

"AID" AND DEMOCRACY: HOW THE 1991 GULF WAR SHAPED THE AFRICAN VIEW OF THE U.S.

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Introduction

The United States (U.S.) victory over Iraq in the Gulf War in January of 1991 gave great impetus to the much heralded U.S. concept of a New World Order¹. It demonstrated U.S. military might and sent out a clear message that the U.S. has the capability of enforcing its will wherever and whenever it desired. This ominous reality was already being facilitated by the rapid crumbling of communist Eastern Europe and the unexpectedly speedy capitulation of former Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev.

All these developments have a direct and significant bearing on the economic and political future of African, Arab and, indeed, all Third World countries. The conduct of the U.S. during and after the 1991 Gulf Crisis gave Third World countries an opportunity to clearly see the role of the U.S. as the only remaining world super power in resolving international crises—political, economic or military.

The conflict between Iraq and Kuwait, which occasioned U.S. intervention, was of a politiconomic nature. Iraq accused Kuwait of stealing its oil and overproducing it, forcing world oil prices to plummet and, in that way, depriving Iraq of much needed oil revenue. Iraq, a regional military super power, chose to solve the problem militarily by marching on helpless Kuwait and swallowing it up overnight, claiming that Kuwait was, after all, part of Iraq before the advent of British colonialism. With its economic, political and military interests in the region threatened, the U.S. swiftly moved in to rescue Kuwait using military force, setting in motion a series of political and economic contradictions with important implications for African and Arab countries.

In this paper, I propose to examine some of the ways in which the events surrounding the Gulf Crisis have helped to shape the African view of the U.S., and investigate and evaluate some of the opportunities created for cooperation between African and Arab countries by U.S. intervention. I aim to show that the conduct of the U.S. during and after the Gulf Crisis portrayed the U.S. as a country bent on protecting its interests in utter disregard of principle and fair play. Many Africans and Arabs have consequently lost confidence in the U.S. as a country

genuinely committed to democratic change, as the latter has always wanted to be perceived.

Military Intervention

Iraq used military force to occupy the independent state of Kuwait, and the U.S. used military force to rid Kuwait of Iraq. The U.S. charged that Iraq had illegally used military force to occupy an otherwise weaker and harmless neighbor, violating its territorial integrity and threatening its national security as well as that of another neighboring country, Saudi Arabia. In view of this, the U.S. argued, it was justified in using any means at its disposal to evict Iraq from Kuwait, protect the sovereignty of the latter and guarantee its security while keeping Iraq's designs on Saudi Arabia in check.

A friend of the U.S., Mikhail Gorbachev, was the first to cast scorn on this "noble" sentiment of the U.S., wondering if the U.S. would have come to Kuwait's rescue if the latter exported bananas. Whereas Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait was entirely unjustified and indeed merited retribution, U.S. intervention was even more untenable. Iraq's occupation of Kuwait had escalated into an international conflict that required international efforts to resolve. It properly fell under the jurisdiction of such international bodies as the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Islamic Organization Conference, the League of Arab States and the United Nations Organization (U.N.), to all of which Iraq and Kuwait belong as member states. This is precisely one of the goals for which all of these organizations were established—resolving international or regional conflicts and maintaining peace and security. The enthusiasm with which the U.S. arrogated itself the responsibility of resolving the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait raised suspicions right from the outset. In a display of rare brazen valor, the U.S. had the U.N. Security Council approve its intervention in the Gulf when its forces were already landing in Saudi Arabia. This, then, raises the question of whether the U.S. intervened to rescue Kuwait because the former is, indeed, committed to the principles of territorial integrity and national security.

Morocco has steadily been swallowing up Western Sahara with the knowledge and, indeed, support of the U.S. As *African News* reported, the obstacles that the UN peacekeeping force is encountering in carrying out its duties in Western Sahara have

. . . raised questions about the will of the U.S. administration to fully support peace initiatives that may threaten friendly governments . . . the U.S. has shown little inclination to

persuade the king [Hassan II] to observe the peace accord, even when the lives of American citizens are at risk.²

Why has the U.S. not found it necessary to invoke the principles of territorial integrity and national security in the case of Western Sahara?

