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NATIONAL INTERESTS AND STRATEGY:

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

CORE COURSE 4 PAPER

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The end of the Cold War and dissolution of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact cause the United States and its allies to reevaluate its national interests and strategy in and toward the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. This paper examines the past US strategy toward Africa and develops a strategy for the future. Although there are many ways to develop a national strategy, this paper will concentrate on identifying US national interests, reviewing the strategic context and trends in the region, and identifying the threats and opportunities critical to our national interest. We will recommend US policy objectives and the tools of statecraft most likely to achieve those objectives and achieve our national interests.

Since the retreat of European colonialism from Africa and the establishment of over 40 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the people of Africa have suffered through famine, pestilence, disease, and countless wars with an appalling loss of life. More important, Africa was yet another battlefield of the Cold War. Both the East and West vied for power and influence across the African continent. From US-Soviet competition for influence in Ethiopia to international intervention in Angola, African nations served as the intellectual, cultural, and sometimes physical battleground of the Cold War.

As the battleground for the bi-polar world, incursions into Africa by the outside world served the interests for their superpowers and their allies. In the opinion of Ambassador Passage, Political advisor to CINC, USSOCOM, the Soviet Union in particular reversed social, political, and economic progress throughout Africa as it aggressively pursued its national objectives and interests in Africa. The East was not alone, however. The West also literally sucked natural resources and raw materials from Africa without much thought to helping to establish long term stability for Africa.

Since the end of the Cold War, interest in Africa has declined considerably, leaving nations devastated by the Cold War to fend for themselves. Today, standards of living across the continent continue to decline as a whole and international investment, necessary for economic development, is sparse. But Africa is a low priority for the rest of the world and can't rely on any other nation or group of nations to rebuild the continent. Africa must do most of the rebuilding itself, with very little outside help. Even National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, an experienced Africanist, speaks of African "self-help" as the only way for sub-Saharan Africa to progress into the 21st Century. Although citing examples of progress in South Africa, Lake warns against "Afro-optimism"--all of nations sub-Saharan Africa face enormous obstacles to economic, political, and social development.

Past US national interest in Africa focused on containment of Soviet influence and access to strategic raw materials necessary to support US industry. In support of those interests, the US met the Soviet challenge throughout Africa, particularly in the horn of Africa, Angola, and the Congo. We actively pursued relations with countries such as Angola, South Africa, and Botswana to ensure an adequate supply of strategic raw materials like cobalt, platinum, and chromium. While US aid often helped countries progress, that aid largely depended on Soviet moves and other worldwide priorities resulting in a "shotgun" solution to problems that needed long-term planning and support.

With the retreat of the Soviet Union and the availability of strategic raw materials elsewhere in the world, US interests in Africa must change drastically. In short, the United States no longer has any "vital" or serious military or security interests in Africa. Instead, US interest is simply to support African progress to lessen the chances of a crisis in the continent that requires vast amounts of US and international resources to remedy. With that simple national interest, the

United States should use diplomacy and leadership to promote economic development, international involvement, and intra-African cooperation. With development, involvement, and cooperation, the nations of sub-Saharan Africa will be able to take the steps necessary to encourage aid from other countries, private industry, international aid organizations, and non-government organizations to solve the myriad of problems most of Africa faces.

With that overriding national interest of preventing a crisis that requires massive world resources to rectify, the United States can establish specific objectives and policy based on the current and future threats and opportunities. The remainder of this paper identifies the US national strategy given our new national interest.

NATIONAL INTEREST

In view of higher priority national interests in other parts of the world, the United States must, for the next ten years, work to promote social, economic, and political progress in Africa with the minimum possible resources. Again, the goal is to avoid a major, resource-depleting crisis in Africa into the next century. In order to achieve this goal, the United States must seek stability in the area. It is in the United States' national interest to

- Promote an atmosphere conducive to economic investment and development
- Encourage ethnic tolerance to reduce the likelihood of ethnic/nationalist conflict.
- Support rebuilding/enlargement of political, cultural, and physical infrastructure to support improved standards of living.
- Help nations combat disease and control exploding populations

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the next ten years, the continent of Africa will not attain the economic, or military preeminence that will seriously threaten the security of the United States to the degree the emerging economic powers of Asia, or the latent military powers of Europe will be able to. However, this does not mean the continent can be ignored. As a rich base of natural resources and strategically located along two of the world's trade routes, Africa has the potential to enhance the United States' economic and military position. There are several threats to achieving this potential.

