



**The Brookings Institution
Africa Growth Initiative
Foresight Africa Podcast**

**“What’s next for U.S.-Africa relations under the Biden administration?”
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Episode Summary:

Witney Schneidman, a Brookings Africa Growth Initiative nonresident fellow, assesses U.S.-Africa relations under the Biden administration, discusses how the next version of the African Growth and Opportunity Act might better support U.S.-Africa trade, and offers recommendations for enhancing U.S. trade and investment in the region.

ORDU: From the promise of new technologies to the innovative and youthful population shaping our continent's future, Africa is full of dynamism worth celebrating. Hi, I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, director of the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institution and host of Foresight Africa podcast. Since 2011, the Africa Growth Initiative has published a high profile report on the key events and trends likely to shape affairs in Africa in the year ahead. Entitled "Foresight Africa," the goal of the publication is to bring attention to these burning issues and to support policy actions to address them. With this podcast, we intend to engage the report authors as well as policymakers, captains of industry, Africa's youths, and other key figures.

Today, we are joined by Witney Schneidman to discuss the Biden-Harris administration's approach to Africa. Witney is not a stranger to Brookings. He is the senior international advisor for Africa at Covington and Burling LLP, where he works on risk mitigation and dispute resolution on international companies in Africa and elsewhere. Witney was previously deputy assistant secretary of state for Africa during the Clinton administration. He is also a nonresident senior fellow at the Africa Growth Initiative here at the Brookings Institution. Witney, welcome to the show.

SCHNEIDMAN: Thank you, Aloysius. It's nice to be here with you.

ORDU: So, it'd be great to start first, Witney, if you could share with us your career journey today, your illustrious career journey today.

SCHNEIDMAN: Well, thank you for asking. So, I've been working on African issues for 50 years. May sound like a long time to some of your listeners, but it's been an incredible journey. My first encounter with Africa occurred in late 1970, 1971, after I graduated high school, didn't go to college. I made my way out to East Africa, and I happened to be in Uganda when Idi Amin took over the country. And I heard him come on the radio and announced that he had just seized power. He was going to liberate the country from evil and imperial forces and borders were closed until further notice.

So, a week later, I was on my way out of the country in one of the first convoys back to Nairobi. And then I started university the following year and I started reading about all these places I'd been. And I realized at that time that Africa was ending one historical era of colonialism, beginning a new era of independence. And in southern Africa, liberation movements were fighting for freedom. And I said, this is incredibly important. Nobody in America seems to be aware of this or care. And I think here's this incredible continent. This is what I want to do. I want to be a bridge between the United States and Africa to explain to my fellow citizens why Africa is so important. And maybe one day I can help shape U.S. policy. So, I've been working off of that dynamic ever since, and it's been quite extraordinary.

ORDU: Wow, that was quite a brave trip at such a tender age.

SCHNEIDMAN: Well, put it this way. If you had told me when I left Radnor, Pennsylvania, in September 1970 that I was going to be in a coup in Uganda three months later, I'm not sure I would have left.

But the fact that things happen in the road of life and you're just presented with different challenges. And for me it was just so different from anything I had seen. And I realized that

the world that I had grown up in outside Philadelphia, the real world was just very different. And I wanted to be part of that other world too, to understand, to make things happen, to try to draw the United States and Africa more closely together, to be part of the journey of these incredible people and nations that I was seeing. So, it just sort of seemed to happen naturally and easily, to be honest with you.

ORDU: Great. Africa is the better for it, and I hope the United States as well. Let's now pivot, Witney, to the current Biden-Harris administration. How, in your view, is the administration doing on Africa?

SCHNEIDMAN: Well, I think year one was a little slow in getting going. I mean, literally in the first days, the new President Biden made a very compelling address to the leaders of the African Union to say that his administration was going to be different. But then, as often happens, many things intervened at the White House, principally the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan. Obviously, recovery from the COVID pandemic. And I think Africa got nudged off the front burner a little bit.

But it began to turn around, I would say, in November when Secretary of State Tony Blinken visited Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal, and really laid out a clear set of priorities for the United States on the continent.

And I think since then, we've seen some good momentum over the last couple of months. We've had the deputy national security adviser go to the DRC. We've had the undersecretary of state for economics visit South Africa and Zambia. The deputy secretary of state has been in Angola, South Africa, and Gabon. The deputy secretary of Commerce is set to go to Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in another couple of weeks. The undersecretary of state for political affairs was just in Morocco working with the global coalition to defeat ISIS.