Similarly, Israel has persisted in its annexation and settlement of Arab lands while the U.S. continues to fund such annexations and settlements.³ The horrendous terror unleashed in the occupied territories has deprived Palestinians of a homeland and scattered them all over the world. Is an independent state of Palestine, existing side by side with the state of Israel, not entitled to territorial integrity and national security?⁴

In 1979 Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, then president of Tanzania and probably Africa's most respected statesman, marched on Uganda, overthrew and consigned Idi Amin, arguably Africa's most infamous dictator, to exile and occupied Uganda long enough to reinstall his friend and brother-in-law, Milton Obote. No country, including the U.S., questioned Nyerere's action, and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity were temporarily ignored.

All these parallels demonstrate that the U.S. did not intervene in the Gulf Crisis that began in August of 1990 to protect Kuwait's territorial integrity and national security. It intervened to protect its own interests, to guarantee the flow of cheap oil from Kuwaiti oil fields. To the U.S., Uganda, Palestine and Western Sahara are not economically strategic like Kuwait. Moreover, Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara would ensure that the latter, with unknown future political leaning, is brought under the control of a proven pro-U.S. "moderate monarchy". And the presence of a militarily and economically strong Israel in a volatile Middle East is imperative for U.S. interests in the region. The U.S., like most other countries, did not, therefore, deem it necessary to question Nyerere's action against Uganda, neither does it feel obliged to help guarantee the territorial integrity and national security of Western Sahara and Palestine. Thus, with its intervention in the Gulf to ostensibly defend Kuwait and Saudi Arabia against Iraqi aggression, the U.S. clearly demonstrated to African countries that for countries that are not economically or militarily strategic, territorial integrity and national security are not inviolable principles.

The U.S. is militarily the single most powerful country in the world now. If it wanted, it has the military power on which it can rely to help enforce peace and security anywhere in the world. Indeed, during its first few months in Somalia beginning December 1992 there was some progress towards peace and a return to public order until this was jolted recently by the confusion over the mission of the UN forces in Somalia occasioning a resurgence of violence. Its conduct in the Gulf

Crisis, however, clearly brought home to Third World countries the fact that the U.S. is not for world peace and stability. It will use its military might only to protect its own interests, regardless of what that may imply for other countries and the rest of the world. The U.S., therefore, lost credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of many Third World countries as a country that can be relied on for cooperation with others to genuinely help restore peace and guarantee stability whenever and wherever the need arose.

Democracy

When Iraq marched on Kuwait it set the stage for a major military confrontation at a time when the winds of political change were blowing across the world, with citizens of different countries under single party dictatorships having begun clamoring for democracy. From Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to Moscow, from Bucharest, Romania, to Algiers, Algeria, citizens had had enough of single party regimes and were pressing for political change that would allow them more say in the affairs of their own countries, preferably through multi-party democracy.

The U.S. came out firmly in support of pro-democracy movements, especially in the communist stronghold of Eastern Europe, with strong promises of economic and technical aid to the new governments after change to U.S.-approved multi-party "democracy", and improvement of human rights records in their countries. For foreign aid-dependent Africa, the U.S. and other Western countries were even more forthright in their demand for change. Aid was swiftly suspended and its resumption predicated upon clear and substantive change towards democratization. In some African cities Western diplomats parted ways with diplomatic niceties and protocol and got actively involved in the funding and organization of antiestablishment demonstrations alongside local members of the public.⁵ What had began as local efforts for change was quickly hijacked by the U.S. in a quest to take credit for the inevitable change when it finally came, and make sure that the course of events did not upset its agenda and interests in various parts of Africa. The trusting African public, however, did not have any problem with U.S. involvement, as long as it benefited their cause.

Most African countries had made substantial progress towards democratization by the time the Gulf Crisis came around. Nigeria was already preparing itself for general elections and return to a civilian government by the beginning of 1993,⁶ Algeria was similarly preparing

itself for multi-party elections, and a constitutional amendment bill had been tabled in the Mozambican parliament introducing multi-party politics and limiting the presidential term of office. Of course, the Sudan had just suffered another setback in June 1989 when the military, led by Col. Omar al-Bashir, cut short the life of President Saddiq al-Mahdi's civilian government. Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda,⁷ Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, Togo's Eyadema Gnassingbe, Tanzania's Ali Hassan Mwinyi, Malawi's Kamuzu Banda, Kenya's Daniel arap Moi⁸ and Cote d'Ivoire's Houphet Boigny, among others, were still finding it difficult to conceptualize their countries under multi-party politics and, except for Mwinyi,⁹ themselves out of power. For these stubborn countries the U.S. had suspended (in the case of Zambia and Kenya) or was under pressure from Congress to suspend (in the case of Zaire) any further aid until they introduced positive political and economic reforms.

