

# THE PIPA/KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS POLL

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

## AMERICANS ON AFRICA

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**PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL  
POLICY ATTITUDES (PIPA)**

A joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland



**Knowledge  
NETWORKS**

A polling, social science, and market research firm based in Menlo Park, California

## INTRODUCTION

The years just preceding the attacks of September 11, 2001 were marked by rising interest, concern and a sense of opportunity in the United States' relations with Africa. The two visits of President Clinton to Africa, the passage of landmark trade legislation, and the growing understanding of AIDS/HIV as a truly global public health problem were a few of the high points that marked a general intensification in the perceived importance of US-African relations.

Since September 11, 2001 – in the swirl of events around the war on terrorism, Iraq and North Korea – there has been new debate about whether, and in what ways, Africa matters to the United States. Certainly the fact of a planned Presidential trip to the annual US-Africa Economic Forum in Mauritius this month – and then its last-minute cancellation – seems to suggest such a debate in the Bush Administration. Some may argue that, given the severe demands of dealing with the US's new security situation, African affairs inevitably must be downgraded. Others may argue that even in the framework of the war on terrorism, Africa – with its proximity to the Middle East, substantial Muslim populations, and recent history of being victimized by al-Qaeda attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania – should continue to receive growing attention and engagement from the United States.

The public has been little heard from recently on the question of US-African relations, and in fact this is one of the least polled subjects in US foreign policy. This Program on International Attitudes/Knowledge Networks poll is the first general study of Americans' attitudes toward Africa in some years. There were many issues on which PIPA/KN sought to elicit the views of the American public. Among these:

After September 11, 2001, have Americans lost interest in Africa given the host of new worries they face? Do they see Africa as having a part to play in the war on terrorism, or do they think it is basically irrelevant? Would they support active police and intelligence cooperation with African governments,

or would they feel these governments are too unreliable?

Since the passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the US economy has weakened significantly, putting stress on the lives of many Americans. Given this reality, how do Americans feel now about a trade agreement that they may see as exposing them to low-wage competition?

It is widely known that most Americans greatly overestimate the size of the US foreign aid program. Does this misperception affect the way they view US aid that is directed to Africa? Within the US foreign aid program, what do Americans think of the proportion that goes to Africa? President Bush has proposed the Millennium Challenge Account, which would increase development aid and could significantly impact Africa. Is there public support for the MCA, and if so, what factors in it are sources of support?

As the world HIV/AIDS pandemic grows, there is an international controversy over whether impacted countries have the right to produce or purchase generic AIDS drugs, putting aside the intellectual property rights of the companies that researched and tested these drugs. How does the public think the US government should position itself on this difficult, multisided issue?

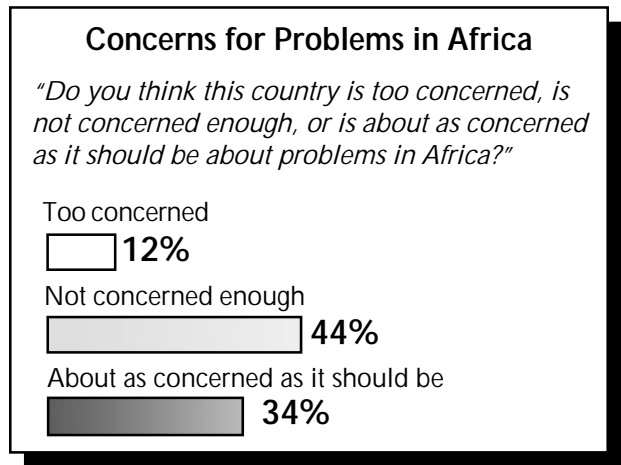
To explore US public attitudes on these issues, the Program on International Policy Attitudes and Knowledge Networks conducted a nationwide poll of 1,146 American adults over December 19, 2002-January 1, 2003. The margin of error was plus or minus 3%. In addition, a supplementary poll of 504 American adults was fielded through Communications Center, Inc. over January 2-10, 2003. Its margin of error was plus or minus 4.5%.

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide research panel, which is randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and subsequently provided internet access. For more information about this methodology see page 9, or go to: [www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp).