So, that suggests that Africa is coming into the attention, it's in the attention of the administration. And I should say that when Secretary Blinken was in Nigeria, he announced that this year there would be a U.S.-Africa leaders' summit. And that really, I think, has caught everybody's attention to ensure that it is as successful as it can be.

ORDU: Yeah. We'll talk about that summit in a minute. I was just wondering how, in your view, they're doing also in terms of appointments, appointments into the administration in terms of key officials. Your thoughts on that?

SCHNEIDMAN: I think we're starting to see some really extremely well-qualified ambassadors going out to the field. Mike Raynor is on his way out to Senegal. Virginia Palmer's going to Ghana. Reuben Brigety, a former deputy assistant secretary for ambassador the A.U. has been nominated to go to South Africa. There's some other appointments in the pipeline, so I think we're getting our best and brightest into key positions.

ORDU: It's also quite reassuring recently, Witney, that the number of appointees in senior level positions in the administration who are of African descent is pretty impressive when you look back in the history of this country in terms of the sheer numbers. I wonder whether you had any thoughts on that as well?

SCHNEIDMAN: Aloysius, this is a really important point. And during the campaign, I've never seen a presidential campaign that had a platform that was dedicated to the African

diaspora like the Biden-Harris campaign had. And it's very much of a priority, very much of a concern. And I know during the campaign they reached out to the African diaspora. That community was very involved. The larger Africa community was very involved. So, I think we're starting to see some of the fruits of that now.

ORDU: Do you have any suggestions in terms of if you had the opportunity to advise the administration in the areas for improvement as we go forward?

SCHNEIDMAN: Well, you know, free advice is always worth what you pay for. But what I really think is so important is the people-to-people contact. In my mind, it starts with commercial diplomacy, because when you look at governments and leaders on the African continent, what's their number one priority in a sense from the U.S., from their other partners? They want to see private sector investment. They want to see economic growth led by the private sector. They want to see private sector led economic development, job creation, technology transfer, compliance with anti-corruption, environmental standards, labor standards, to improve governance. So, anything that can be done to move that dynamic forward, that to me is at the top of the list.

And it also translates into conflict resolution. For a long time, the U.S. has focused on the instabilities in the Sahel and Somalia and elsewhere from a security point of view, which it is. But I don't think we've given enough attention to the economic development dimension of insecurity, and job creation, and small and medium enterprises, and the role of women, gender, youth. I'm not saying it's easy, but I just think we need to really double down on understanding the multiple sources of these conflicts and how these conflicts require multiple solutions.

There's not just one solution. It needs different strategies over time. This is not going to be done in three years or five years or seven years. This is a long-term proposition here.

And finally, we have to be working with all of our partners. This is not just something the U.S. can solve or should solve. We need to be working with ECOWAS. We need to be working with the A.U. We need to be working with our partners from the EU as well, and the private sector. So, I guess that would be second area, you know, really trying to ramp up the kind of strategies that we bring to the table where it revolves around conflict resolution.

ORDU: Those are really, really exciting suggestions because growing up in rural Nigeria, and indeed as survey after survey or polls have shown, the youths of the continent in general, if we present them with options in terms of where to go study, where to go live, and work, almost always the U.S. ranks highest. And that's really, if I hear you correctly, that's a preference base for America, right, that the African youths already have. And so if the administration could really be intentional and capitalize on that, that's really, really incredible.

SCHNEIDMAN: Yeah. And to that point, Aloysius, the Afrobarometer polling that indicates that seven out of ten Africans would like to live under a democratic government, to me, that's the connective tissue between the United States and Africa. That has to be at the forefront of our dialogue. It's not easy. January 6, 2021, showed that we have our own challenges here with building democracy. It's never perfect, it's never done. But that really has to be front and center of our engagement on the continent.

And I guess the other example I would point to is the Young Africa Leaders Initiative, which was started under President Obama. When USAID put the first application online for the first class of Mandela Washington Fellow, right, the first class was going to be 500. Some 50,000 of Africa's best and brightest young men and women applied for those 500 slots. That's more selective than Harvard University. Give me a break!

And it just shows what you were talking about, just the deep desire to sort of learn from America, to share with America and how America can learn from young Africans and how it's very much a two-way street. I think the challenge to us is how do we build that street into a superhighway so the foot traffic is going back and forth, the ideas are going back and forth, the aspirations are going back and forth.