The advent of the Gulf Crisis, however, introduced a new dimension to the role of the U.S. in the process of democratization in Africa. First and foremost, the U.S. sought international political legitimacy for its intervention in the Gulf Crisis. This was to be achieved through the up-to-then U.S.-scorned U.N. Anticipating to be rewarded in different ways, many African and Arab countries voted with Western nations at the U.N. to allow a U.S.-led military intervention in the Gulf. Indeed, some African and Arab countries, notably Syria, Senegal, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Egypt, went on to contribute troops to the Allied Forces that eventually flushed Iraq out of Kuwait.

The Gulf Crisis presented African and Arab countries with an opportunity to see U.S. hypocrisy with regard to its commitment to genuine democratic change in Third World countries, democratic change that would benefit the citizens of those countries. As soon as various African and Arab countries offered it their support in various forms during the Crisis, the U.S. readily looked the other way on the question of democratization and human rights records in such countries. Kenya, for instance, had been instrumental in the evacuation of U.S.-trained terrorists from Libya at the time of the Gulf Crisis and provision of hospital and military facilities for U.S. forces in the Gulf during the same period. Suddenly the Kenyan political and human rights situations "improved"; there was "substantial progress" towards democratization in the country; the then maverick U.S. ambassador to Kenya, Smith Hempstone, resumed cordial relations with the Kenyan leadership with whom he had been engaged in protracted acrimonious and undiplomatic exchanges; and part of the withheld U.S. aid to Kenya was released. During her talks with Kenya's President Moi later, U.S. supreme court judge, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was to say, "Kenya was a shining

example of a country at peace."¹⁰ She appreciated economic and political "reforms" that had been initiated by Moi. Meanwhile, the U.S. was spending millions of dollars a day in the Gulf to reinstate the family rule of the Emir Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah in Kuwait. It was not lost to many Arabs and Africans that the U.S. was willing to support undemocratic governments so long as they served its interests.

That the U.S. has never called upon Mobutu Sese Seko, leave alone pressure him, to introduce democratic change in his country is ample proof of U.S. willingness to create and maintain in power despotic regimes that serve its interests in Third World countries. The concession of the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Herman J. Cohen, in his speech at the African Studies Association annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, in November 1991 that the U.S. cannot do anything about Mobutu was further confirmation of this. To justify their efforts to keep Mobutu in power U.S. officials insist that if Mobutu relinquished power, Zaire would be plunged into strife because "Without Mobutu, American and other Western diplomats based in Zaire contend that the country would degenerate into tribal chaos."¹¹ How does it become so difficult to put pressure on Mobutu to change while a trade embargo during the Gulf Crisis was already strangling Iraq virtually within days of its imposition? The U.S. went on to bombard Baghdad killing thousands of innocent Iraqis already made destitute by the trade embargo, and at one point even considered the drastic option of assassination as one way of getting rid of Iraq's Saddam Hussein during the Crisis. But on the other hand it becomes difficult to pressure Mobutu into introducing democratic changes in his country.

A year after the Gulf Crisis, the U.S. was still furnishing the world with abundant evidence of its double standards and hypocrisy on democracy. Algeria was one of the first African (or Arab, as the West would prefer) countries to introduce multi-party politics in the recent wave of democratization. Fearing that Muslim fundamentalists in the form of the Islamic Salvation Front would win a majority in the national assembly, the Algerian government cancelled the second round of elections set for January 16th, 1992. Then the army deposed President Chadli Benjedid, created a ruling High State Committee which proceeded to appoint a government, and declared a year-long state of emergency. The U.S. is the world's loudest critic of military coups and regimes. But it is also the world's loudest critic of Muslim "fundamentalism." In the Algerian situation it had to choose the lesser of two evils. When the army took over, therefore, the U.S. fell silent. The obstruction of an otherwise freely and fairly elected government, but which happened to be Muslim fundamentalist, from taking power had justified a military take over and the suspension of a democratic

process in Algeria. This did not make Africans believe that the U.S. was serious and honest about democratization through free and fair elections.

