

# “Africa Policy Issues for the Next Administration”

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## **Introduction**

In April 2008, CNA convened some of America's leading experts on Africa from across a wide spectrum of disciplines and perspectives. During the discussions, moderated by CNA senior fellows Ambassador Frances D. Cook and Admiral Harry Ulrich (ret.), the participants took on difficult questions about U.S. Africa policy and how the next administration can best execute our goals in this challenging, yet critical, area of the world. Our experts agreed that while the Bush administration has increased U.S. attention to Africa over the past eight years, significant challenges still lie ahead for the next administration. This report summarizes the discussion and provides a set of recommendations for the next administration.

## **U.S. Policy in Africa**

The United States has been actively engaged in Africa for over five decades, with the establishment of the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs under President Eisenhower in 1958. In the early years, our Africa policy was linked directly to our Cold War strategy of preventing Soviet expansionism but evolved overtime to reflect a more diversified view of our interests. In the 1960s, we discovered African resources, including crops and minerals; faced our first of many African conflicts in post-independence Congo; and put into motion a myriad of development programs, including the Peace Corps. The next decade was difficult for African nations, as economies plummeted following the fall out of the commodities market.

Throughout the 1970s, as African leaders seemed to be profiting from foreign aid while their people sunk deeper into poverty; U.S. policy makers were no longer convinced that our efforts were having the pay off we desired. This raised serious questions about funding and aid, forcing US officials to think about how best to use resources in this part of the world. A period of difficult belt-tightening for African nations followed in the 1970s and 1980s, with many undergoing harsh economic reforms. Under Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, U.S. efforts were channeled into preventing and mediating conflicts, primarily through peacekeeping, and promoting economic growth through trade.<sup>1</sup>

Under the current Administration, our budgetary resources allocated to Africa have greatly increased, and the amount of sustained, top-level policy attention to the continent is without precedent. The Bush Administration has focused on health and education; economic growth and development; eradicating poverty; and improving security conditions on the continent – and there have been some measurable successes from these efforts. Most agree that the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which provides funding to nations that meet certain govern-

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<sup>1</sup> This paragraph and the one before it draw heavily from an excellent overview of the history of U.S. policy in Africa: "A Mixed Record: 50 Years of U.S.-Africa Relations," Herman Cohen, *Foreign Service Journal* (May 2008, pages 17-24).

ance criteria, is among most dramatic policy initiatives under Bush. While it appears promising, naturally, the long-term impacts remain to be seen. In addition, participants agreed that the establishment of AFRICOM also represents a major shift in U.S. policy on the continent. Finally, in recent years, U.S. investments in Gulf of Guinea hydrocarbons have greatly increased and are continuing to do so; we currently receive at least 15% of our oil from this region. Ensuring access to these resources will continue to be an area of concern for the next administration.

### **The Challenges Ahead**

Speakers agreed that despite 50 years of U.S. efforts in Africa, the next administration will continue face enormous challenges on the continent: one half of the people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in poverty; a potential food crisis looms; the effects of climate change are already having an impact; authoritarianism and poor governance, corruption, and incompetence at leadership level persist; seemingly endless conflicts rage in certain countries, threatening to spread into others; diseases such as HIV/AIDs and malaria continue to kill thousands; and several states appear to be teetering on the edge of instability, at risk of plummeting into chaos.

The next president will also have to deal with the fact the current focus on Iraq, Afghanistan and the broader war on terror has to some extent been at the expense of other important countries – some of them in Africa. Specifically, the level of foreign assistance, for example, has been skewed in such a way that only a few African nations are significant recipients, leaving less for some of the poorest – those the least capable of even defending their borders. Additionally, the transformational diplomacy initiative, which prioritized U.S. embassies in major powers such as India and China, has had the unhappy effect of contributing to a significant decrease in the level of diplomatic support in Africa. This has had a direct impact on State Department officials’ ability to execute important programs in Africa because often they do not have sufficient staff numbers to do so and may not be appropriately trained and funded to execute the types of “hearts and minds” activities this Administration has made a priority.

### **Improving Security and Stability**

Improving security conditions in Africa must be a priority for the next administration. This Administration has recognized that poverty, disease, and corruption in Africa lead to instability and power vacuums that negatively affect our own national security. Building professional militaries is an important component in promoting and long-term stability and democratic principles across the continent. Many African countries have weak, ineffective security forces. African security forces often serve only to protect the regime, rather than being part of a broader transparent, accountable security structure that aims to protect individuals from harm.