*Engagement With Africa*

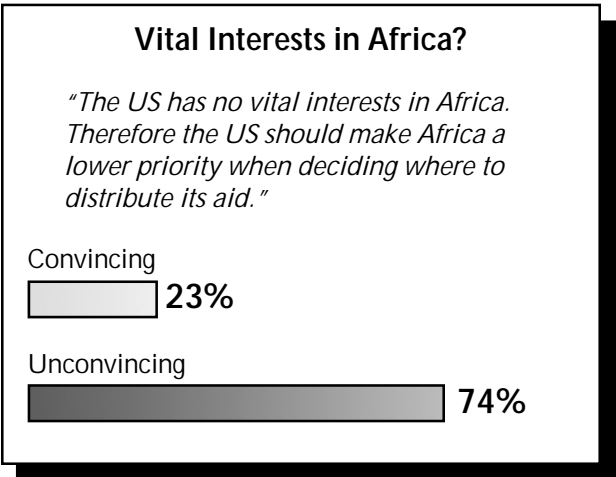
**1** A majority of Americans continues to believe that Africa is important to the US and even supports increased levels of engagement with Africa. Americans support the US paying close attention to Africa and most reject the argument that the US has no national interests there. A very strong majority supports increasing military and police training and exchanging intelligence with African governments as a means of fighting the war on terrorism. The median respondent favors a substantial increase in the proportion of US foreign aid that goes to Africa.

Despite the high level of attention to other regions in the news, Americans continue to believe that Africa is important to the US. There is no sign of any decline in support for the US paying close attention to Africa and a strong plurality feels that the US does not pay enough attention to Africa. When asked whether “this country is too concerned, is not concerned enough, or is about as concerned as it should be about problems in Africa,” a 44% plurality said the US was not concerned enough, and another 34% said the US was about as concerned as it should be. Only 12% thought the US was too concerned.



These results are statistically the same as the last time the same question was asked, by Newsweek in May 1999. At that time 47% said the US was not concerned enough about Africa—a larger percentage than for five other regions tested. Only 11% said the US is too concerned about Africa and 34% said it is as concerned as it should be.

Most Americans reject the argument that the US should focus less on Africa because it has no interests there. Offered the argument that “the US has no vital interests in Africa. Therefore the US should make Africa a lower priority when deciding where to distribute its aid,” only 23% said they found this convincing; 74% found it unconvincing. Again, this result is very similar to the last time the question was asked in the November 2000 PIPA poll (24% convincing, 70% unconvincing)—suggesting that intervening events have not produced any sea change in public attitudes about helping Africa.



Most Americans see Africa as somewhat important to the war on terrorism. This study asked respondents to think “about the various regions of the world that are important to the war on terrorism” and then to say “how high a priority [the US] should...put on dealing with threats from sources in Africa.” A majority – 56% – said such threats should get “medium” priority, while 27% wanted to give them “high” priority; only 13% said “low” priority.

A very strong majority supports the idea of increasing military and police training and exchanging intelligence with African governments as a means of fighting the war on terrorism. Respondents were told that “Currently there is some discussion about whether the US, as a means of fighting terrorism, should increase military and police training and exchange intelligence with African countries,” and then offered three positions on this issue. A very strong 71% thought the US should extend these types of cooperation to some African states, with a

plurality of 47% saying the US should increase training and exchange intelligence “with any African government that supports the war on terrorism and that we think could help us,” and another quarter (24%) saying the US should do this “only with African governments that are democratic.” Only a fifth (19%) thought the US should not increase training and exchange intelligence with African governments.

### Cooperation in Fighting Terrorism

*“...whether the US, as a means of fighting terrorism, should increase military and police training and exchange intelligence with African countries.”*

The US **should** increase military and police training and exchange intelligence with African governments



The US **should not** increase military and police training and exchange intelligence with African governments



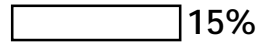
There is also sentiment in favor of increasing the portion of US foreign aid that goes to Africa. Respondents were asked to “think about all of the money the US spends on foreign aid,” and to give their “best guess about what percentage of this money goes to economic and humanitarian aid for African countries.” The median answer was 15%. Respondents were then asked what they thought would be an appropriate percentage, if any. The median response was slightly more, at 20%. In reality, the percentage of the US foreign aid that was directed to Africa in 2001 was 11%.<sup>1</sup> Of those who answered both questions, 51% “raised” Africa’s share of aid relative to what they guessed this share to be.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: White House Office of Management and Budget, Congressional Research Service.

