incredible disease.'^v Ironically, Bush's African-American Secretary of State between 2001 and 2004, Colin Powell (whose parents came from Jamaica), seemed to identify genuinely with Africa.

But the 'dovish' Powell had to contend with powerful 'hawks' and members of the lily-white policy establishment in Washington. Dick Cheney had voted against Nelson Mandela's release from prison as a Congressman in 1986, branding the African National Congress (ANC) a 'terrorist' organisation. Walter Kansteinner III, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, was also opposed sanctions against Apartheid South Africa in the 1980s, and as late as 1990, considered Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to be unrepresentative of the aspirations of most South Africans. Talk about missing the boat of history.

The profound concerns in Africa about Bush's 'War on Terrorism' was that new justifications would be found to back autocratic allies who support the United States in its declared hunt for terrorists, rather than supporting democratic allies and principles. The US established, in 2002, a United States military base and a Joint Task Force Horn of Africa Command in Djibouti, with about 1 500 soldiers. It is still there despite Obama's smile. The base was established with the goal of tracking terrorists in the region, may yet come to mirror Washington's support of autocratic governments. Oil-rich Equatorial Guinea and oil rich Gabon, whose leaders by the US State Department's own admission were human rights abusers, were actually invited to Washington to meet with Condoleezza Rice and Bush respectively. So we see again some of the double standards, even with this gun slinging cowboy from Texas.

Equally disturbing to many Africans was the United States' decision in February 2007 to establish a new Africa Command (AFRICOM) on the continent. The details remained vague, but it seemed that the Pentagon was seeking to consolidate three commands covering Africa into one in order to be able to intervene more effectively on the continent to fight terrorism, stem conflicts and provide humanitarian assistance. This approach could further increase America's prioritising of militaristic anti-terrorist approaches to engaging Africa. Africa would be wise to be wary of such a close embrace with Uncle Sam and the dangers that such intimacy could bring for its own long-term security. Based on the history of US policy on the continent that we have just narrated, Africa should be wary of a self-appointed American policeman offering to patrol the continent in search of enemies.^{vi}

The one area, however, that the Bush administration can be given some credit for was its substantive contributions to the global battle against AIDS in Africa where real resources were put in there. Clinton talked a good game, but talk was cheap. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) involved a five-year commitment of \$9 billion between 2004 and 2008 to fifteen of the most heavily affected countries, including twelve in Africa.^{vii} There were criticisms of the anti-abortion and anti-condom conditions attached to funding weakened the programme's effectiveness. But, it makes more sense to look at what people actually do, rather than them coming to our continent to 'feel our pain'.

So, we go now to our brother, Obama.

The main outlines so far of Obama's early Africa policy, gleaned from his presidential campaign and early utterances, include: support for to the UN/African Union peacekeeping mission in Sudan's Darfur region; supporting South Africa and Nigeria to play a leadership role in Africa; and pushing for reform of the UN.^{viii} Sanctions have been renewed on Sudan although there is still continued engagement in the South and Darfur and in Uganda where Museveni keeps extending his rule after 20 years. Obama has just given him \$250 million because he sent troops to Somalia where the US does not want to go and where they are trying to fight against terrorists (where there are still so called terrorists in Somalia even under Obama, just like there are civilians being killed in Afghanistan).

Six months into his tenure, Barack Obama's visit to Ghana in July 2009 was a twenty-four hour sojourn and delivered a major address to the Ghanaian parliament on development and democracy in which he stressed that Africa was an interdependent and integral part of world. He supported African agency in sorting out African problems arguing that 'Africa's future is up to Africans.'

Obama further noted his own strong identification with Africa by observing: 'I have the blood of Africa within me.' His message was one of 'good governance' (though his earlier praise of deceased tyrant of oil-rich Gabon, Omar Bongo, as a peacemaker in June 2009, and his embrace of autocratic oil-rich Arab sheikhs and Chinese communists, appear to contradict this). So it appears that different rhetorical rules are being applied to us in comparison to other parts of the world. But the speech essentially noted that Africa needed 'strong institutions' rather than 'strong men.' I think that this was a message that was essentially right. People wondered why he chose Ghana as opposed to Kenya, Nigeria or South Africa. We know now that Ghana is just about to become a big oil producer. Exxon, which happened to give significant contributions to Obama's campaign, are negotiating a deal with the Ghanaian government. But the Chinese are moving in quiet aggressively and the deal has not been done as yet. I am not trying to suggest a conspiracy but it is very important that we recognise the world for what it actually is (laughter).

Following closely on Obama's heels was US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in what was a very well co-ordinated visit, where she sent the same sorts of messages that Obama did in terms of anti-corruption and democratisation etc.

What is to be Done?