Since the U.S. has a long, albeit mixed, history of training forces abroad, participants agree that continuing and expanding upon our efforts to train African militaries. Programs like the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) have been successful and should be continued, if not expanded. Participants noted, however, that building security should take a holistic approach fostering good governance, transparency, and accountability across the whole security sector; it should not be unsustainable training and equipping of the past. (In other words, simply providing equipment without maintenance and logistics support to keep it operating is only going to add to the collection of derelict machinery, vehicles and ships that are the fruits of earlier US aid efforts.)

Interestingly, one speaker noted, that security sector reform can be particularly effective in a place where civil war has destroyed all of the government institutions and there is an opportunity to start from the beginning, such as Liberia. A real life example of security sector reform is in Equatorial Guinea, where at the request of the EG government, a U.S. company has been working on security sector enhancement for the past seven years. Despite a slow take-off, this has been a relatively successful endeavor for both sides providing EG with the security forces it desires while enabling America to be directly engaged in the development of the military forces with minimal U.S. government involvement.

## **Peacekeeping**

Another key to improving security is to continue investing in peacekeeping. The current UN peacekeeping system needs improvement. UN peacekeeping operations are inefficient, under-resourced, and therefore often ineffective. Because of the nature of African conflicts, peacekeepers are often deployed to areas where there is no existing peace to keep (often fighting has resumed by the time the peacekeepers arrive). Deployment of peacekeepers is frequently delayed due to bureaucratic holdups within the UN. Experts agree for peacekeeping forces to be effective they must be present and on the ground within days of when a conflict ends. Finally, the UN's reliance on a volunteer force of peacekeepers results in a force that is often inadequately trained, and is comprised of the weakest troops of contributing countries' militaries is simply unsatisfactory. Peacekeeping operations must have a clear mission, which they often lack, as well as an agreed upon exit strategy. These elements are essential precursors to development of a proper training regime for peacekeepers.

Peacekeeping is an area that will consume a considerable amount of U.S. government funds in Africa (just as Africa will continue to require the largest number of peacekeeping forces). Under the current administration's Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), which began in 2005, \$660 million over five years has been allocated to train 75,000 peacekeepers. As of 2008, the U.S. has trained nearly 39,000 Africans in peacekeeping. We have also provided equipment. Additionally, we have trained 80% of the Africans deployed around the world in peacekeeping operations (most of which are in Africa). This will be a challenge for the next administration (if it was difficult to send troops to PKOs before Iraq and Afghanistan, it will

likely be immeasurably more so in the coming years); participants agreed that the funding levels and consent with Congress on sustainability have not yet been reached.

There was a hope and an expectation that AFRICOM could play a role in improving some of the weaknesses associated with the current peacekeeping system. At the same time, speakers agreed that the role of the Department of State in peacekeeping is essential; state department officials need ownership, oversight, and active participation in PKOs. European partners have recently contributed to the USG for peacekeeping because their own systems are too ineffective; some speakers view this as being linked to the successes of our current approach to peacekeeping and the important role of DoS therein.

### **Promoting Democracy**

Under the current administration, the promotion of democracy has been linked to building long-term stability and security in a number of regions of the world, including Africa. Indeed, most agreed that democratization is a laudable and important goal for the U.S. on continent and that it is likely that the U.S. will continue to invest in these efforts. Participants cautioned, however, that we should be wary of an over-emphasis on elections as a measure of democratic progress (with recent events in Kenya and Zimbabwe serving as examples). Rather, U.S. efforts should center on improving the foundational elements of a democratic system, such as transparency and legal reform. Once these are in place, democracy can thrive.

### **AFRICOM**

The discussion surrounding AFRICOM was generally positive. The initiative is seen as an innovative enterprise that has the potential to revolutionize our ability to coordinate defense-related activities on the continent and improve security. It also has the potential to focus more DoD resources on Africa. Creating another a combatant commander dedicated to Africa is all but certain to create a “demand signal” for those resources. Some participants were skeptical about its impact and value. In truth, the jury is still out on AFRICOM, and it will be up to the skill of AFRICOM leadership to make this initiative a success.