### Attitudes Toward Proportion of Foreign Aid Going to Africa

-- Median answers --

*“I would like you to think about all of the money the US spends on foreign aid. Just based on what you know, what is your best guess about what percentage of this money goes to economic and humanitarian aid for African countries?”*



*“What do you think would be the appropriate percentage for African countries, if any?”*



[Actual percentage:]

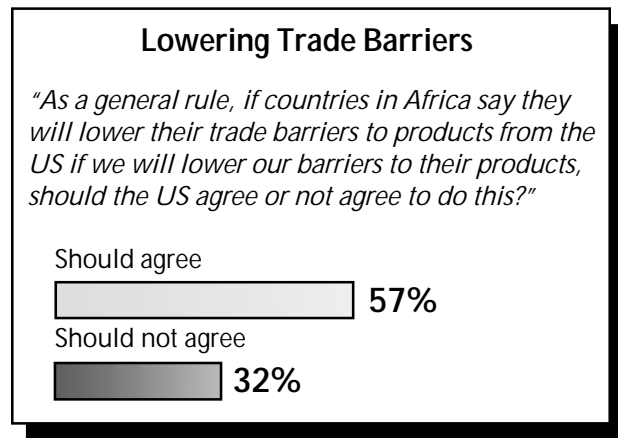


Interestingly, though Americans support the idea of using aid as a means to address the problem of terrorism, they are lukewarm about the idea of targeting aid specifically to African Muslim populations. In a Chicago Council of Foreign Relations poll in June 2002, an overwhelming 78% favored the general principle of “helping poor countries to develop their economies” as a “measure” to take “in order to combat international terrorism.” PIPA asked whether “As a way of addressing the threat of terrorism, do you favor or oppose increasing aid to help reduce poverty in African countries that have large Muslim populations?” A narrow plurality of 49% favored this, with 44% opposed. Apparently many Americans are uncomfortable with using aid meant to benefit the world’s poor as an instrument to focus on groups viewed as more dangerous. (A similar question was asked about “increasing aid to help promote democracy” and did get majority support; see below.)

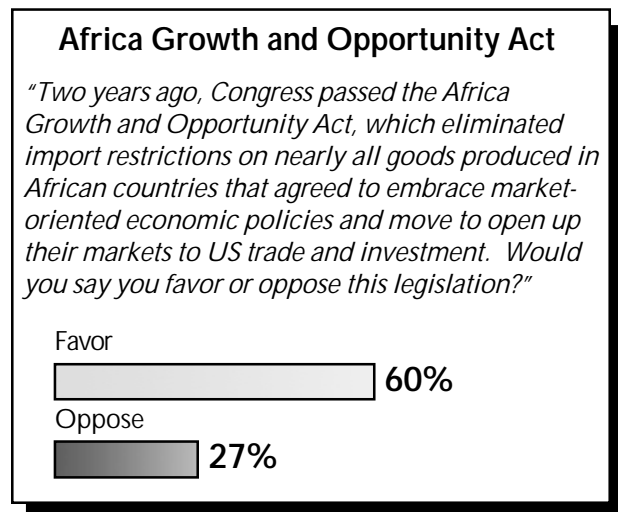
### Trade With Africa and AGOA

**2** A clear majority supports the broader principle of removing trade barriers between the US and Africa and supports passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGO). A modest majority supports transferring trade quotas from wealthier countries to African countries, even when told this might be politically sensitive and result in more competition from low-wage workers.

A solid majority supports free trade with African countries, both in principle and specifically as outlined in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). PIPA asked half the sample, "As a general rule, if countries in Africa say they will lower their barriers to products from the US if we will lower our barriers to their products, should the US agree or not agree to do this?" A solid 57% majority said the US should do so; about a third (32%) felt the US should not.