ORDU: Of course, the continent itself, we're seeing now in terms of megatrends, right, we're seeing the youth bulge.

SCHNEIDMAN: Yes.

ORDU: From now 'til 50 years on, the one continent that is going to exponentially grow in terms of population is, of course, Africa. And that youth bulge is also happening at the time of tremendous, tremendous technological digital revolution. And these are areas where the U.S. could be deliberate and capitalize on what is happening on the African continent in terms of the huge market and, of course, the technology revolution.

SCHNEIDMAN: Yes, absolutely. And I think that is really what is going to drive the future of this continent and is certainly one of the most exciting aspects of it. Because, as you say, the youth bulge, the number that I focus on, there are 1.3 billion people on the continent today. One billion of those people are 35 years and younger. Right. So, when you put young people together with technology, we know what happens. A lot of innovation, just a lot of creation in the private sector and services. And where is that taking place in Africa? That's taking place on cell phones. You have some 600 million people accessing the internet on cell phones.

So, I think the challenge right now is how do we get everybody connected? How do we get all 1.3 billion people connected? How do we do the last mile? How do we make sure that folks have the skills that they need to operate online? I think we've seen from the pandemic, yes, all of us spend a lot more times on our computers than we used to. But having the skills to do this on your cell phone, to start a business, to run a business, to communicate, I think that's really the cutting edge, as it were. And if we can really sort of respond to those kinds of needs, I think there'll be a lot more innovation than we've already seen on the continent.

ORDU: Witney, you mentioned earlier that President Biden will be hosting another U.S.-Africa leaders' summit later this year. Do you have any particular advice for the administration regarding the priorities for this year's summit?

SCHNEIDMAN: Well, as I understand it, it's going to be like two days. And just looking what's happened in the past, when President Obama hosted the Africa Leaders' Summit in 2014, to be honest with you, many of us not in government, but many of us who care about U.S.-Africa relations, you know, we are quite nervous. How can this be successful? Here's China, they have their summit every few years and the Chinese leader will come with \$30 billion. And that's certainly not going to happen.

But what we saw in 2014 was this organic response where the U.S. private sector came forward and made tremendous commitments of about that amount: \$36 billion. So, that's how I'm looking at this summit. Can we use the great desire for American companies to be more proactive on the continent to generate those kind of commitments? And then can we set up a mechanism that really tracks those commitments and really mobilizes U.S. government to sort of ensure that problems are resolved so companies can implement and we hold companies accountable for what they say they're going to do. And obviously, working with our partners on the continent to make sure that they're benefiting from these investments in the most relevant way. So, that's what I'm hoping to see out of the summit. There's a range of other issues, too, that I'm sure will be discussed, like governance, democracy, and climate change and recovery from COVID pandemic.

ORDU: So, on the private sector side, which you just mentioned, obviously critical, catalytic role they will play. And you're obviously a representative of the private sector yourself. What would you be looking for in terms of specific and monitorable outcomes from this year's summit?

SCHNEIDMAN: Well, I'm aware that the administration has been talking about an initiative around digital technology. And several years ago, the World Bank did a study called "The Digital Moonshot." Yeah. And that's where they said, you know, in ten years we want to have a billion people online. That's going to cost \$100 billion. And to me, that's the top end.

But I would hope that we get something in that direction out of this summit, pointing to a digital future for the continent, where it's not just the people in the urban areas, but it's the people in the rural areas. It's the farmers in Mali who can find out the price in Bamako of what their product is, or people in Zambia who want to communicate from rural areas with their doctors digitally--that that can really be accelerated.

And if we can really set a blueprint for that, for working with our private sector, we're working with USAID and U.S. government agencies, we're working with our partners on the continent, we're working with the African private sector, and so many of the cell phone providers, which are so critical to this--I'm sure we can have a digital future that really accelerates economic development on the continent.

ORDU: Fascinating indeed. You mentioned USAID, and, Witney, there seem to be a multiplicity of U.S. government agencies that interface with Africa. You have the DFC. You have the MCC. You have the USAID. And you have, of course, your former departments, State Department, Power Africa, et cetera, et cetera, and all with Africa-related mandates. Do you see the diversity of agencies as a challenge or some opportunity?