In concluding this presentation, it is important that we offer some policy recommendations for a more enlightened US policy toward Africa. First, Washington must support democracy more consistently in Africa and not make exceptions that are politically expedient (eg Egypt, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea). Second, African-American lobbyists must support more education and research on African issues and continue to work with the Congressional Black Caucus and the tens of thousands of Africans in the US, and NGOs with an interest in Africa to build a strong constituency for Africa. This includes the Gates and Clinton Foundations respectively, which could all be a very powerful lobby for Africa. Third, Washington must support more strongly the role of UN peacekeeping in Africa as well as the strengthening of African regional organizations such as the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Finally, the US also needs to play more of a role in annulling Africa's \$290 billion debt which was largely accumulated by corrupt, monstrous African autocrats many of whom were fed with western loans during the Cold War era. America must eliminate its agricultural subsidies to its farmers (\$108 billion in 2005). Seventy percent of Africans are farmers. The US in 2005 spent \$108 billion in paying US farmers who do not need subsidies to compete against African farmers who are too poor to actually compete.

To conclude, in the true spirit of our ancestors, Africans must always welcome Barack back home, but should continue to hold his feet to the communal fire.

Dr Witney Schneidman

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I wanted to say thank you for inviting me and it is great to be back here in Cape Town. I was first here in 1986 and I really enjoy this city and its history.

One of the things that I did while I was involved in the Obama campaign was that I was co-chair of the Africa Experts Campaign, so I was very involved in developing an Africa policy, bringing people into the campaign and then I was a part of the transition team before going back to my consulting practice. But, I do need to say that I do not speak for the Obama administration.

I am so proud to be invited by the US Embassy to come down to give the first Senator Ted Kennedy anniversary lecture at the University of Pretoria on the 26th anniversary on the signing of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act. I will not be as colourful or dramatic as Ade, but I do want to respond to a number of points.

I would also like to start by looking at the Cold War before I can look at who Obama is and where he wants to go. The US did not only focus on anti-colonialism during the Cold War. I think it is broader than that. The main challenge to the US during this period was being true to its historical principles by supporting democracy and majority rule and its security interests. This played out in different ways.

During the Kennedy administration, the US voted against Portugal in the UN and against South Africa and it extended support to Frelimo and the FNLA in a symbolic way to send a message of support to say that these groups were the future. Now, Portugal was a NATO ally and it threatened to deny US access to the Azores islands where US ships would refuel on the way to Europe. There was a real battle between the Africanists and the Europeanists in the Kennedy administration. It did play out. By the time the Johnson administration came, the Vietnam War was engulfing American foreign policy with domestic turmoil and Africa slipped from the top of the American foreign policy agenda. In the Nixon administration, if you read the National Security decision memo 39 said that the 'whites are here to stay' and the only way that change can come about is through them. But that analysis was proved wrong in 1974 when the armed forces in Lisbon overthrew the dictatorship. That led to a proxy war in Angola with South Africa and the US together against Cuba and Angola (and the Soviet Union). Domestic pressure compelled the US to back off support for this conflict and Congress cut funding to the CIA. But, this had a very serious impact. When Angola became independent in 1975, the US did not normalize relations for another 18 years.

The legacy of the cold war is quite brutal. So, that means that you have to read the history closely and you have to look at all of the component parts.

Regarding the ethnic lobbyists, I think that this is really important point to speak about African policy. During the Regan era of 'constructive engagement', where they played down the traditional belief in majority rule in South Africa in favour of cutting a deal to get the Angolans out, in exchange for Namibian independence, it was American civil society and the CBC and this national movement that Senator Kennedy was a part, where students in cities and states who took actions on companies and US government and the South African government. You could see the conflicting forces but civil society and Congress eventually won out.

The process of creating Foreign policy is not one person making decisions that involves the State Department, intelligence agencies and the White House to get around the table to try and arrive at the right decision.

I would debate Michael Clough's idea that Africa policy is left to mid-level officials. That might have been true at one time but no longer. When I was doing research for my dissertation and I interviewed someone who had been on the National Security Council during the Johnson administration and I asked him what the role of the Assistant Secretary was, and he said that the role was to keep Africa off the desk of the Assistant Secretary. But a lot of that has changed.

The campaign of Obama

I was in the Clinton administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and I was responsible for AGOA and economic and commercial issues in Sub-Saharan and Southern Africa. We think we did a lot during the Clinton administration. Clinton inherited a mission from Somalia that President Bush had initiated for good humanitarian reasons. But when those two Blackhawk helicopters were shot down and 16 American soldiers were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu and the world watched on CNN, it was a searing experience for us and a searing experience for this young administration and indeed it did back off.

It was one of the reasons why the US administration stood by during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. If you listen to former President Clinton, he has apologized for that and that was his deepest regret as President that he did not take action to respond to that. But, it is also important to realize that in 1994, the US Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown made his first visits to South Africa and Botswana and he argued that the US has commercial interests in Africa that transcend oil. He said that trade and investment can be made into a part of the US-Africa relationship. This played a big role for the strong US support during the transition in 1994 in South Africa. President Clinton understood that if the US did not support South Africa, the notion of success would be lesser. This led to the creation of the Gore-Mbeki bilateral commission and it had working groups on a number of issues (education, trade and investment) and we developed a strong and important relationship that made a positive impact during the Clinton years.