The other half sample heard a description of the AGOA legislation, which Congress passed in 2000 and expanded in 2002, as a bill that "eliminated import restrictions on nearly all goods produced in African countries that agreed to embrace market-oriented economic policies and move to open up their markets to US trade and investment." Support was just slightly higher than the level of support for free trade in principle: 60% said they favored the measure, with 27% opposed.



A more modest majority also supported the idea of the US increasing import quotas for African goods at the expense of quotas assigned to more developed trade partners. Respondents were asked the following question:

As part of its trade policy, the US limits the import of certain goods, such as apparel, by establishing quotas that give other countries the right to sell only a certain amount of a product in the US. In many cases these quotas limit imports from poor countries more than they limit imports from wealthier countries. Some people say that we should increase quotas for poor countries, such as those in Africa, because this would help their economies and may even reduce their need for US and international aid. Others argue that this is not a good idea because it would lead to more competition from low-wage workers, and that reducing quotas for wealthier countries could be politically sensitive. Do you favor or oppose the idea of increasing import quotas for poor countries in Africa?

In this case, a slimmer majority (52%) favored increasing import quotas from African countries at the expense of wealthier countries, while 37% opposed the idea. It is possible that the mention of the potential costs – especially of competition from low-wage workers – diminished support for this idea.

Still, in every question posed, majorities supported increased trade with Africa, even though a strong plurality said that African countries primarily would benefit. Asked about the "overall impact of a closer trade relationship between the United States and African countries," 44% felt it would only or mostly benefit African countries. Just 13% felt it would only or mostly benefit the US. Another 28% felt all countries would benefit equally, while 7% felt no country would benefit.

**Aid to Africa**

**3** While only one in three say the US should increase aid to Africa, when asked how many of their tax dollars should go to Africa, two-thirds

offer an amount that is greater than the actual amount, with the median respondent proposing an amount that is over six times the actual amount. Support for aid to Africa is greatly dampened by the belief that a majority of aid money ends up in the pockets of corrupt officials: an overwhelming majority would favor an increase if they had more confidence that the aid would really help the people who need it.

As discussed above, the median respondent favors substantially increasing the proportion of US foreign aid that goes to Africa. However, when asked about an increase in isolation from the foreign aid budget – suggesting an absolute increase in spending – support for an increase is more modest. Asked whether “US aid to Africa should be increased, cut or kept about the same,” about one-third (33%) wanted to increase aid. Forty-six percent wanted to keep it the same, while only 14% wanted to cut. When the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations asked this question in June 2002 the response was very similar: 35% increase, 22% cut, 37% keep same. (Worth noting is that in the CCFR poll, Africa scored the highest percentage in favor of an increase of any region asked about.)

Despite this modest level of support for an absolute increase, responses to another question suggests that Americans would prefer a substantially higher level of aid to Africa than exists in fact. PIPA asked, “Thinking about the amount you pay each year in taxes, how many of your tax dollars would you be willing to have go to economic and humanitarian aid for African countries?” The object of this question was to learn what tradeoff respondents might make between aid to Africa and their other preferred uses for their tax money. The median response was \$20 for aid to Africa. In reality, the median taxpayer’s bill includes approximately \$3 for economic and humanitarian aid to Africa.<sup>2</sup> Two-thirds (67%) of those who answered the question offered an amount higher than the actual amount, with the median respondent offering an amount over six times the size of the real amount.

<sup>2</sup> Sources: White House Office of Management and Budget, Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center.

### Attitudes Toward the Amount of US Aid to Africa

*“Thinking about the amount you pay each year in taxes, how many of your tax dollars would you be willing to have go to economic and humanitarian aid for African countries?”*

\$20

[Actual amount of median taxpayer’s tax bill that goes to Africa:]

\$3

*“Do you think US aid to Africa should be increased, cut or kept about the same?”*