SCHNEIDMAN: I see it as an opportunity. There's no question about it. And here's the challenge to the U.S. government. I'll just give you an example. When I was in the Clinton administration and we went to roll out AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, for the first time, we actually only had ten countries that were going to be beneficiaries. And working with our partners in the African diplomatic corps here in Washington, they got really upset because they had been working for this legislation for five years, all 48 countries then--48, today 49--all 48 ambassadors had written to U.S. Congress saying they want this legislation. And then we tell them, well, there will only be ten beneficiaries.

So, when they registered their protest with us, we realized that maybe we were not listening very well. Maybe we don't really understand, right. We say we're in a new partnership, but maybe not really.

So, we went back to the well, and we convened this ministerial, U.S.-Africa ministerial, and invited like 50 countries, and defense ministers, finance ministers, and foreign ministers. And we mobilized all levels of the U.S. government. And where I'm going is that we saw that folks at TVA had their own programs that they got going with their counterparts on the continent. Ex-Im Bank got programs going. Commerce Department. USAID. MCC.

So, yes, there are a number of U.S. agencies. And Prosper Africa has been established to help bring more coherence. But the bottom line is that each agency does different things. And I think the real challenge is to have folks in that agency deal with their counterparts in African governments, to share experience, build capacity on both sides, and build understanding so that we can truly deepen the relationship. This is not just person-to-person. This is government-to-government at all levels. So, that's why I think these 17 U.S. government agencies can really be a value-add, are really quite important to engage as individuals, but obviously, as you suggest, leading to a holistic U.S. policy toward the continent.

ORDU: An interesting opportunity to pivot. You mentioned AGOA. You were, of course, part of the team that worked on the passage of AGOA, which expires soon in 2025. So, presumably the negotiations for a replacement or so is likely to be happening during the lifetime of the current Biden-Harris administration. But looking back, what would you say have been the successes and failures of AGOA to date?

SCHNEIDMAN: In terms of the successes, AGOA has been important for helping the United States transition from strictly a relationship predicated on aid to one that's predicated on trade. And why that so important is when it's aid, the relationship is donor recipient, i.e. we're going to give you this money, but you have to do what we tell you to do.

Now, look, don't get me wrong. Aid has an important place to play, and I don't mean to be cynical about it. And there are certainly many, many examples. PEPFAR, probably the largest, where it's been extraordinarily successful. But aid is not sustainable. I think everybody would agree with that.

So, to introduce trade is a stimulus for economic development, which AGOA does, it was a very important departure for the United States, because when you start moving to trade and the private sector, you're now talking about mutual benefit, mutual gain, and you're going to negotiate on the terms of what that benefit and gain looks like. And that's a much better position, I would argue, to be in. So, bringing that new dynamic is probably the most important outcome.

And the second is, again, bringing trade and investment to the center of the U.S.-African relationship. Prior to that, it was all about security or it was all about health, it was all about aid. Bringing the private sector in was an important dimension of AGOA. But that was 22 years ago, almost a quarter of a century ago. And the world was emerging from the Cold War. Africa was emerging from the Cold War. We were looking for a new footing. Things are different today. And that's why I think we need to take a new look at the legislation and ask what is relevant to keep and where do we make changes.

ORDU: Indeed. Things are very, very different today, particularly in Africa. Of course, things have changed in remarkable ways here in the United States. So, looking forward, how should the administration approach the negotiations for the renewal of AGOA, in your view?

SCHNEIDMAN: I think there are two fundamental issues that we have to keep in mind. One of the most dramatic changes that has taken place over the last quarter century in Africa is the number of partners that Africa has. It's not just the U.S. It's not just China. It's India, it's Turkey, it's Brazil, it's Japan, it's Indonesia. You now have the U.K. outside the EU; you have the EU. And then, of course, you have the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which is absolutely one of the most important changes that has taken place, this effort to create an integrated common market in Africa is really quite significant.

So, two issues arise from that. One is the issue of reciprocity. I think some economies, let's face it, are larger than other economies. And I think for the smaller economies, we would want to keep business as usual. But there's no question with other economies, U.S. goods and services are being discriminated against. For instance, if you build a tractor or refrigerator in the United States and export it to South Africa, for example, it's going to land in South Africa and facing an 18% tariff. If that same U.S. company builds that tractor or refrigerator, let's say in Germany, because of the EU economic partnership agreement that the EU has with South Africa, that tractor and refrigerator will land facing a 2% tariff. So, what does that do? That puts the U.S. worker at a disadvantage, but it also puts the South African consumer at a disadvantage because by definition that's going to make the American product more expensive. So, I would hope that we could sort of preserve what's good about AGOA--and there's much good about AGOA, but also move to a relationship where there's more reciprocity, where the playing field is more level in critical sectors. So that's certainly one concern.