Notably, speakers emphasized that AFRICOM should not be thought of as an aid organization. Rather, nearly all participants agreed that it should leverage its strengths as a military organization, emphasizing defense activities such training African forces. Another potentially important role for AFRICOM, being an inter-agency organization itself, is to help professionalize the bureaucratic practices of African defense-related ministries and agencies. For example, one speaker pointed out that some African countries don’t pay their soldiers on a regular basis, if at all, partly because they don’t have the bureaucratic mechanisms in place to do so; this is an area where AFRICOM can potentially have real impact.

Finally, most participants agreed that building maritime security should continue to be a priority for U.S. military, and AFRICOM. For numerous reasons, including improving security

and stopping unlawful activities such as, illegal immigration, trafficking, and smuggling, the U.S., the Africans, and our European partners all directly benefit from more secure seas of the coast of Africa.

### **Promoting Economic Development and Investment**

While countries in other regions of the world, such as China and India, have transitioned into emerging markets, most African nations have not. One speaker noted that this is not the result of lack of aid, nor should we assign any kind of cultural inevitability to the situation. Rather, the causes for the economic problems of today can be attributed to the influence of Marxist doctrine in the post-independence era; bad governance, corruption, and incompetence on the part of many African leaders; a legacy of colonial borders that keeps the continent divided; and war.

The news in Africa, however, is not all bad and Africans themselves are optimistic that they can move beyond the problems of the past. There has been significant growth in a number of African countries; in fact, seventeen countries' GDPs have increased at a rate of 4 percent or higher for more than a decade (and these are not the oil-producing countries). These countries have succeeded because in general, peace prevails and the leaders in these countries are more accountable and responsible having left behind the tendency to complain about the colonial legacy and instead embrace new ways of doing business. They are working to put into place laws, rules, and regulations that create transparency and accountability in the markets to instill confidence for investors. Organizations such as the Mo Ibrahim Foundation have been very influential in promoting development in Africa while fostering good governance among African leaders.

Investing in the private sector is critical in stimulating economic growth in Africa. Currently, there is a small group of private investors in Africa investing in such industries as telecommunications and construction. Mo Ibrahim is credited with bringing cell phones to Africa, an industry that has boomed. Several of these companies have experienced real financial success investing; some of these markets are quite ripe (particularly to venture capitalism, one speaker added). In order to take advantage of this, the U.S. should put into place mechanisms that ensure banks and private companies feel secure; many U.S. investors fear African markets. The U.S. has not yet effectively accomplished this and that we are missing an opportunity.

American private and public investment in Africa has been traditionally focused on the oil market and mining activities. However, according to participants, U.S. investments in Africa should be more diverse. The agriculture sector is one area that is potentially promising. African agriculture practices are among the most primitive in the world; they need the basics, including improved irrigations systems, better seeds, and more efficient methods of transporting their goods to more prosperous markets. In addition, unless rapid and dramatic change occurs soon within the agricultural sector, much of the continent will face food crises

as the negative effects of climate change set in. Encouraging companies to invest in irrigation techniques, fertilizers, sod, and other products that will enhance the agriculture industry could greatly improve conditions for Africans, while also being profitable.

Infrastructure is a second area that investors should target (roads, power lines, train tracks, etc.). This may be a particularly ripe area for investment because there is buy-in from the Africans who continuously express a need for improved infrastructure. The Chinese have capitalized on this and have constructed roads, train tracks, bridges, and buildings in numerous countries. Naturally, investment in this area can also complement development in the agriculture industry because due to of the lack of infrastructure, Africans farmers cannot transport their goods beyond local markets.

### **Engaging on Key Countries and with African Organizations**

Speakers agreed that there are specific countries that will require special attention from the next administration including Sudan, South Africa, and Nigeria. The Bush administration's identified these countries in their first national security strategy and has expended considerable time and resources on these nations. Despite their efforts, problems persist; working with these nations will be complicated, time consuming, and even frustrating for the next administration. Despite this, to reach our long-term goals for the region, they are too important to overlook.

**Sudan.** The situation in Sudan should be an immediate priority for the next administration. Within the international community, there is the perception that the U.S. has the ability to end this conflict but has not. This conflict is particularly troubling because the situation in Darfur has the potential to spread and cause spillover effects into Chad and the Central African Republic; these countries are vulnerable to conflict and are already suffering refugee crises. One speaker noted that it may be necessary for the U.S. to take military action to reach an end to the fighting; however, speakers agree that this should be done with other countries, and not just the U.S. alone. Participants described the situation in Darfur as “an embarrassment for the U.S.” and in one expert's view “elucidates the decline in U.S. credibility.” Although the Bush administration assisted in negotiating the Darfur Peace Agreement, the speaker claimed that violence in the region is now worse than when the agreement was signed in 2006.