Increased

33%

Kept about the same

46%

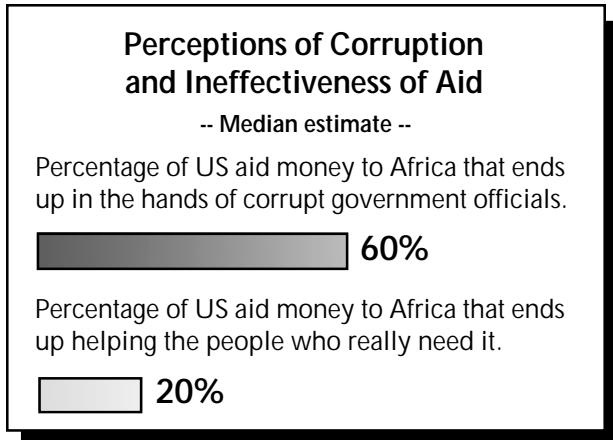
Decreased

13%

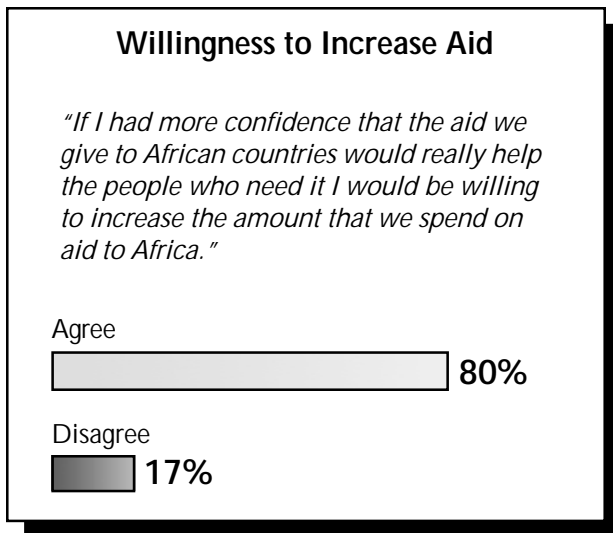
The fact that only 33% said they favored an increase in aid to Africa, while 67% proposed an amount well in excess of the actual amount, suggests that many Americans overestimate the amount of aid that goes to Africa. This is consistent with an abundance of research showing that Americans tend to grossly overestimate how much the US gives in foreign aid.

In addition to this overestimation, support for aid to Africa is greatly dampened by the belief that a majority of aid money is lost to corruption in recipient countries. When asked to give their best guess of “what percentage of US aid money that goes to African countries ends up in the pockets of corrupt government officials there,” the median answer was a remarkable 60%. When asked to guess “what percentage of US aid money that goes to African countries ends up helping the people who really need it,” the median answer was only 20%. These numbers are quite close to a November 2000 PIPA poll that asked about aid to poor countries in general. In that case the median estimates were that 50% ended up in the pockets

of corrupt officials and that just 10% helped the people who need it.



Apparently, if Americans believed that more of the aid to Africa would help the people who need it, an overwhelming majority would support increasing aid to Africa (despite the fact that they already overestimate how much aid goes to Africa). In the current poll an overwhelming 80% said they agreed with the statement: "If I had more confidence that the aid we give to African countries would really help the people who need it, I would be willing to increase the amount that we spend on aid to Africa."



*The Millenium Challenge Account*

**4** Support for President Bush's proposed Millennium Challenge Account—which would result in increased aid to Africa as well as

other regions—varies from about half to three quarters depending on how the question is framed, with support being higher in response to more information.

In March 2002, at an international meeting in Monterrey, Mexico, President Bush proposed the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA)—a program in which the US would increase development aid by 50% over the next three years, resulting in an annual increase of \$5 billion by 2006. According to the president, the criteria for MCA grants would "reward nations that root out corruption, respect human rights, and adhere to the rule of law...invest in better health care, better schools and broader immunization...and have more open markets and sustainable budget policies." While the program will fund projects in qualifying poor countries worldwide, it is also widely expected to increase overall aid to Africa.

Support for the MCA ranges from about half to three-quarters of the public, depending on how the question is asked. Poll questions that provide more information about the program get stronger approval.

The most simply worded question asked, "Do you approve or disapprove of President Bush's decision to increase US foreign aid to poor countries?" In the present study, 48% approved and 46% disapproved (when first asked by Pew in April 2002, 53% approved and 36% disapproved). Another question that got almost the same result told a different sample that the president had "proposed a 50% increase in aid to help poor countries develop their economies." Forty-seven percent favored, and 47% opposed this proposal.

