

Africa as "Other": Examples from the Media

Excerpts from: Kaplan, R.D. 1994. The coming anarchy. *The Atlantic Monthly* February: 44-76.

Population --> environmental degradation --> political anarchy

pg 46:

"West Africa is becoming *the* symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real "strategic" danger. Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, and increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders,are now most tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism. West Africa provides an appropriate introduction to the issues, often extremely unpleasant to discuss, that will soon confront our civilization."

Pg 48:

".... it is Thomas Malthus, the philosopher of demographic doomsday, who is now the prophet of West Africa's future. And West Africa's future, eventually, will also be that of most of the rest of the world"

"I got a general sense of the future while driving from the airport to downtown Conakry, the capital of Guinea. The forty-five-minute journey in heavy traffic was through one never-ending shanty-town: a nightmarish Dickensian spectacle to which Dickens himself would never have given credence. The corrugated metal shacks and scabrous walls were coated with black slime. Stores were built out of rusted shipping containers, junked cars and jumbles of wire mesh. The streets were one long puddle of floating garbage. Mosquitoes and flies were everywhere. Children, many of whom had protruding bellies, seemed as numerous as ants.... It seemed to me that here, as elsewhere in Africa and the Third World, man is challenging nature far beyond its limits, and nature is now beginning to take its revenge"

Environmental analysis? pg 60:

Homer-Dixon points to a world map of soil degradation in his Toronto office. "The darker the map color, the worse the degradation," he explains. The West African coast, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, China, and Central America have the darkest shades, signifying all manner of degradation, related to winds chemicals, and water problems. "The worst degradation is generally where the population is highest. The population is generally highest where the soil is the best. So we're degrading earth's best soil"

African diaspora and the threat of racial violence at home pg 76:

"The spectacle of several West African nations collapsing at once could reinforce the worst racial stereotypes here at home. That is another reason why Africa matters. We must not kid ourselves: the sensitivity factor is higher than ever..... Africa may be marginal in terms of conventional late-twentieth-century conceptions of strategy, but in an age of cultural and racial clash, when national defense is increasingly local, Africa's distress will exert a

destabilizing influence on the United States.”

Excerpts from: Goldberg, J. 1997. Our Africa. *New York Times Magazine* March 2, 1997.

Africa as the source of disease (pg 35)

“America does, though, have compelling national security interests in Africa. Some conform to the traditional definitions of national security... But there is a whole new set of what might be called biological national-security issues: environmental destruction, explosive population growth, the rapid spread of disease and the emergence of entirely new diseases.... Not that Africa is the only exporter of disease..... But tropical Africa -- hot, wet, and poor, and home to an unmatched diversity of animals, plants, and microbes -- has been an especially fertile petri dish for pathogens..... malaria, the mosquito-borne disease that kills more people in Africa than AIDS, a “real threat” to the United States”

Western condescension (pg 62)

“The question: what will save Uganda from the devastation of AIDS, the burden of illiteracy, the chaos of its neighbors and the yoke of feudalism? The answer, it seems, is beef. Or so suggests Yoweri Museveni, Uganda’s odd and compelling President, who has ruled this country since 1986..... Museveni is muscular, with a shaved head, similiar in carriage and demeanor to Yul Brynner. Like the King of Siam, he lives in a state of perpetual declamation..... Today he is trying to reposition himself as the Steve Forbs of Central Africa.... Our interview is supposed to concern American national interests in Africa and the growing chaos in Zaire..... The President would much rather talk, though, about the merits of his cows, and devise with his visitor a strategy to introduce Ugandan beef to the American market....And the United States Government has channeled about \$30 million to anti-AIDS activities in Uganda since 1990. I ask Museveni what else the U.S. could do to reverse the epidemic. “The only thing America can do is lower the cost of production of these drugs” he says. The only thing? “I would prefer not to ask them for more money because it is not a sustainable source of funds,” he says. There is a hint of a sneer in Museveni’s voice when the subject turns to traditional development aid. Even the Peace Corps, which trains teachers in Uganda, doesn’t escape his criticism..... The Peace Corps *has* helped Uganda, of course. . . But Museveni, ungrateful as he may sound, is not wrong: the teachers only teach if they get paid, and Congress has made it clear that it will not be the American taxpayer who foots the bill.”

Excerpt from: Editors. 1997. The end and the beginning. *The New Republic*. June 16, 1997.

Africa as immoral

“Laurent Kabila’s takeover of the former Zaire comes in the infancy of a new Africa, an Africa that is as yet undefined, and that has the potential for immense horror -- a continent isolated from the world in a way it has not been for a century. Or there is the other path, a path of economic and moral return, that begins with the formation of honest government. The signs now point toward the horror, not the promise. The prospect should make the leaders of independent Africa shudder. Let us hope it also makes them change”