The U.S. had presented itself as the world champion for "democracy", making many Africans who were clamoring for democratization of their political systems look up to it for support and realization of their dream. The shift in its position in this cause during and shortly after the Gulf Crisis proved to African countries that the U.S. was not committed to any serious and meaningful change to democracy unless such change served its interests. Repressive regimes that served its interests were welcome and, in fact, supported to stay. With this shift, the U.S. exposed its hypocritical side, disappointed many Africans and deprived itself of any legitimacy or moral basis of championing democracy in Africa and other Third World countries. Going soft on single party regimes because of their support for it during the Gulf Crisis, spending millions of dollars a day to reinstate family rule in Kuwait, tolerating military takeover in Algeria to counter Muslim fundamentalism, and supporting repressive governments did not conform with the character of a country seriously and genuinely committed to democratic change.

UN Sanctions and Linking of Issues

Iraq's occupation of Kuwait attracted a great deal of international attention, partly because of Kuwait's stature as a major world oil supplier, but most importantly because of the eventual U.S. involvement. Apart from hoping to use it to determine world oil prices, Saddam also saw his occupation of Kuwait as a potent bargaining weapon with which he could push for negotiations that would eventually lead to a solution of the Palestinian problem. Therefore, when he was called upon to withdraw from Kuwait voluntarily or risk a military attack, he demanded that the process of seriously addressing the Palestinian question be set in motion before he could withdraw from Kuwait. Desperate for an excuse to trim Saddam's military wings, the U.S. insisted that Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait could not be linked to the Palestinian question because the two were separate and unrelated issues.

The U.S. position convinced the U.N. and Western nations who proceeded with lightening speed to impose trade sanctions against Iraq. Within no time it had become abundantly clear that the U.N. sanctions were taking effect and that they would soon achieve their desired results. U.N. sanctions caused Iraqi children and general public immeasurable suffering and anguish. Tens of thousands of Iraqis were

threatened with starvation and disease. The U.S., however, considered this suffering by innocent people insufficient. Determined not to lose the opportunity to attack Iraq, it had the U.N. approve a resolution permitting it and other nations to use force to get Iraq out of Kuwait. It then disregarded the sanctions and the suffering they were causing Iraqi people and proceeded to subject Baghdad to heavy bombardment, destroying civilian property and innocent life.

While to Western countries U.S. victory against Iraq vindicated the actions of the former in the Gulf, Africans read a different message in this sequence of events. Throughout this period of crisis the then U.N. secretary general, Javier Perez de Cueller, held regular consultative meetings with U.S. president George Bush which led to the U.N. Security Council approving virtually every resolution proposed to it by the U.S. on the issue. The U.S. began to frequently refer to "U.N. resolutions" on the Gulf Crisis, insistently demanding that they be respected and observed by all due to their seriousness and importance. It also evoked U.N. member states to respect the world body and take its decisions seriously.

Resolutions on the Gulf Crisis were not the first of U.N. resolutions. The U.N. had previously passed equally important resolutions on Namibian and Western Sahara independence, and the South African and Palestinian problems. The U.S. scorned the U.N. on these resolutions and frustrated any efforts of successfully implementing them. This was basically because Namibian independence would not have been a healthy development for apartheid South Africa, a U.S. ally, and Palestinian independence would not be in the interest of the state of Israel, one of the closest allies of the U.S. The U.S. insisted on linking Namibian independence to the withdrawal of Cuban forces from neighboring Angola. Indeed, serious negotiations on Namibian independence only began after Cuban troops pulled out of Angola at the insistence of the U.S. Yet during the Gulf Crisis the U.S. strongly believed that Iraq had no business linking its occupation of Kuwait with the Palestinian question. To many Africans, therefore, linking or not linking issues became the question.

Most countries have supported calls by South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) for the world to maintain sanctions against the minority apartheid government of South Africa as a way of compelling it to change its racist policies and move faster towards allowing black South Africans full freedom and participation in the government. The U.S. has persistently opposed this call arguing that the people who would be hurt most by such sanctions would be the poor blacks themselves. The U.S. has, therefore, maintained active economic and military cooperation with the South African apartheid government, either as a government or through multinational

corporations.¹² Yet sanctions against Iraq were speedily imposed without any consideration whatsoever of the public that would, and actually did and still does, suffer the consequences.

The Gulf Crisis, therefore, was a great revelation of the double face of the U.S. for Third World countries. To the U.S., the U.N. is important and should be taken seriously only when it is passing resolutions that favor U.S. interests; otherwise it is a dead body. Sanctions are a potent and important political weapon only when they are applied against countries that are out of favor with the U.S. And issues can only be linked if the link proves to be in the interests of the U.S. During the Gulf crisis, therefore, the U.S. presented itself to weak and poor Third World countries as a bully nation that will go to any length to use its influence and disproportionately immense military power, not to resolve international crises and maintain peace in concert with other nations for the good of the entire world, but to further its selfish interests at the expense of weaker nations. It cannot, therefore, be relied on for cooperative efforts to genuinely seek equitable solutions to international problems.