Another sample heard a question with information about the share of the federal budget that would be devoted to development aid as a result of the president's proposed increase, saying the president had "proposed increasing aid to help poor countries develop their economies, so that it would be about 1% of federal spending." In this case, a strong majority—61%—supported the idea (34% opposed). Again, this is consistent with other research that shows that Americans overestimate how much goes to aid and are thus more supportive

of an increase when they see it in the context of the total amount actually being spent.

Finally, the current poll asked a question originally written by Peter Hart Associates:

President Bush announced a proposal for the United States to increase its support for developing countries around the world by ten billion dollars over the next three years. The money would be used for such things as improving education for students, helping businesses find new markets for their goods, developing new ways to grow more food, and fighting AIDS. This assistance would go only to poor countries that adopt sound economic policies and root out corruption in their countries. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this proposal by President Bush?

This fuller explanation of MCA’s benefits and requirements garnered overwhelming majority support—73% in favor with 25% opposed. This result is very similar to that of Hart in March 2002 (79% in favor, 19% opposed).

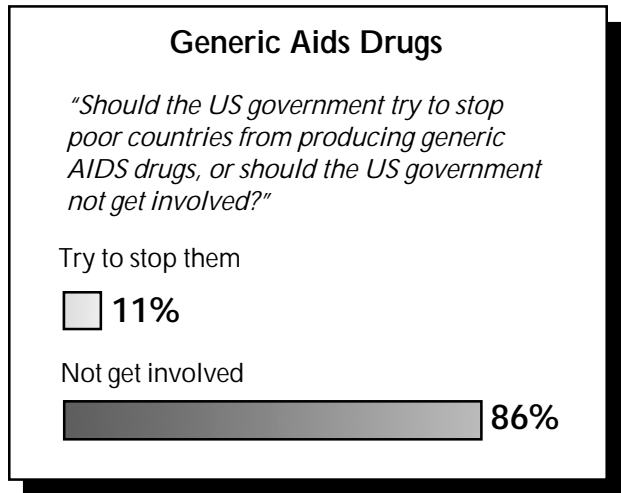
**AIDS**

**5** An overwhelming majority believes that that the US should not try to stop African countries from developing generic AIDS drugs. Overall, the US government gets lackluster ratings for how it is dealing with the international AIDS crisis.

One issue facing African countries in dealing with the devastating HIV/AIDS crisis on the continent is how to ensure that as many infected people as possible have access to AIDS drugs. Under an international legal norm called *compulsory licensing*, in the event of a public health emergency a country can legally set aside a drug patent and produce generic alternatives. The US is actively working to discourage African countries from doing so, as US pharmaceutical companies produce the majority of such drugs.

In this study, respondents were asked, “Should the US government try to stop poor countries from producing generic AIDS drugs, or should the US

government not get involved?” An overwhelming 86% said the US should not get involved, and a mere 11% felt the US should try to stop them.



Americans also show dissatisfaction with US efforts on HIV/AIDS. In the January 2003 PIPA-Knowledge Networks survey, respondents were asked to rate how well the US is dealing with a variety of foreign policy issues on a 0 to 10 scale, with 10 being very well, 0 being very poorly, and 5 being neutral. Asked about the “world AIDS epidemic,” a plurality of 39% gave America’s handling of the issue a negative rating (0-4). Another 25% gave it a neutral rating (5), and just 32% gave it a positive rating (6-10). The mean response was 4.63. Only three issues out of the 17 tested received a lower rating.

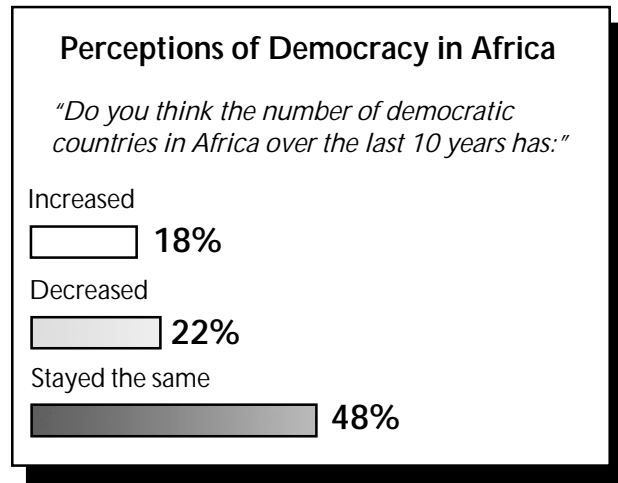
*Perceptions of Democracy in Africa*

**6** Most Americans are not aware that democracy in Africa has grown over the last 10 years. A majority supports aid to help promote democracy in Africa as means of addressing the threat of terrorism.

