

Mixed feelings, and still surprise and apprehension, were followed in Africa to the news of the election of *Donald J. Trump*: the populists did not hide their happiness, while progressives were shocked. In fact, the Trump's rhetoric has aroused much hot reactions from all Muslim majority countries of the continent, especially on the occasion of the invective propaganda against Muslims, thus fuelling an ever-latent anti-Americanism. The one who gets the nomination for the post of *Assistant Secretary for African Affairs*¹, currently held by *Linda Thomas-Greenfield*, will give the green light on a possible new Trump's Administration strategy for Africa. In fact, the US State Department's *Bureau of African Affairs* grounds its tasks on the following four guidelines: strengthening democratic institutions; supporting African economic growth and development; advancing peace and security; promoting opportunity and development.

"Africa needs strong institutions, not strong men", had stated *Barack Obama* before the Parliament of Ghana² in July 2009, slogan then taken in Addis Ababa, on the occasion of the speech given at the African Union's headquarters in July 2015³, the very first American President to have visited this institution. In spite of this, it seems that some African dictators have welcomed the election of Trump, because in their thoughts – being sure of his isolationist, protectionist and non-interference in internal affairs imprinting – he could leave them undisturbed, this thing still to be check though. In light of this, one may interpret the ready congratulations by President of Burundi, *Pierre Nkurunziza*, accused by the international community to foment violence against the population in order to stay in power, being first among the African Heads of State to have done so. As already occurred against the Burundi leadership, albeit in another African case of bad governance – that of the *Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)* – it is very likely that Obama, in consultation with the Congress, before leaving the White House, is going to impose new sanctions to some Congolese personalities found responsible for the violence still occurring over there.

The president-elect *Donald J. Trump* has promised to shift the priorities of foreign policy and remodel the system of US alliances, but Africa has not marked the presidential campaign at all. With the exception of the attack and the assassination of the US ambassador to Libya in Benghazi, Africa throughout the campaign was never mentioned, because firstly it is not typical of any US campaign issue and secondly because the Clinton-Trump competition had been characterized by the search for internal consensus at less sensitive to that topic social strata. In the interregnum between the election and the official coming into office, Trump and his team will probably have a way to design a US strategy toward Africa, although so far one can only extrapolate very few possible guidelines on the basis of early indications available. Anyhow, the last three Administrations – Clinton, Bush and Obama – regardless of their political orientation have been able to maintain a consistent US policy towards Africa, always focusing on peace and security, good governance and democratization, trade and investment, and promotion of the business as well as through targeted actions ultimately supporting development for the African continent.

As a matter of fact, the only difference between these them has always been about the scale of priorities and the forms of financing. Indeed, contrary to his detractors, it can be assumed that Trump is aware of the enormous potential of Africa directly or, indirectly, through his staff. Yet, what it needs to be overcome is the negative image with which the African continent is known in the US, mainly due to the inadequate and outdated perception through which Africa is being portrayed in the Western world, including Europe.

1 *Assistant Secretary for African Affairs*, see: <http://www.state.gov/p/af/>

2 See: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-ghanaian-parliament>

3 See: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/28/remarks-president-obama-people-africa>

As for immigration, one underestimates that many Africans (about two million new regular residents coming from Sub-Saharan Africa⁴) usually enter in the USA on the basis of a variety of programmes assisting African applicants to obtain their visas. It is worth noting that they systematically send thirty-five billion dollars per year in remittances to their home countries, which is a significant cash flow exceptionally useful for Africa, because private savings represent an increasingly decisive element to the cash flows committed to the growth of developing countries in general and of Africa in particular. These revenues would run the risk of suffering a substantial contraction, if, as declared on several occasions during the election campaign, Trump endorsed the idea to drastically reduce the number of visas by and large granted to foreigners.

Will the counter-terrorism actions in Africa, significantly intensified under Obama, continue? In fact, it is not yet clear if the 45th President of the United States wishes or not to strengthen commitments and actions against the Islamist terrorism that like wildfire is branching in many African areas.

Even though some consider possible an increased militarization of US intervention in Africa, it seems to be however more sound the idea that Trump will easily agree to take advice by the General Staff, continuing the fight without quarter against the jihadists across the Sahel, which means not moving away from the operations that Obama started. What is more, he could 'delegate' to France several agendas, while maintaining the approximately five thousand American soldiers deployed in a dozen bases posted all over Sub-Saharan Africa, such as in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Mauritania, Niger, etc.

Another concern in Africa is linked to the economic recipes that Trump could adopt to safeguard the US economy, to the detriment of African economies, whose growth is slowing in recent months, although it is likely to recover in the long run anyway. Besides, Africans fear the loss of development aid and preferential trade agreements, not to mention the sense of frustration among human rights defenders also concerned about climate change, the effects of which Africa suffers more than other regions. Yet, climate change according to Trump would be a hoax, hence the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions agreement with China could fall through as well as the US support to the COP 22. Furthermore, a serious geopolitical risk for *Washington* could be given by the shift that US foreign policy could generate in Africa in favour of *Beijing*, which, as a matter of common knowledge, managed to develop and implement a long-term whole policy towards Africa, while the United States have so far made to prevail above all humanitarian and security aspects, having hitherto failed to establish themselves as a counterbalance to Chinese power in Africa and to achieve equally good results in the economic sphere.