The 12 day, 6 nation visit that Clinton took was unprecedented. The American president always goes to Europe for various conferences but a US president had never been to Africa on the scale that Clinton wanted to. He wanted to shine the light on the progress that was being made on the continent in terms of conflict resolution, good governance and job creation. He wanted to send a good message back home that often most Americans do not get a chance to hear. That was an important trip and helped to establish numerous programs.

When it came time to pick sides between Hilary and Obama, I had a couple of conversations about this guy Barack Obama and I read his biography. Not only was he the son of an African academic who moved to the US, the product of a mixed race marriage, he grew up in Indonesia and went to an Islamic school. I was just thinking, this is America, this is the world. This is the message that we need to send to the rest of the world. Plus, he is a really smart guy – he went to Harvard, he was editor of the Law Review.

Once I realized that, it did not take me long to decide to get involved in the campaign. Then they asked me to chair the Africa Experts Group and it was extraordinary as all of these people kept coming to us saying that ‘we want to help, we want to help’. It included University Presidents, 25 year olds with law degrees – a truly remarkable experience. The slogan was ‘No drama – Obama’, which meant that we are all serious about changing America, we are really serious about making this world a better world. People were not into it for their egos, but rather an outpouring all throughout the campaign. My son took a semester out from college to go and run the campaign in South Eastern Iowa. That was the amazing thing – it was fathers, sons, daughters, people from all walks of life. One of the things that we did during the campaign is that we reached out to the African Diaspora in the US. We realized that the deal has changed because since 1970, more Africans have come to the US than came throughout the whole ‘middle passage’. What are they doing in the US today? The African Diaspora in the US has the highest number of professional positions and degrees in comparison to any other Diaspora community. We wanted to reach out to let them know that their vote mattered (because many of them had not voted before), but because they earned so much money, we wanted them to contribute. But we also felt that once we won, we thought that the Somalian community could be a key link for US policy in rebuilding that country, because USAID is not going to do it.

Obama foreign policy in Africa - What is the vision?

It is important to start with the global security agenda of the Obama administration. He has said time and time again that the security and well being of Americans is linked with the security and well being of people else-where. This is a very different dynamic to the Bush administration. Their global security police was ‘either you are with us or against us’, ‘this is a war on terror’ and the Obama administration took a conscious decision to reject that approach. Obama was clear in his distinction between the 1.5 billion Muslims in the world and the 40 000 – 60 000 jihadists (see Cairo speech). Where there are people who want to attack Americans, we will respond in kind where we have actionable intelligence (hence the attack on Somalia). But, this is a very different approach because it is saying that this is not a war against Islam, this is a world that we all need to be in together and our own well being in dependent on yours.

When it comes to Africa, his trip to Ghana was important for several reasons. It is important to realize that Obama went first to Russia, then to a G8 Summit and then Ghana. Obama wanted it to be this way because he said that he wanted people to realize that Africa is a part of the world, it is not a world apart. It is important for Americans to realize that it is an 8 hour flight from JFK to Accra, it is also an 8 hour flight from JFK to Paris. President Obama wants to integrate Africa into the world’s foreign policy. His major message was that the core of the American agenda in Africa is good and effective governance, which includes accountability and transparency. Secretary Clinton’s trip, a month after Obama’s, really helped to develop that agenda. She went to Kenya, she opened the US-

AGOA forum where she said that we have to develop AGOA, it has to become more relevant to more people. She engaged with the Kenyan government. She did not wag her finger publicly, but behind closed doors she said that the Kenyan government has to do better and live up to their commitments and develop a new constitution. She said that the Kenyan government has to hold people accountable for the violence that occurred in aftermath of the elections in 2007.

Clinton came to South Africa and helped to open a new page. US- South Africa relations are very important and she started to look at areas where the US and South Africa can look to work together such as climate change and agriculture. Then she to Angola where the government presented her with a proposal for a strategic dialogue and how it would be structured. She was the first US Secretary of State to spend the night in Luanda. This was an acknowledgement of the progress being made in that important country. From there she went to the DRC and met with President Kabila in Kinshasa and then she went to the Eastern DRC where the issue of sexual violence against women was very much on her agenda. It is saying that we need an Africa policy that is all inclusive because we are going to try to do many things and women are vital to any progress that Africa is going to make and violence against them is a tremendous evil and impediment to that progress.