Among observers of Africa, there has been a general consensus that democracy in Africa has shown clear growth and improvement since the end of the Cold War. However, most Americans are not aware of this. Respondents were asked, “Do you think the number of democratic countries in Africa over the last ten years has increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?” Less than one in five—18%—knew that the number of African democracies has increased. Seventy



percent believed that the number of democracies had either stayed the same (48%) or actually decreased (22%).



Though Americans are unaware of the headway made by democracy in Africa, a clear majority is willing to increase US assistance to help build democratic institutions there. Fifty-seven percent favored "increasing aid to help promote democracy in African countries that have large Muslim populations" "as a way of addressing the threat of terrorism."

**Humanitarian Intervention**

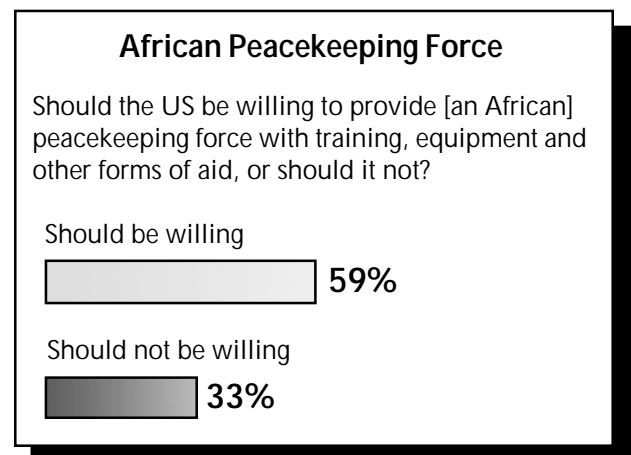
**7** A majority believes that the US has a moral responsibility to participate in military interventions in Africa to stop genocide, and a strong majority believes that the US should have intervened in Rwanda in 1994. However, support for such intervention in Africa is lower than for Europe—apparently because the operations in Europe have been perceived as more successful. A majority favors providing training for a multinational African force that would be prepared to intervene in cases of large-scale ethnic killings.

A majority feels the US is obliged to attempt to prevent genocide in Africa. Fifty-five percent said "the U.S. and other Western powers have a moral obligation to use military force in Africa, if necessary, to prevent one group of people from committing genocide against another." Thirty percent did not think the US had such an

obligation. This is virtually unchanged from June 1999, when Pew found 58% saying the US had this moral obligation.

This support, however, is somewhat lower than for intervention in Europe. When asked the same question about Europe in the current poll, 70% said the US has a moral obligation to prevent genocide there, with just 19% saying it does not. Apparently this difference is not due to racist feeling but rather greater satisfaction with the results of operations in Europe—specifically in Bosnia and Kosovo. When Pew asked this question about Europe in 1999, just 60% felt an obligation to intervene—statistically no different than for Africa. In the intervening years, Americans may have come to feel that the peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo proved effective, thus raising support by 10% to 70%. There have been no high-profile successes in Africa in those intervening years.