Loan-Induced African Support for the U.S.

African countries, like most other Third World countries, are heavily dependent on loans, otherwise known as "aid", from the U.S. and other industrialized countries. The U.S., therefore, expected that this would make African countries feel a moral obligation to give it automatic support for its mission in the Gulf. Indeed, leaders of many economically distressed African countries were hard pressed to pledge support for the U.S. in the hope that such action would either guarantee them more loans or, at least, win them more favorable terms for repayment of earlier ones. Morocco's King Hassan II, for instance, even expected his support for the Allied Forces to win him membership in the European Economic Community.

Although this reflected the position of most African leaders, it is important to distinguish between the genuine position of the African public and that of mostly unpopular leaders whose decisions are largely motivated by selfish interests of holding onto power. By supporting the U.S., such leaders expect to be maintained in power, either by force or by handouts which they can use to whitewash their economic catastrophes and buy themselves a little more tolerance from their citizens.

In Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria there were widespread actions that clearly demonstrated public opposition to the U.S. intervention in the Gulf. Americans arriving in

Los Angeles from Kenya reported incidents of indiscriminate harassment of whites in the coastal tourist city of Mombasa. White seemed to symbolize the U.S., irrespective of the victim's actual country of origin. The seriousness of the attack on the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, forced embassy officials to temporarily close the embassy and the U.S. State Department to issue advisories cautioning American citizens against traveling to Tanzania. Similar riots were reported in Algeria and Egypt, while thousands of Nigerian citizens flocked into recruitment centers in northern Nigeria volunteering to go and fight for Iraq during the U.S. invasion. Jordanians held mass demonstrations opposing and denouncing U.S. intervention in the Gulf. At the same time, the Sudanese government was overtly behind Saddam Hussein, Saddam played host to the then Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda (although the press gave the visit a news blackout) and Libya remained guardedly silent over the crisis. It was clear that across the continent, the sympathies of the general public lay with Saddam Hussein. Indeed, *Africa Confidential* reported that "the degree of popular support for President Saddam Hussein displayed in the Arab world, including North Africa, has taken the West by surprise."¹³ The general African public saw the U.S. as a country misusing its military might to molest militarily weaker nations. Memories of U.S. invasion of Panama, and earlier on, Grenada, its assault on Libya, and the downing of an Iranian civilian aircraft in 1988 killing hundreds of innocent passengers, were all still fresh in their minds. After Iraq, they felt, it could very well be their own weak nations next.

In essence, the African people saw the U.S. invasion of Iraq as an invasion against a weaker Third World country only asking for a better price on the world market for its chief export commodity—oil. To them, the invasion meant that Third World producers of primary commodities had no say on the prices that their commodities should fetch on the world market. Earlier negotiations to resolve Kuwaiti-Iraqi differences over their oil quotas to the world market indicated that Kuwait was ready to keep within its stipulated quota to help maintain favorable and stable world oil prices. The sudden change in the position of Kuwait to that of non-cooperation, prompting Iraq's heedless invasion, was interpreted by the African public as a U.S. inspired conspiracy to provoke Iraq into a senseless move that would justify a U.S. military intervention which would then be effectively used to trim Iraq's military capability. This is why the U.S. insisted on the use of force even when it was quite clear that the trade sanctions that had been imposed on Iraq by the U.N. were achieving their desired results, and other countries, including a section of the American public, were willing to give the sanctions a chance.

U.S. hypocrisy in this matter was further emphasized by later revelations of earlier U.S. involvement in supplying Iraq with the necessary material for the development of nuclear weapons. This was quite in keeping with the U.S. practice of remaining supportive of a regime, however dictatorial and corrupt, as long as it continued to serve its interests, and then dispensing with it as soon as it had served its purpose. The African public, therefore, began to seriously and openly question the honesty of U.S. involvement in and commitment to the solution of international conflicts.