US Policies toward Africa

The actions promoted by Washington in favour of a penetration into the African Continent are multiple and heterogeneous. Among the more recent, it is worth mentioning the *US-Africa Leaders' Summit*⁵ held in Washington (August 2014) and the second edition of the *US-Africa Business Forum (USABF)*⁶ occurred in September 2016. For instance, the President of Liberia, *Ellen Johnson Sirleaf*, wondering whether Trump intends to develop any 'Africa Agenda', said she was concerned about the future of the trade agreements between Africa and USA. If Trump prefers bilateral agreements to multilateral ones, it is then plausible that he could call into question the *African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)*⁷, a multilateral treaty launched in 2000 by Clinton that grants duty free access to a large number of African products in the US, whose products instead keep on

4 The origin of Africans living in the US is as follows: *Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Liberia, Somalia, Morocco, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Eritrea, Cape Verde, Senegal, DR Congo, Uganda and Algeria.*

5 See: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/us-africa-leaders-summit>

6 See: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/21/fact-sheet-us-africa-cooperation-trade-and-investment-under-obama>

7 See: <http://trade.gov/agoa/>

being taxed when entering the African market. The AGOA, renewed in 2015 for another ten years (i.e. until 2025), covers almost five thousand products from thirty-eight African countries.

As to commercial relations, a few months ago the US Congress published a study, explaining that trade agreements between the EU and Africa, by ensuring reciprocal tariff benefits, harms US companies in terms of competition. By the way, the only African country to have a free trade agreement with the US is Morocco. This would leave room for believing that Washington will consider necessary to undertake appropriate negotiations for an improvement of the relevant market conditions.

The *Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)*⁸ is an initiative commissioned by George W. Bush in 2004, thanks to which the US has increased its aid to the best performing African countries with over thirty billion annually. In fact, the MCC is bilateral aid agency independent from both the *Department of State* and the *Agency for International Development (USAID)*⁹. To this regard, there is certain uneasiness both in *Ivory Coast* and in *Niger*, being both countries eligible in the programme. Although Trump has supported the opportunity for a clean break to development aid, without providing other details so far, however, the MCC is really popular with Republicans in the Congress, so they could persuade the newly elected President to continue the project. With over five hundred participants every year, the *Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)*¹⁰ was commissioned in 2010 by the Department of State under the Obama Administration. It is a plan designed to encourage young African generations, inspiring them to democratic values through scholarships of a few weeks in the United States; there are currently four YALI regional leadership centres of in Africa, in Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa. Another important decision by Bush in 2004 concerns the *President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)*¹¹, focused on helping those affected by the HIV/AIDS syndrome around the world and particularly in Africa.

The Obama Administration, after having released in 2012 the *US Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*¹², in 2013 has launched the initiative *Power Africa*¹³, a development plot designed to help those African countries (so far Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria and Tanzania), which, albeit characterized by high economic growth, are not in a position to sustain their actual energy needs, because of their poor, costly, obsolete and polluting infrastructures. Some of these nations are also framed in the *Energy Governance Capacity Initiative (EGCI)*¹⁴, which aims to strengthen and rationalize their already existing energy resources' national capacities. *Power Africa* employs a multi-sectorial approach with high added value, optimising a wide range of synergies, ranging from energy technology to private sector transactions, with the goal to fill the gaps in the continental energy sector. Africa, with her huge natural resources (geothermal, hydroelectric, wind, solar and natural gas), many of which are still completely unexplored, boasts some of the fastest growing economies in the world. Yet, there are more than six hundred million people in Sub-Saharan Africa lacking access to electricity, so Washington has estimated that, to achieve universal energy access in Africa within the next fifteen years, at least three hundred billion dollars of investment will be needed in the meanwhile.

8 See: <https://www.mcc.gov/>

9 See: <https://www.usaid.gov/>

10 See: <https://yali.state.gov/>

11 See: <https://www.pepfar.gov/>

12 Published by the White House in June 2012, the strategy it is focused on four main themes: strengthening democratic processes; stimulating economic growth, trade and investment; advancing Peace and Security; promoting opportunity and development. See: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/209377.pdf>

13 See: <http://www.usaid.gov/powerafrica>

14 <https://m.state.gov/mc38722.htm>

Analysis, assessments and forecasts

African problems, still plaguing the continent, are very well known: malnutrition, diseases, poverty, Islamist terrorism, political instability, poor governance and so for. Trump's grandiloquence did sometimes resort to blatantly racist prejudices, to attract his potential constituencies, until the achievement of the final victory: should we believe that the end has justified the means or should we rather fear that there is an actual conviction of such bandied about positions? Public discourse conditions to counterargument the political narrative performed during the Trump campaign could not be met, since his rhetoric was completely ineffable as far as content and form are concerned, having deconstructed the opportunity of political correctness, so as to facilitate easy grip populist themes for the average American man of the street, a trend in sharp rise everywhere today, in Europe too. This means that most of the political and programmatic lines of the new US Administration will depend greatly on who actually will hold the highest positions relevant to Sub-Saharan Africa, which are firstly the post of *Assistant Secretary for African Affairs* and secondly that of Director of the *Agency for International Development (USAID)*. Actually, they are non-priority appointments for Trump's timetable, therefore most likely they will be given notice among the latest, after he will have sworn as President, January the 29th. Paradoxically, compared to those who fear a peremptory downsizing of US policy towards Africa, it is in the light of the marginality with which Trump considers African issues that the Republican area lobbying network may in the short run get his own way in suggesting the most suitable names as impacting on the quality and quantity of African policies to be set. Thus, in the medium to the long term, evident deviations should not emerge from what had already been arranged by the previous Administrations with Clinton, Bush and Obama.