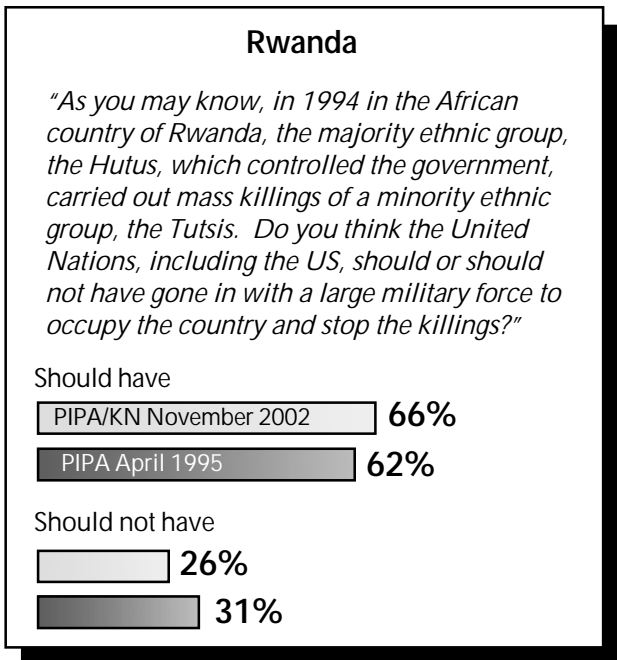
A solid majority also supports the US providing support and materiel for a multinational, all-African peacekeeping force that could intervene in hotspots on the continent. Respondents were told "the African Union, an organization of all African countries, has proposed establishing a peacekeeping force made up of troops from numerous African countries to intervene when there is severe ethnic conflict or large-scale killings." Then, asked whether "the US should or should not be willing to provide this peacekeeping force with training, equipment and other forms of aid?" a majority of 59% said the US should. About one-third (33%) said the US should not provide such assistance.



A strong majority feels, in retrospect, that the United Nations should have intervened to stop the ethnic killings in Rwanda in the mid-1990s. PIPA posed the following question:

As you may know, in 1994 in the African country of Rwanda, the majority ethnic group, the Hutus, which controlled the government, carried out mass killings of over 500,000 people who were members of a minority ethnic group, the Tutsis. Do you think the United Nations, including the US, should or should not have gone in with a large military force to occupy the country and stop the killings?

Two out of three (66%) said that the UN and the US should have intervened in the Rwanda genocide, while only 26% said they should not have done so. Retrospective public support for intervention is very consistent with results from April 1995, when PIPA first asked this question. At that time, 62% felt the US should have gone in and 28% were opposed.



## METHODOLOGY

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks, a polling, social science, and market research firm in Menlo Park, California, with a randomly selected sample of its large-scale nationwide research panel. This panel is itself randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and subsequently provided internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have internet access). The distribution of the sample in the web-enabled panel closely tracks the distribution of United States Census counts for the US population on age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, geographical region, employment status, income, education, etc.

The panel is recruited using stratified random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone sampling. RDD provides a non-zero probability of selection for every US household having a telephone. Households that agree to participate in the panel are provided with free Web access and an Internet appliance, which uses a telephone line to connect to the Internet and uses the television as a monitor. In return, panel members participate in surveys three to four times a month. Survey responses are confidential, with identifying information never revealed without respondent approval. When a survey is fielded to a panel member, he or she receives an e-mail indicating that the survey is available for completion. Surveys are self-administered.

For more information about the methodology, please go to: [www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp).

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**The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA)** is a joint program of the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Center on Policy Attitudes. PIPA undertakes research on American attitudes in both the public and in the policymaking community toward a variety of international and foreign policy issues. It seeks to disseminate its findings to members of government, the press, and the public as well as academia.

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**The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM)**, at the University of Maryland's School for Public Affairs, pursues policy-oriented scholarship on major issues facing the United States in the global arena. Using its research, forums, and publications, CISSM links the University and the policy community to improve communication between scholars and practitioners.

**The Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA)** is an independent non-profit organization of social science researchers devoted to increasing understanding of public and elite attitudes shaping contemporary public policy. Using innovative research methods, COPA seeks not only to examine overt policy opinions or positions, but to reveal the underlying values, assumptions, and feelings that sustain opinions.

Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay and Phil Warf designed the questionnaire and wrote the analysis.

Leonard H. Robinson, Jr., Bernadette B. Paolo, Esq., Tom Bayer, Amy Hawthorne and Elaine Maag contributed to the development of the questionnaire and the analysis

Knowledge Network's Stefan Subias adapted the questionnaire and managed the fielding of the poll

Trent Perrotto, Monika Kacinskiene, Roman Gershkovich and Batsuuri Haltar contributed to the production of the report.

The search of existing poll data was done with the aid of the Roper POLL database.

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