And then another issue that I think is quite important to address and, Aloysius, maybe this is something, a conversation that you can host at Brookings with civil society, business and civil society. Because when AGOA was passed in 2000, yes, it was seen as a stimulus to economic development, but it was also seen as an incentive for good governance, i.e. you could get the benefits of AGOA as long as you're making progress in terms of economic reform and democratic reform.

So, here we are today, and if there's a coup d'état, that country will lose its benefits. Where it became most crystallized was recently in Ethiopia, in incredibly tragic and just nonsensical conflict there, the U.S. withdrew benefits from Ethiopia. And we saw in 2007 when there was a coup in Madagascar, the U.S. withdrew benefits. Who loses in those situations? Usually it's the several thousand women who are on the manufacturing line in the factories assembling apparel for the American market. And I don't think that's really what we had in mind with AGOA when we wanted to use it as a stimulus for economic development, that it would be temporary.

In the case of Ethiopia, it was quite interesting. In 2017, the U.S. company PVH, which controls the brands of Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein, they moved their operations from Bangladesh to Ethiopia so they could take advantage of AGOA. But last November, when the U.S. announced that it was withdrawing benefits, kicking Ethiopia out, boom, PVH closed its factory two weeks later. You could almost predict it in Ethiopia. And at the same time, the U.S. came forward with a package of sanctions that it was going to put on those responsible for the decisions to go to war.

So, here we are basically kicking under-served people out of their jobs and we're also threatening sanctions. And I think we need to take a really hard look at that. And I would be in favor of decoupling. I don't know where else we sort of use our trade policy as an incentive for governance, particularly in a situation where the U.S. is trying to boost its trade and investment in Africa. I think U.S. companies are looking for more certainty. They're looking for more predictability. And our own trade policies undermining it, in my mind, doesn't make a lot of sense.

ORDU: This is particularly fascinating because the tying of trade and all that to governance, et cetera, clearly has a tremendous cost, as you just outlined on both sides, because the people who suffer, the losers, are usually the poorest of the poor, who are the main beneficiaries, if you like, of trade and also your competitors--the U.S.'s competitors on the continent are not necessarily looking at trade through the prism of purity in terms of governance. So, again, that surely also affects U.S. businesses.

I was just wondering, since the U.S. businesses themselves will be actively engaged in the re-negotiations in the coming couple of years before 2025, specifically on the U.S. business side, what would you advise them to focus on to make sure that AGOA mark two or three is a much better outcome than what we currently have?

SCHNEIDMAN: I think what we have seen is that when countries develop AGOA strategies, that there's a boost in what those countries export to the United States. For instance, in Ghana, they published their AGOA utilization strategy in 2016. And Ghana's non-oil exports rose by 91% from 2017 to 2020. We're talking about yucca plant roots, apparel products, and travel goods—things that Americans don't necessarily associate being manufactured in a country like Ghana.

So, with countries developing their utilization strategies, that gives the opportunity for them to say to the U.S. private sector, hey, this is what we're good at. Come invest with us in these sectors and help us grow these sectors, help us grow these industries. And, Aloysius, here's the thing. If we can really get more U.S. investment into critical sectors in African countries, that's gonna have a beneficial impact not only for utilization of AGOA, but for also what is trying to be accomplished under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement--more goods and services circulating within Africa. It will strengthen Africa's manufacturing sector, and that's really what we want to see.

So, I guess that's my major recommendation, is just to really drill down on what are national strategies for attracting investment that creates jobs, that stimulates exports from Africa to the U.S. across the continent. And if we can really get much more coherence in that area, I think that would be a huge win from a AGOA extension in 2025.

ORDU: You alluded to the African Continental Free Trade Area a minute ago. And it's particularly fascinating because at a time when globalization is seriously under threat, Africans are acting in solidarity, as exemplified by the African Continental Free Trade Area, probably the largest trading bloc on the planet in terms of number of countries, right. So what's your advice to the administration on how best to work with Africans to actualize the African continental free trade area?