From there she went to Nigeria and the Nigerians were upset that Obama did not come. And the message was very clear – the US is very concerned about governance issues in Nigeria and specifically corruption issues. However Nigeria is the most important country with 150 million people. You will hear Ambassador Carson saying that Nigeria is the most important country on the continent and what he was really saying was that it cannot fail. There was a frank discussion and an agreement to create a bi-national commission with Nigeria so we can dig down on issues of governance and accountability, energy security and the conflict in the Delta, transportation and immigration issues.

Then the Secretary went to Liberia, where she was with President Johnson , who is doing an extraordinary job in rebuilding that country after 20 years of conflict. Then she went to Cape Verde and then came home. In 9 months of the Obama administration, we have had top 2 officials to come to the continent and lay out a comprehensive agenda. We have the President laying out \$3.5 billion for food security initiatives. We have had the appointment of a number of people (Carson and Rice), people with a great understanding and commitment to Africa who are positioned to make a difference. So, I am hopeful and confident that in 4-5-6 years from now, we will see a robust Africa policy.

Let me close on one point that is important – the continuity policy. One of the things that the African Growth and Opportunity Act pleaded was a bipartisan consensus between Democrats and Republicans and that it is in the US interest to invest in African development. This led to AGOA and the \$15 billion going towards PEPFAR, led to the creation of the Millennium Challenge Account and the creation of Africom.

Let me say one thing about Africom. It is clear that its rollout was poorly communicated. The notion was that it would militarise Africa and the US. Bush administration did not take the time to consult appropriately on the continent by talking and listen and take the time to do the preparatory work that was necessary. Hence, Africom was misunderstood.

I would argue that this initiative is a positive development because what Africom is doing at the moment is working with African militaries to make them more professional, to enhance civil-military relations to enhance the ability of African nations to contribute to UN peace-keeping operations and to contribute to an overall security environment. For instance, right now, Africom is working with Liberia to develop a Coast Guard facility so they can patrol their waters to avoid people coming into their waters to take their fish. This means that the government can get the revenues of their natural habitat.

It is important for UN peacekeeping. At the UN General Assembly in September 2009, President Obama was the first president to address the General Assembly. He also had a luncheon for those governments who contribute the most to UN peacekeeping operations as a signal to say 'what you do is very important and we want to be there with you'. This is a signal that the US is going to try to engage the UN and work with the UN and Africa will be the biggest beneficiary of that.

On the issue of debt relief

This is something that started in the Clinton administration and followed through to the Bush administration and there is a recognition that those governments that have inherited debt from previous governments that squandered resources do not deserve to carry that burden. Progress is being made on this. About 6 months ago in the DRC, where there has been a lot of progress in terms of debt relief, the Chinese wanted to extend a \$9 billion loan which would have put new debt loan. So, the Chinese restructured that to a \$6 billion loan.

Removal agricultural subsidies

This probably hits on the most important issue, and that is enhancing Africa's agricultural productivity. But this is a priority of this administration but this is a value change— it is not just subsidies and not the US doing it unilaterally. I think that this has to be dealt with in the context of the WTO and dealing with these issues so that Africa can have access to markets throughout the world. This would mean that Africa can have access to markets throughout the world and if we don't have the right approach, then it will not be sustainable. It is also about irrigation and mechanization. Thailand has more tractors than sub-Saharan African. These are really tough issues.

But, the important thing is that we are able to have sessions like this where we are able to throw ideas around and exchange views and I wanted to thank you for inviting me to be here.

Prof Adekeye Adebajo- First Response to Dr Witney Schneidman

Before I answer some of the questions, I would first like to respond to some of the comments made by my co-presenter because I think that sometimes people like to patronize Africans. You see, a lot of evidence before you and then you are told that you are being too simplistic or you are not reading history closely enough. But, this history has been written by Americans. They have written the same sort of things. We can disagree but the content of history, but saying that a history is too simple does not recognize that we may see the same history in a different way. But I do not respect your own perspective any less nor will I call it parochial or simplistic.

In terms of self-determination, I think that you brushed over a lot of the US record in Africa by trying to explain it in terms of Vietnam or the difficulties internally. Obama went to Cairo in June this year and a US President actually acknowledged that it has helped to topple a democratically elected government in Iran in 1953. This is a fact, it is not a 'not close reading of history'. It is not simplistic, it happened. One should not insult our intelligence by saying that 'we have changed' or 'we were having difficulty at the time'. You know, there are victims of American actions all over the world. The way that Regan towards Apartheid in condoning it delayed the liberation of this country. We cannot dismiss this somehow as not a close reading of history or simplistic. These things happened.

Just as black Americans had to fight their own countrymen in the 1950s and 1960s to be seen as equal, we claim the right to do the same too and have that history respected. I think that it is also important to note that it is not just Clough saying that Africa is treated by middle level officials and not as a priority. Cohen, who is one of your most knowledgeable Assistant Secretary's of State between 1989 – 1993, wrote a book *Intervening in Africa* and I actually interviewed him while I was doing my research and he confirmed a lot of what has been said by Clough. It is not a matter of heresy.