It became abundantly clear that loans from the U.S. and U.S. dominated bodies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to poor countries were not free of strings. They were a tool that would be used to blackmail such countries into supporting the U.S. when the occasion arose. There was even the question of how such loans were disbursed by the lenders and used by the recipient countries. In most cases, recipient countries received in real terms much less than the amount of loans agreed upon which, all the same, they were responsible for repaying in full. Misallocation and mismanagement of the little that trickled down to the intended public projects precluded the consideration of such loans by the general African public as a factor in determining their support for the U.S. in its intervention in the Gulf.

Afro-Arab Cooperation: Some Observations

Up to this point, it is clear that African and Arab countries cannot possibly rely on the U.S. for meaningful and fruitful cooperation in which they are treated fairly as equals. African and Arab countries would, therefore, be ill-advised to continue looking up to the U.S. for assistance, whatever assistance, whenever they need any. There is urgent need now for these countries to take charge of their affairs and determine their own destinies.

A series of U.S. contradictions and hypocrisies emerged during its involvement in the 1990/91 Gulf Crisis which emphasized U.S. commitment to marginalizing and maintaining Third World countries in economically and militarily disadvantaged positions. However, did the Gulf Crisis awaken Arabs and Africans to the reality of the need to explore the prospects for cooperation among themselves which would eventually lead to their self-reliance? Why would the chief producers of the world's leading source of energy and owners of some of the world's richest mineral deposits and greatest natural resources¹⁴ remain dependent on inequitable foreign loans?

The Gulf Crisis was a bitter lesson not only for Arab nations but also for African ones. Although officially some African and Arab

governments may consider themselves as having benefited from it as mentioned earlier, the crisis did confirm that African and Arab peoples still share a common history of suffering at the hands of other more powerful nations. But beyond a common history of suffering, how can African and Arab countries work together to free themselves from the bondage of foreign loans?

Both African and Arab countries were colonized by European powers in the mid nineteenth century and present structures in such countries are largely a legacy of the colonial administration. The world's worst problem of national independence now, the Palestinian question, for instance, was a result of British colonial irresponsibility of unfulfilled promises that climaxed in their vanishing ahead of their agreed date of departure on May 14, 1948 as officially announced by the U.N.¹⁵ Both Israelis and Palestinians, whom Britain had duped into supporting her during World War II with cunning promises of supporting each against the other, accused Britain of betrayal.

The civil war that turned Lebanon into the worst case of sectarian violence was a product of French colonial machinations that unnecessarily exaggerated and sensationalized the differences between Christians and Muslims, and even between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims. The laws originally formulated by the French which distributed government positions according to religious affiliation were later to prove catastrophic as the Lebanese demographic landscape shifted. The previously majority Maronite Christians, to whom the French-designed laws allocated the presidency on the basis of their numbers, swooped demographic positions with the previously minority Muslims while the laws remained unchanged.

The Angolan and Mozambican civil wars that have left millions of people dead and millions more maimed and displaced, and the emerging crisis in Western Sahara are all a result of abrupt departures by the Portuguese and Spanish colonial administrations respectively without any arrangements for orderly transition to independence in these countries. The more than thirty year Sudanese civil war that has left that country practically paralyzed is a result of British colonial tricks. After sealing off the south from northern Sudanese as a way of keeping the southward spread of Islam in check, and after sealing off the north from southern Sudanese as a way of keeping southerners uneducated and underdeveloped so as to form a source of cheap labor, and being well aware of the historical, cultural, religious and linguistic differences between the two regions, the British decided at the 1946 Juba Conference that the two could, after all, regain their independence as one country.¹⁶

Even several decades into their independence, Arab and African countries continue to be victims of inequitable trade arrangements that favor the industrialized countries over them.¹⁷ They export their primary products to industrialized countries at extremely low prices and import finished goods from such countries at extremely high prices. Industrialized countries are so determined to maintain prices of Third World primary products low that the U.S. would go to war with Iraq to force the latter to keep the price of its oil down, but insist that it was fighting for democracy.

However, it is not enough for Africans and Arabs to keep blaming their woes on other countries, for this will not help them. There is more need now than ever before for these countries to find practical solutions to their own problems, irrespective of the origin of such problems.

Discussion on Afro-Arab relations today usually rekindles memories of slavery and slave trade to which Arabs subjected Africans beginning in the 14th century. This, together with the aggressive efforts by Muslims to spread Islam throughout the world, seem to be major considerations in determining how Africans and Arabs relate to each other. The success of Western countries in convincing unsuspecting non-Muslim Africans that Muslim Arab and terrorism are synonymous has not helped the situation.