SCHNEIDMAN: Well, again, another really important question. I mean, I've had some discussions with the leadership at the AfCFTA with members of Congress, such as Representative Karen Bass. And we've talked about sort of focusing on key corridors, strategic corridors. You know, I know it's a priority, for example, for the AfCFTA to streamline the highway from Abidjan to Lagos. I understand takes like 17 days. And how many border checks and how many shakedowns and how much does that drive up the cost of goods? All I know is a lot.

So, to get the U.S. and maybe some of our technology companies in partnership to help digitize these border posts, land-based border posts, would be extremely important and I think progress has already been made. As I understand it, it used to take like ten or 15 days to get goods from Mombasa to Kigali, for example. Now I'm told it only takes a couple of days. So, we can see that progress is happening. We just have to be more deliberate about.

It was put to me a couple of years ago that a truck of goods can leave a warehouse in Cape Town and travel the 1,500 kilometers to Johannesburg in 17 hours. It would take that same truck with the same goods to travel the same distance from Johannesburg to Lusaka five days. So, how do we get it so that that truck can go from Johannesburg to Lusaka in 17 hours like it does from Cape Town to Johannesburg? And I think if we can really partner with governments, with the AfCFTA, to really streamline some of these strategic trade corridors, that would be a huge win.

ORDU: I'm glad you mentioned the trade corridors before, because the president of Africa's regionalism, Kwame Nkrumah, was on record in the '60s as envisioning a time when you could actually leave Cape Town to Cairo in the same day, by road. He envisaged these north-south highways and east-west. This is 2022, we still don't have one major highway that links the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, crisscrossing Africa.

And yet, Witney, these are all the kinds of infrastructure that the U.S. is really disposed to focus on and finance and make happen. And often, given the prowess of U.S. businesses, what it takes is that little extra funding for preparation, for ensuring the due diligence and social, environmental, to make sure that these are bankable projects the private sector can then finance. So, why, Witney, do you think it's so difficult to pull that off?

SCHNEIDMAN: Aloysius, that is one of the key questions in the U.S.-African relationship. I think generally U.S. companies, when they look at Africa, what do they see? They see risk. A lot of these companies are publicly held companies and so concerns about transparency and anti-corruption are foremost in their minds.

So, how do we de-risk the risk? And that's where I think the DFC and public monies play a very important role because it's not so much the amount of public money, but the fact that it's there. I think that gives our private sector a lot more comfort to go into markets that they might not otherwise go into. And I think that has to be at the top of our conversation with our partners on the continent. How do we get our road building companies to be successful? How do we get our data center companies to be successful? How do we get our construction companies out there? Because they're not there right now. Our technology companies are there. So in the hospitality sector, the U.S. companies are well represented. Education, you know, we're very involved on the continent, our universities have many partnerships. But we just have to build out the relationship and hopefully the summit that's coming up will not just be a one off, but it will really be the start of a new dialog with the continent where we can

really just get into areas that we haven't necessarily gone into before, but that are mutually beneficial and that are clearly beneficial to the development on the continent.

ORDU: In fact, that reminds me the points you made, very valuable points indeed, as VP of the African Development Bank, I once had my team look at basically procurement and who's winning the contracts, right, at ADB, African Development Bank, at the time. And the numbers, what came out in that study, is basically, as you said, the sheer absence of the U.S. entities in the competition for these contracts.

SCHNEIDMAN: Yes.

ORDU: It never ceases to amaze me. I'm not sure that has radically changed.

SCHNEIDMAN: Yeah. It's going to take a big effort. This is where we need to get our state trade agency, you know, from Ohio and Texas and California, who speak to their companies and really move beyond Washington, move beyond the capitals, and really just sort of get down to the states and unlock new opportunities for our companies. That's really what it's about. Africa is a continent of vast opportunity and it's about how do you capture that, and how do you capture it in such a way that it's win-win? How do you help U.S. companies align their commercial objectives so that they're consistent with the economic development objectives of African governments and the African people?

ORDU: Witney, thank you very, very much for joining our show today. We look forward to continued dialog with you as we push the administration and all interested parties towards better business and commercial relationships between the United States and Africa. Thank you very much.

SCHNEIDMAN: Great, Aloysius, thanks for inviting me onto the podcast.

ORDU: I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, and this has been Foresight Africa. To learn more about what you heard today, find this episode online at Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast. Each episode will be listed on its own web page and there will be links to the content discussed in the episode.

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Thank you very much.