AGOA, which you were praising: 93% came from oil exports. How can you then say that AGOA is actually a success? Non-oil imports from AGOA have declined. Most of AGOA has been based on oil. It has not done what it was designed to do, which was to increase a diverse range of exports from Africa to the US.

Clinton went to Rwanda in 1998 and he lied. He said that he did not know what was going on at the time. And subsequently, the research shows that the US actually had all of the intelligence. He failed to act on the information that he had.

Clinton was an excellent President for America, not for Africa. He was a brilliant political actor. But, we have to be honest with ourselves when we assess these things. Remember that it took Clinton 6 years to go to Africa and only after he was re-elected. If it was so important for him, would he not have gone a bit earlier?

Africa was the only place where an analyst can make a statement like 'the Secretary of State Hilary Clinton was the first Secretary of State to have spent the night in Luanda. Can you imagine saying that Secretary of State Clinton was the first one to have spent a night in Paris? Is it not ridiculous to be patronized in that way? How does it help us that Hilary to spend the night in Angola or that

Obama came to Africa in the first 6 months? Is that what you are looking for or are you looking for concrete things that actually change a basically unequal relationship?

Clinton actually went to Africa during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, where he met Mandela, who helped him to stiffen his moral backbone.

I do not think that my own history is any less rigorous than yours.

Dr Witney Schneidman – First response to Prof Adekeye Adebajo

Prof Adebajo, let me say that there is no attempt to be patronising. But, people would agree that we have different readings of the Cold War era and US foreign policy towards Africa. We did make some big mistakes - we count them, we know them (Zaire and elsewhere throughout the continent). But I think that we also need to acknowledge some of the successes like during the Kennedy administration and the Carr administration and the strong support for Zimbabwe's and Namibia's independence. It is not about taking credit for anything though.

I think that there was an era where Africa was way down on the US Foreign Policy agenda, but that is not the case anymore and I can say that having been there. The fact that the Secretary of State and the President came to Africa in the first six months of their office is an indication that our top officials are engaged on African issues.

AGOA

When I talk about AGOA, I separate out oil because that comes in to the US whether AGOA exists or not. It is rather about that 5% that is largely apparel based. South Africa is much more diversified and is by far the biggest recipient of AGOA. And when you look at the statistics that between 2000 – 2007, apparel exports to the US did increase steadily and the effect was particularly beneficial, especially on a country like Lesotho. During this period in Lesotho, more jobs were created in the private sector than the public sector, and today that is still the case. AGOA needs help, because only a handful of countries are benefitting from the non-oil exports (including South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, Swaziland, Mauritius). There is a lot of discussion now in the US and agriculture is at the forefront. And if we can unilaterally address the subsidies, then we will. Subsidies are addressed in the Farm Bill. But, maybe there is something we can do, especially if our friends in the EU do the same. Clinton could have gone to Africa earlier, but between Somalia and Rwanda, there was not a clear understanding of Africa.

You mentioned Monica Lewinsky, which I am glad you did, because that, for me, was not a scandal but an eye opener. I went into government when that broke and I got into government in the Africa Bureau during that period (1997). In January 1998, we were told that the President is going to Africa and you guys need to organize the trip and here are the countries. So, we started to work 24/7 to put it together. And then the crisis broke. And I will never forget coming home at 11 pm at night, utterly exhausted because I had been at the White House at 7 am, to hear this breathless journalist saying that the President is involved with a sexual scandal and the White House is paralysed. I was like 'paralysed'? It is often not what it seems.

Prof Adekeye Adebajo- Second Response to Dr Witney Schneidman

I am still going to contest your version of history because I think it is selective.

You talked about Namibia and UNSC 435 as if it was a good thing in 1978. But, following the resolution, you failed to mention what happened which is that Crocker, the US Assistant Secretary of State, then delayed that independence by 12 years because he linked withdrawal of Cuban troops in Angola (which was completely unrelated) to the independence of Namibia. Please do not pull the wool over our eyes here, our eyes are wide open. It is a new Africa you are coming to now. It is not 1986 when you broke sanctions to come here.

You talked about AGOA and Lesotho as if it were some kind of success. Do you know that between 2005 – 2007 20 000 jobs were lost in the textile industry in Lesotho? It has been shown that a lot of the Malaysians and others who invested in South Africa to take advantage of AGOA a lot of that data has shown that it has not been successful. A lot of US analysts get away with this because people often do not have the data to counter it. They trumpet how much they are doing for Africa or how many millions they are contributing, without actually following it through.

Dr Witney Schneidman – Second response to Prof Adekeye Adebajo

Africom

Does it strengthen militaries when we need to be strengthening democracies? It is not a perfect world, we are just trying to get it right here and focus on mutual security issues, not empower militaries to take over civilian governments. Equipment is given with training and the controls. It does not always go right but do you sit back and do nothing or try to go forward and get it right and make changes in the process.