- Ethnic rivalries have led to war in Africa which have destabilized the economies of African states and disrupted the flow of natural resources out of the continent.
- Population growth has increased to three percent annually and exceeds the food production increase of one percent. This will strain the economies of all sub-Saharan African nations by the end of the century. 21 countries can no longer support their populations with existing food production.
- Education level is low and education is academically instead of technically oriented. This will slow economic growth as well as slow exports of natural resources.
- The continent is environmentally unstable. There are cyclical droughts and overgrazing, overcultivation and deforestation has increased poor soil conditions on much of the continent and increased desertification. Rectification will take resources away from developing export economies.
- Islam is one of the continent's two dominant religions. All the nations of sub-Saharan Africa have significant Islamic populations which are becoming more orthodox and less African in their set of beliefs.

- African nations are the third through seventh major providers of oil to the United States. Any disruption in the flow of oil will have severe repercussions in the US.
- The infrastructure in Africa has deteriorated since the end of colonial rule. The road system is poor and railroads in many regions are no longer in service due to civil wars.
- African nations have run up huge debts. The G-7 has been forced to cut the minimum annual payments for many African nations.
- Africa has health hazards which imperil not only its own populations, but those of the entire world. AIDS has become an economic problem for many nations worldwide as well as those in Africa. There are many other diseases endemic to the continent which pose a major world-wide health threat.
- Closure of the SLOCs (Cape of Good Hope, or the Horn of Africa) through terrorism or regional conflict would have a major effect on world markets.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has a substantial voting bloc in the United Nations which can affect US political objectives.
- A potential market of 600 million consumers is damaged by the vast numbers of those consumers living in poverty.
- There is the potential for friction with NATO.
- The US has very limited military facilities in the region.

U.S. OBJECTIVES

As Tony Lake pointed out during his December 1994 Africa trip, we are confronting the reality of shrinking budgets and resources and an honest skepticism about the return on our investments in peacekeeping and development. In the best of times all that can be offered nations in crisis is a window of opportunity in which they can sort out their problems during a period of relative security -- that window can only stay open for so long. Every time the leaders of contending factions do not seize that opportunity, do not act before the window closes, they diminish the international community's will to offer support in future conflicts and crises.

U.S. objectives in Africa include encouraging African governments and leaders to make democratic and economic reforms, expand their export markets and investment opportunities, resolve conflicts -- from whatever source -- peacefully, and curb environmental degradation. Key for the U.S. is the stability of the region and a desire to prevent situations from developing that will require international intervention to meet recurring humanitarian needs. Specifically, U.S. objectives are:

- Strengthening and expanding democratic institutions, because such institutions protect and advance basic human rights, and because elections provide a peaceful form of change.
- Encouraging African governments to restructure their economies to lay the groundwork for long-term growth, which in turn has the potential of attracting foreign investors and improving cooperation among states in the region.
- Encouraging African governments to institute economic policies that promote sustainable development, and build responsive governments that give citizens a stake in the future.
- Promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes, whether caused from ethnic or tribal conflict or inter-state tensions.

U.S. POLICY/STRATEGY:

Given the resource and budgetary constraints on the U S for now and the foreseeable future, U.S policy objectives in Africa will need to be met primarily through cooperative efforts with other major donors and appropriate international institutions and through the concerted and committed efforts of the countries concerned African governments and leaders will need to crack down on corruption and the inefficiencies inherent in many of their systems Although economic assistance is dwindling, much can be done through diplomatic suasion and cooperative international efforts Small programs targeted at specific sectors, such as health care, or the Peace Corps' small businesses program, can be particularly effective To further U S objectives, our policy strategy should include

- Funding for democratic elections and institutions, including support for private groups that monitor elections and help build democratic traditions and institutions (e g. the National Endowment for Democracy, the African-American Institute)
- Pressuring autocratic states by halting aid, suspending debt renegotiation, imposing trade sanctions, denying visas, freezing assets of high officials with proven records of corruption or human rights violations
- Reducing the amount the poorest nations pay to service their debt and continue to work with other major donors toward the same end (e g G-7 cut by 2/3 the amount the poorest African nations must pay to service their debt).
- Working within the World Bank and other IFI's to provide assistance for those countries prepared to make needed structural reforms and progress toward good governance

- Supporting, bilaterally and within the relevant international organizations, regional and intraregional efforts and cooperation on joint development projects and programs. (e.g. the South African Enterprise Development Fund) Such support would include experts' services and/or limited funding assistance
- Supporting former colonial powers' efforts to assist region, e.g. joint programs, donor coordination.
- Encouraging U.S. business investment, through trade fairs and promotion efforts
- Training for police and customs officials in fraud and criminal investigation.

CONCLUSION

Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is a low national priority for the United States. Future US policy must concentrate on avoiding major crises or situations which require additional amounts of US resources. The United States should remain involved, politically and diplomatically, in the affairs of Africa to encourage economic and political development and stability of the region.