

TRANSAFRICA FORUM

TRANSAFRICA FORUM SCHOLARS ADVISORY COUNCIL BRIEF: "REMAKING U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE"

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In this cogent analysis of U.S. foreign assistance and the agencies that administer it, the members (Dr. A. Lynn Bolles, Dr. Herschelle Challenor, Dr. Dorith Grant-Wisdom, Dr. Willard Johnson, and Dr. Cherri Waters) of TransAfrica Forum's Scholars Advisory Council Issues Committee on Reconceptualization and Restructuring of Economic Development Assistance, and Multilateralism present their views on how foreign aid should be reorganized. Specifically, the paper, which focuses on bilateral assistance, calls for the rethinking of the goals and objectives of American foreign assistance programs, the reallocation of U.S. foreign assistance budgets, and the revamping of the principal economic assistance agency.

The authors argue that foreign assistance is in the national interest of the United States because of its beneficial impact on trade, security, and the environment. They also contend that the central mission of U.S. foreign assistance in the post-Cold War era should be supporting equitable economic development in the developing world.

The paper calls for the reallocation of foreign assistance away from military aid towards economic assistance. There should also be a reallocation of U.S. foreign assistance away from higher income countries such as Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Greece, Spain, and South Korea towards the poor countries of the developing world that are in dire need of U.S. aid. No government-to-government assistance should be given to governments that are human rights abusers.

In view of the past failures of U.S. foreign assistance, a new approach to foreign assistance is presented. This approach calls for a policy in which no less than 40% of foreign assistance goes towards the poorest countries of the world and all forms of military assistance are eliminated except for that which goes toward defense conversion. The authors also argue that funding should be increased for the Peace Corps, Inter-American Foundation and African Development Foundation because of their grassroots focus and poverty alleviation missions.

Given the mismanagement and ineffectiveness that have marked the Agency for International Development's administration of U.S. foreign assistance, the authors argue for the creation of an autonomous International Agency for Cooperation and Development to administer foreign aid. They also contend that there is a need for greater inter-agency coordination of U.S. economic, security, and development policies.

Lastly, the authors point out that U.S. foreign assistance is amongst the lowest of the industrialized nations. The United States contributes only 0.2% of its gross domestic product towards foreign aid. This is a figure that is the lowest percentage of any industrialized nation except Ireland. Since the United States consumes a great share of the world's resources, its obligation to assist others more than it presently does cannot easily be denied.