Globalization

Kofi Annan said that what Africa needs is not less globalization but more. But clearly there is a downside to it when it leads to deindustrialization, when companies come in and don't respect the laws of the country/induce corruption. But, there is an upside that we need to acknowledge.

AIDS & generic drugs

I agree with you, I think that the Clinton administration just did not get it on HIV/AIDS & ARVs. At that time the mindset was all about 'prevention'. That was going to be our approach. The notion that we could come up with any kind of drugs, generic or not, seemed to be outside of anyone's comprehension. It was left to President Bush to come up with PEPFAR where 2.3 million people are on ARVs. The Clinton Foundation is now doing a whole lot of work getting people on generic drugs. The dynamic has changed for the better.

Oil

It is hard to go any country on the coast of Africa where there is not oil these days. How do we get governments to use oil revenues responsibly? I do not buy the notion that oil is a curse. It is the people who make decisions about what to do with the revenues that are the problem and they need to be held accountable and invest those resources.

Question time

- 1. My concern is that if Africa constitutes only 2.5% of the global economy, why should the USA spend more than 2.5% of its time on Africa? Is it not time for Africa to not worry about the US and the rest of the world thinks, but to see what it can do for itself?**

Prof Adekeye Adebajo: It gets 15% of its oil from Africa, which will get 25% from Africa in the future as the Middle East becomes less important. Hence, Africa as a whole might not be that important, but there are certain parts of Africa that are important, and we need to use those to the best of our advantage.

Dr Witney Schneidman: Obama wants a robust policy in Angola which he will not measure in terms of '2.5%' of his time, but in terms of success. He wants to work on successful areas and make progress – the more progress, the more time and the more resources will be invested.

- 2. All US presidents want to become 2 term presidents. I am sure that Obama also wants to serve two terms and that is why he is not acting on many of his original promises so that they will not be unpopular and he can be re-elected. For example – his backtracking on Israel and the issue of Jerusalem as its capital. This has been disappointing.**

Dr Witney Schneidman: I am not going to get into the Israel issue because I do not follow it as closely and I would want to misrepresent it. But I do want to talk about whether he is doing something until he gets reelected. And there I point you towards the issue of Afghanistan. There is a big debate now about whether we should commit more troops or not. And this policy review has been going on for some months now which has led Dick Cheney to accuse the Obama administration to being weak and being unable to make a decision. But, I can tell you that he is trying to get it right. Because there is no easy answer to the counter-insurgency, to dealing with a government that is frankly totally corrupt and does not represent its own people. What is the decision for Afghanistan and the US, where the US would send its own troops to war, into harm's way. These are not easy issues and I think that this administration is going to deal with it on its merits as its number one concern.

Prof Adekeye Adebajo: You did not want to talk about Israel, which is a crying shame. How can anyone be quiet about Israel? You cannot have a double standard in this world. All of us need to talk about Israel. Edward Said fought a lonely battle on this score. And to simply dump this issue by saying you are not an expert and in the next sentence race onto Afghanistan is not acceptable.

- 3. Professor Adebajo said that President Bush seemed to treat Africa as one nation. But when you talk about debt relief, you want Africa to be treated as one. We do not want Africa to be lumped as one (for instance around government and the issue of Mugabe). Do we support regimes that continue to support the rights of African people?**

Prof Adekeye Adebajo: These debts were built up in the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1970 – 2002 Africa actually paid \$550 billion out of an initial \$540 billion which was loaned. So, it is the interest that keeps accumulating. There is no moral argument to continue to repay these debts because a lot

so the people who are suffering and having to use 15%-25% of their foreign exchange earnings to service interests on debts that people know can never be repaid. And, these are not people who voted but people who took the debt in the first place. There must also be some responsibility placed on the creditors and the debtors as well because these loans were actually being pushed on African countries as a result of the petrodollars that were being generated in the 1970s. There is a moral issue here in that you cannot punish generations of people. People all have to learn to be more responsible because people should not extend these kinds of loans in the future. So, even if you wiped out all of the \$290 billion of debt, it does not mean that Africa has recovered or that dictators are going to go ahead and are not going to build up another \$290 billion debt, but it is the necessary thing to do to let the countries which have good leaders and want to progress. The world markets would not feel anything if the debts were wiped out in one day, they would not even notice it, but for Africans, it has tremendous implications.

- 4. I am deeply concerned about your comments about coming to Africa to improve our so-called security. It seems like a thin veil to militarizing of Africa. We have enough guns in Africa. The investment of the US in Israel is so vast in comparison to the investment in any other country and much of that is in military hardware. If you are really interested in Africa, then surely 'education, education, education' is what the US, as the richest country in the world, should be investing in.**

Dr Witney Schneidman: I agree with you that there are too many arms on this continent, but Africom is not about arming Africa or military sales. There are no military sales to be had. We are not selling weapon's systems to Uganda or Kenya, it is really about training. We share interests in counter-terrorism. When you lose an embassy as we did in Kenya and Tanzania, we want to be working closely with their intelligence and military services to make sure that does not happen again. What happened in Kenya? 200 people were killed, the 15-20 of those were Americans and 2000 people were hurt, the vast majority of which were Kenyans. There are common interests around here. The role that Africom is going to play under Obama is clearly defined, and defined in such a way that it supports other objectives that we are trying to achieve. I could debate this till the cows come home and I am probably not going to convince you but we can come back here in the future and we can see who is right and who is wrong.