Some U.S. stakeholders have promoted the idea of establishing a no-fly zone over Darfur to help end the conflict. Almost all participants agreed that a no-fly zone is not a feasible option. Darfur is remotely located; the region is almost 1,100 miles from a body of water. As a result, it would be very difficult to use naval air assets to impose the no-fly zone. Even if U.S. forces were able to overcome this obstacle by using air bases in neighboring Chad, they would have to obtain permission from the Chadian government to use the French runway/air stations, which participants agreed is unlikely. Additionally, it would be almost impossible to regulate the no-fly zone, as Sudanese planes and UN planes look virtually identical since the Sudanese have painted their planes white, making it difficult to distinguish them from UN

aircraft, which carry food supplies. Thus, a no-fly zone may deter the Sudanese use of air space but puts at risk the humanitarian aid that the majority of the Sudanese population relies on for survival.

**South Africa** is an economic and military power in Africa. Its economic investments throughout the continent and ability to influence its neighbors and African organizations such as the AU, make it a lynchpin for successful relations throughout Africa. Internal pressures within South Africa, such as the untested leadership abilities of President Zuma, the very deep racial divide that persists, pressures from climate change, and rampant crime, threaten the long-term stability of South Africa. In recent years, U.S. relations with South Africa have been tense; experts agreed, however, that to establish credibility throughout the continent, the U.S. should make efforts to improve its relationship with the South Africans.

**Nigeria (Niger Delta).** Nigeria is one of the most strategically important countries in Africa, as it is located on the Gulf of Guinea, and is a major provider of oil to the U.S. and the world market more broadly. With an enormous land mass and a large population, Nigeria is also a leader on the continent; it has considerable influence throughout Africa. The on-going conflict in the Niger Delta continues to threaten Nigeria's internal stability as well as having a direct impact on the price of oil. Additionally, if not stopped, some experts think that it could spread to other oil-producing regions in Africa; since the tactics used by the militias in the Niger Delta are perceived as effective.

One speaker suggested that a potential solution to the Niger Delta crisis could be to implement the same model the international community used to settle the situations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast. This would mean working with President Yar'adua to ensure that the money available for the Delta goes directly to grass-roots projects and infrastructure development, as opposed to transiting through the state governors and local chiefs. At the same time, a deal must be made which would trade disarmament and demobilization of the militias in return for a better revenue-sharing formula for the Niger Delta communities, perhaps by making them partners in oil ventures. Finally, these efforts would be buttressed by an increased maritime security effort designed to stop the illegal oil bunkering and by the formation of riverine police (not military) units, which would assure security in the swamps.

**Other States to watch:** Today, there are active crises in Chad, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic Congo. The political fall-out in Kenya over the elections demonstrated to us that even the seemingly stable countries in Africa are fragile and can fall apart overnight. Additionally, there are a number of states, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast that have just emerged from conflict are also fragile and at high risk of slipping back into violence without support.

**African organizations:** Participants agreed that the U.S. should work with African organizations, including the African Union and the regional economic organizations. This is how the Africans have organized themselves and it provides Africans the opportunity to provide Afri-

can solutions to African problems. While participants agreed that giving African organizations the respect and attention they deserve is important for the next administration, many of these organizations are in their infancy and have a long way to go before they operate on a level equivalent to, for example, the European Union. The current administration has worked with the AU and regional organizations and has had success in some areas, but not in others. It is unrealistic to expect rapid results from organizations so early in their development.

### **Policy Recommendations for the Next Presidential Administration**

These are based on participants' view and perspectives, but should not be construed as reflecting consensus of all participants:

➤ **Build on the successes of the Bush Administration's Africa policy.** Future U.S. Africa policies should leverage the successes that have resulted from the dramatic changes made in U.S. policy towards Africa over the past decade. For example, a number of important humanitarian and health-related programs have been launched under President Bush; these have had some measurable success. Additionally, speakers agreed that U.S. efforts to build maritime security off the coast of Africa have been fruitful. Multiple speakers mentioned the successes of Africa Partnership Station and other efforts to build maritime security, such as the on-going private sector program in Equatorial Guinea.