Europeans also engaged in African slave trade. Millions of Africans were ferried across the Atlantic Ocean to establish the world's largest slave colonies in the Americas, leading to the most explosive case of race relations following the emancipation of African slaves in the U.S. This is not to mention millions of others who perished in transit.¹⁸ Even a more recent phenomenon like colonialism which cost many Africans and Arabs their lives in their common struggle for independence¹⁹ is easier to overlook and turn former colonial masters into most trusted friends and mentors than a 14th century event. Yet, the first step towards the achievement of economic self-reliance and development by African and Arab countries inevitably lies in cooperation among themselves.

African countries, like most others, rely a great deal on Arab oil. Ironically, the corporations that are responsible for the pricing and final marketing of Arab oil in African countries are mostly American, French, Italian or British. The result of this middleman role by foreign oil companies in Africa has been exorbitantly high oil prices. Oil prices in Africa were further driven up by the uncertainty of supplies caused by the 1990/91 Gulf Crisis, and they have never come down since. In turn, this sparked off high prices for virtually all essential commodities and services in African countries, leading to uncontrollable inflation and

throwing African economies into chaos. This has adversely affected the cost and standard of living in these countries. In contrast, as soon as it became clear that the U.S. was gaining the upper hand in its war with Iraq the pump price of oil in the U.S. fell to below pre-war levels.

Direct sales of Arab oil to African and non-oil producing Arab countries would be one way of ensuring that such countries receive oil at reasonable and stable prices. Closer trade cooperation between African and Arab countries could mean that African and non-oil producing Arab countries obtain Arab oil at special rates. Saddam Hussein's offer of free oil during the Gulf Crisis to countries that could have supported Iraq during the Crisis, therefore, was long overdue. Saddam should have offered African countries oil at concessionary rates earlier and in good faith, and not just to solicit support during his conflict with George Bush. As a potent political and economic weapon, oil is also the best tool for fostering Afro-Arab cooperation and pressing for Afro-Arab agenda in international fora.

On the other hand, the largely desert Arab countries need African agricultural produce. The African agricultural and horticultural products that are sold on European and American markets are the same products that are in high demand in Arab countries. Trade between African and Arab countries would definitely be much more equitable than the trade arrangements between Third World and industrialized countries under which the former are underdogs.²⁰

With their combined vast mineral resources, African and Arab countries need to make the initial serious steps in the direction of industrialization. In modern times, industrialization is a prerequisite for the development of any economy. African and Arab countries have supplied, and continue to supply, industrialized countries with most of the basic raw materials that they need for industrial production. If they could cooperate and pull their resources together, Arab and African countries have a great potential for industrialization. Industrialization of their economies would ultimately help them free themselves from dependence on Western countries for industrial goods, an important start for a break with economic domination by the West. The modest industrialization successes already achieved by such countries as Nigeria, Iraq and Egypt provide a good base for development and emulation by other Afro-Arab countries. Attempts at industrialization by Zimbabwe, Syria and Kenya, and the advent of an independent South Africa are a potential boost for industrialization efforts in Afro-Arab countries.

But to achieve all these, African and Arab countries need enabling environments. Accountability by leaders, the rule of law and administration of justice, individual freedom and political stability are imperative for any meaningful economic development. Setting up of

democratic institutions that can outlive personalities would ensure that African and Arab countries continue to enjoy political stability and economic prosperity even with changes in leadership. Most of the economic and political problems that Afro-Arab countries face now are largely a result of mismanagement of national affairs by military or authoritarian leaders. Repressive governments have the effect of driving underground productive ideas that might not be in line with those of the establishment. Besides, repressive insecure leadership leaves a country particularly vulnerable to external forces and manipulation as it scampers for external support to stay in power.

Democratic institutions would not only foster a conducive environment for development within a country, but would also eliminate hostilities between neighboring countries which result from internal conflicts that attract external interests from neighbors with a stake in a country's affairs. The eventual cooperation among African and Arab countries would be an important factor in strengthening their regional organizations. This would in turn give them a united and stronger voice in international fora which would enable them to adopt a common stand, work in concert and ensure that their interests are adequately protected and catered for. This would help African and Arab countries to avoid a situation like that obtaining in Somalia now. The Somali crisis has been a major test for Afro-Arab countries to solve their own problems. The OAU, the League of Arab States and the Islamic Organization Conference, all of which Somalia is a member of, totally failed to address the Somali problem. At the UN, it took none less than the secretary general, Boutros Boutros Ghali, himself to chide Afro-Arab countries and spur them to table a resolution before the Security Council for UN intervention in Somalia. Even then, the US emerged as the key player in the UN operations in Somalia, and although it has tried to do commendable work there so far, what will follow cannot be predicted with accuracy now.

Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to show that the conduct of the U.S. during the 1990/91 Gulf Crisis was clear evidence of its readiness to use military force to protect its selfish interests at the expense of weaker countries. The double standards employed in its demand for democratization in Third World countries seriously undermined its credibility as a champion of democracy in the eyes of such Third World countries. In that case, African and Arab countries, like all other Third World countries, cannot possibly rely on the U.S. for positive economic

or political change for the benefit of the whole world, for the U.S. will only support change that serves its own interests.

It is, therefore, important that African and Arab countries, like all other Third World countries, seriously explore the possibilities of cooperation and self-reliance among themselves, for it is only among themselves that they can find genuine and meaningful cooperation and ultimate solutions to their problems.

NOTES

¹For an insightful analysis of the concept of the New World Order and U.S. foreign policy, see Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America's Purpose* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992.)

²*Africa News* (Durham, North Carolina), Volume 36/Number 1, May 11-24, 1992, p. 1.

³*The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Vol. XI, No. 7, February 1993, p. 7.

⁴Although the recent PLO-Israeli peace agreement grants Palestinians control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the fate of the Jewish settlers in these regions and displaced Palestinians who would like to return is being delayed until the third phase (two years from now) of the transition to Palestinian autonomy.

⁵For the involvement of former Ambassador Smith Hempstone and other Western diplomats in the funding and organization of anti-government demonstrations and riots in Nairobi, Kenya, see *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi, Kenya), July 20, 1990, p. 20.

⁶Nigeria has since postponed the presidential elections, and then nullified the results of the June 1993 presidential polls, bringing the country to the brink of a political crisis.

⁷Kenneth Kaunda finally lost to Frederick Chiluba in Zambia's presidential elections held in November 1991.

⁸President Daniel arap Moi went on to successfully defend his presidency in Kenya's December 29, 1992 multi-party elections, the country's first such elections since 1966.

⁹The amended constitution that former President Julius Nyerere bequeathed Tanzania on his retirement in 1985 limits the Tanzanian presidential term of office to two five year terms. President Mwinyi has already served his first and is now in his second and final one which expires in 1995.

¹⁰*The Daily Nation* (Nairobi, Kenya), July 9, 1992, p. 2.

¹¹Harden, Blaine, *Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990), p. 38. Also Lucy Komisar, "The Claws of Dictatorship in Zaire," *Dissent*, Summer, 1992, p. 330.

Economic Intervention (New York and London: Praeger Publishers, 1991), pp. 132-133.

¹³*Africa Confidential* Vol. 31 No. 18, 14 September, 1990, p. 3.

¹⁴On the economic potential of Zaire alone, for instance, Harden points out that River Zaire, which has a steadier and more reliable flow than the Amazon "has the capacity to generate 13 percent of the world's electricity." (Harden, 42) which could adequately supply the whole of Africa and southern Europe. Yet it does not even adequately supply Zaire alone. Zaire also has some of the world's richest deposits of strategic minerals "including 70% of the world's known reserves of cobalt..." (Harden, 50)

¹⁵See Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 359.

¹⁶Lako Tongun, "The Alliance Between the Sudanese Military and the National Islamic Front," a talk delivered at the James S. Coleman African Studies Center, UCLA, January 22, 1993. For British tactics of keeping northern and southern Sudan hostile to each other, also see Constance Berkley, "The Roots of Consciousness Molding in the Art of El-Tayeb Salih: a Contemporary Sudanese Writer," Ph. D. dissertation, New York University, 1979, pp. 18-19.

¹⁷George O. Roberts, *Afro-Arab Fraternity: The Roots of Terramedia* (Beverly Hills, CA and London: Sage Publications, 1980), p. 17.

¹⁸See Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, *The Making of the African Diaspora in the Americas, 1441-1900* (Longman: Harlow, 1987) for a discussion on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the enslavement of Africans in the Americas.

¹⁹For the graphic description of the treatment of Algerians under French colonialism, for instance, see Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1968.)

²⁰For an analysis of the disparities in the North-South trade, see Michael Barrat Brown, *Fair Trade: Reform and Realities in the International Trading System* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993.)