Prof Adekeye Adebajo: A lot of the training by the US is not just training, but also providing equipment for these African armies to pursue terrorists and a concern has been expressed by civil society groups that you could actually be strengthening militaries at the time when Africans have finally got them out of power. I do not think that it is just training.

- 5. You mentioned that Obama received the Nobel Prize but here in Southern Africa, we would have liked to see it going to Tsvangirai because he stands for democracy in Zimbabwe at great personal cost. So my question: is there any way that we can put it on the conscience of Obama that in return for him getting the Nobel Prize, he should make it his business to get rid of the tyranny of Mugabe?**

Dr Witney Schneidman: What Obama said when he received the award was that 'I do not deserve this'. This is for transformative figures like Mandela and Tutu, I have not done that. That did not mean that he did not accept it (laughter), what he said was 'I accept your challenge to do that'. That is a pretty big challenge to take on. The first African leader that Obama received at the White House

was the Tanzanian President and the second one he received was Tsvangirai. Obama is aware and he follows these issues closely.

- 6. It is true that America's actions and inactions have had a checkered history. But, this is simply too easy to criticize. Is the main issue is not China? China has gone to Sudan where Wen Jiabao said that we do not ask questions in Sudan. In the current state of the Chinese onslaught, don't you think that America not a better strategic ally than China?**

Prof Adekeye Adebajo: Although I was described by the brother asking this question as 'anti-Western', if you look at my accent, I am clearly a product of the West. I went to American and British schools. I am not just bashing the US because it is fun or some kind of sport, but the actions that the West has undertaken in Africa of the past five decades have had a tremendous impact on the continent, much of it negative. So, why should we not say that?

80% of trade is still with the colonial power. So, what they do is absolutely critical. It is important not to say that it is 'either China or the West'. You have to use China in order to negotiate with the West. And I don't agree with you that China has bolstered Zimbabwe's regime. China has bolstered Sudan's regime because it started to invest heavily in its oil industry and it is a much more important player over there. But, although China has invested in Zimbabwe's economy, it is not the most important actor in that situation. We should be a plague on both of their houses. We should criticize China for supporting autocratic governments or destroying/damaging textile industries but it is not as simple as an 'either or' (China or the West).

Dr Witney Schneidman: Adebajo said that we should use China to negotiate off the West. And I guess I would differ with that. One of the projects I have been engaged with is the Africa-China-US Trilateral Dialogue. And I think that China and the US need to be working together in Africa to assist African governments. I do not think that it is really possible to use China to get leverage over the US and it does not appear to be a successful method in diplomacy. I think that we should acknowledge the contributions that the Chinese make (roads, ports, computer systems) but then also ask 'what are the terms of the deal'? For instance, are you involved with the 'Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative'? What is your environmental policy? Are you creating jobs? Are you transferring skills? This is the kind of dialogue that we should be having with them.

- 7. I would just like to get your response – you say that Obama is concerned about democracy, accountability and good governance. The CIA has become quite involved in a number of initiatives in Africa. Now, we also know that President Zuma was hosted by agencies close to the CIA before he was elected. We also know that these agencies have been active in South Africa in the policy of the ruling party. What are your thoughts about the role of these agencies?**

Dr Witney Schneidman: The reading of the Cold war history shows that the CIA has done some horrible things, not only in Africa but around the world. Patrice Lumumba, it is well documented and unacceptable because it goes against American law and people should be held accountable. At the same time, the CIA has contributed a lot. What is the role of an intelligence agency? On the one hand, it is to provide information for government officials to make decisions on and that is an

important function and that is why all countries have intelligence agencies with good people to do the task and trained to abide by the laws of the land. The question to ask is how to get more accountability over our intelligence agencies.

Prof Adekeye Adebajo: By golly, I could not believe that you actually praised the CIA. I nearly fell over my chair. 9/11 was surely one of the greatest intelligence failures in history and you say that some of the are good people, but surely good people do not torture or set up camps in North Africa where torture takes place.

Dr Witney Schneidan : I would agree that it was a huge intelligence failure. And not because we did not have the intelligence. In August 2001, there was an intelligence brief saying that Al Qaeda was getting ready to attack the USA and the US was forced to have a look at the connection between intelligence and decision making and what you do with the intelligence that you get. Intelligence services have to be under the rule of law and the debate we are having at the moment in the US is whether we prosecute those who transgressed the rule of law or not? The attorney general made a decision that made people believe that they could act in a specific way and how we deal with that is our responsibility. The important point is that the Obama administration is respecting the rule of law and will do things differently.