➤ **Reconsider our broader priorities to ensure that resources are available to achieve our goals in Africa.** Under the current administration, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the transformational diplomacy initiative have resulted in the Department of State being under-manned and under-resourced in Africa. This has had a direct impact on our ability to effectively conduct activities in Africa. For example, the majority of U.S. embassies in Africa have a 30 percent vacancy rate. Many of the officials who are stationed in Africa are undertrained and ill-equipped for their postings. As a result, embassy staffs are over-worked and often cannot respond effectively to the demands placed upon them by those wishing to do business or implement a development program in their country.

➤ **Clarify AFRICOM's mission.** Based on the discussions, it appears that there still may be lingering confusion about the mission and roles of AFRICOM. Specifically, speakers discussed whether AFRICOM is a military organization whose activities will focus on defense/security or is it an organization that exists to coordinate all U.S. efforts in Africa (with an emphasis on development). While this may become clearer as the command nears its October 2008 operational date, it suggests that roles of the DoD and the other agencies involved in AFRICOM still need clarification. In the view of workshop participants, AFRICOM should not be an aid organization but should focus more on leveraging the core competencies of the U.S. military.

➤ **Direct appropriate levels of funding to Africa our programs (including AFRICOM).** The current administration has attempted to balance AFRICOM's develop-

ment and defense goals by adopting an interagency structure. However, a lack of funding has constrained the advancements that the interagency approach is able to achieve. In order for AFRICOM to accomplish its development goals, Congress will need to increase funding for the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development. The programs operated by these departments are critical to the success of AFRICOM, however, these agencies remain understaffed and under-resourced.

➤ **Continue the hard work of engaging with key countries and solving conflicts.** Speakers agreed this means using diplomatic power - and strongly consider applying military force - in Darfur; the ongoing genocide in Darfur is not only a humanitarian crisis but also a threat to the U.S. image abroad. While a military option was supported, participants agreed that a no-fly zone is not a feasible option. In addition, we need to continue efforts to resolve the conflict in the Niger Delta. This conflict has had a direct impact on the price of oil and we should be concerned about the internal destabilization effects this conflict has on Nigeria and the potential for it to spread. Finally, we will not be successful unless we secure friendships with influential countries on the continent, such as South Africa.

➤ **Work with and through African institutions such as the AU and the regional organizations.** These organizations are young and they need our respect and support. In the long-term, these organizations should be able to manage effectively humanitarian crises, conflict mediation, peacekeeping efforts, on their own. One speaker noted that specifically, the U.S. should support efforts to put into place dispute mediation mechanisms. Currently, there are not effective tools in place at the regional or international level to mediate religious, social, and ethnic conflicts. The U.S. should not support the idea of imposing “western” institutions, such as the G-8 on Africa.

➤ **Maintain the positive image of the U.S. in Africa by continuing activities that Africans see as benefitting them.** Unlike in other areas of the world, polls indicate that Africans believe that many of U.S. activities in Africa are benefitting them directly. One speaker cautioned that an over-emphasis on U.S. military activities (as opposed to development activities) on the continent could change this. Tapping into the successes have had in recent years will be likely in maintaining this positive image.

➤ **Promote public and private investment in Africa.** There has been real economic growth in recent years, for example, in Rwanda and Angola, which the U.S. should capitalize on – the time is now. Agriculture and infrastructure are among the most important and least advanced sectors for U.S. companies to invest in. Discussants generally agreed that the Chinese have already made significant progress investing in Africa that we should be aware of. Although Africans generally appreciate China’s efforts, recently, some have expressed disappointment in some Chinese investment projects because the quality has been poor. This may present an opportunity for U.S. investors and companies who are known for high quality work, particularly with regard to building infrastructure.

➤ **Work with the international community, including the Africans:** Given the scale of our strategic goals in Africa, the U.S. will need to work closely with our traditional allies, as well as other stakeholders, such as China, India, and Russia. While the U.S. continues to focus on security and economic growth, we do not want to detract from our laudable and correct commitment to humanitarian interventions, to major health issues, and to development programs. It is clear that the full range of policy challenges will require enormous resources and it is not possible to fund what these programs call for on our own (let alone unilaterally handle the diplomatic and military efforts required). To achieve the proper balance, yet to meet the challenges effectively, only a combined effort will succeed—an effort involving our bi-lateral allies, international institutions, and, not least, African leaders.

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