Moyo's book – *Dead Aid* – her argument was that the West should cut off aid to Africa and although her argument was a bit simplistic, it touched a nerve because of the frustrations attached to aid. In there she says that governments can go to the bond market – there are other ways to finance development. We need to look at ways to finance development. We need to look at aid programs that include an end game – when do we transfer out?

- 8. I come from Conservation International. We need to stop this victim mentality as a continent by asking what other countries can do for us. Africa is one of the wealthiest areas on the planet. We have a significant degree of natural resources. We need to take places like Botswana as an example by saying that we value what we have. It is a model for a country that managed to maintain control of its wealth through its negotiations with countries like De Beers. It is time for Africa to stand up and say what we have is great and not let the outside world lecture us.**

Prof Adekeye Adebajo: I do not see myself as a victim. Nigeria, my country, went into Liberia in the 1990s in the middle of awful civil wars where over 200 000 people were killed and they lost 1500 troops. That is not the example of a victim, but responsible neighbours. To think that it took the loss of 18 US soldiers and 10 Belgians to withdraw from Somalia and Rwanda respectively, then the Nigerian action is actually quiet heroic for one country to lose that any soldier's in another country's civil war. A lot of what Mbeki did, which people do not give him credit for by deploying 3000 troops to the DRC, is not a sign of a victim. It is a bit of a distortion. I am also careful of portraying Botswana as a model. I was there earlier this year for a conference and there were reports of extra-judicial killings. I must be careful not to airbrush these countries. And while it is important to find success stories in Africa, we must look carefully at them before declaring them so.

9. **My sense is that nothing is going to change because the Americans are not going to change their economic policy. It is clear that the people that Obama has in his administration are all people who brought us to this terrible situation that we are in now. They are all there giving him advice again. There is no change in the whole idea in the concept of globalization. When you talked about the Gore – Mbeki dialogue – it was also very much about ensuring that the South African government was not to create generic drugs, which created a terrible situation and as a result, hundreds of thousands of Africans died here as a result of their policy. Foreign policy is not complicated for the US – it is about oil and countries that whole-heartedly support the US. If you look at the countries that Obama went to, they were the oil countries or those with the potential for oil. G-d help us if we ever find oil here (South Africa). There is so much mineral wealth that they are interested in. Obama has caved in in a terrible way to the Israelies and have left the Palestinians high and dry yet again. And we know that there is not one Israeli government that has conceded on the issue of houses in the West Bank. It is shameful that they were allowed to get away with the Gaza massacre.**

10. **Education and Africa’s future. If you look at all of the studies of Africa, they are not housed in Africa but in Europe or the US. This capacity seems to be going down. We are also going out of Africa. How do we harness that capacity and make sure that it stays here?**

Prof Adekeye Adebajo: While it is true that many of our educational institutions have become weaker on the continent over the past few decades, I am heading up a think tank here which is a pan-African institution that works across the continent and is trying to strengthen the institutional capacity of ECOWAS and the AU and we have also produced 9 books on transitional justice, and the UN and South Africa in Africa. So, there is scope to build an African brains trust. Unfortunately, South Africa, which does not always embrace Africa and sometimes suffers from a cultural schizophrenia, is the best country from which to do this. But, I would not give up on it. There are other institutions that are producing world-class research (CODESRIA in Sengal).

ⁱ Quoted in Mendell, *Obama*, p.6.

ⁱⁱ Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, Crown Publishers, 2006.

ⁱⁱⁱ On US policy toward Africa during the Cold War, See Salih Booker, "US Foreign Policy and National Interests in Africa", *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 8 no.1, Summer 2001, pp.1-14; Michael Clough, *Free at Last? US Policy Toward Africa and the End of the Cold War*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992); and Peter Schraeder, "Removing the Shackles? US Foreign Policy Toward Africa after the end of the Cold War", in Edmond Keller and Donald Rothchild (eds.), *Africa in the New International Order: Rethinking State Sovereignty and Regional Security*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996); pp.197-205.

^{iv} Clough, *Free at Last?*, p.2.

^v Quoted in Frank Bruni, "Deep US-Europe Split Casts Long Shadow on Bush Tour," *The New York Times*, 15 June 2001, p.A6.

^{vi} See M. Ruiters, 'AFRICOM Bodes Ill for Africa', *Global Dialogue* 12(1), 2007: 4–5 and 38; T. Whelan, 'Why AFRICOM?' *Global Dialogue* 12(2), 2007: 31–36.

^{vii} Copson, *The United States in Africa*, pp. 42–65.

^{viii} See Honore Banda, 'Who Will be Best For Africa?' *The Africa Report*, no.10 April-May 2008, p.48.