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# US National Interests in Sub-Saharan Africa

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The novelty of the post-Cold War strategic environment is reflected in the changing jargon of American military professionals. "Humanitarian assistance" and "peace operations" were hardly key concerns of the national military establishment in the mid-1980s, though they have become prominent a decade later. Since the early 1990s, US professional military literature has been increasingly preoccupied, some would say obsessed, with discussions of what are identified as unprecedented roles for the national military establishment.

Interventions with military forces often figure in discussions of US involvement in Africa; indeed, in the 1990s no part of the world has seen a greater number of such interventions than Sub-Saharan Africa. However, noncombatant evacuations, humanitarian relief operations, and peace support interventions tend to obscure the more enduring and more significant diplomatic and economic links between the United States and African countries. They also obscure routine military-to-military relations in the region, which have expanded in the wake of the Cold War.

The United States conducts military operations in Africa, just as it exercises diplomacy and provides aid, to further US regional objectives. The demise of the Cold War had an obvious effect on US objectives in Africa, and while each US administration is expected to put its own imprint on the nation's foreign policy, some American activities reflect enduring interests. This article identifies a set of desirable conditions that appear to have become de facto US national interests in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## Identification of US Interests

All nations have interests, and national leaders pursue those interests with varying degrees of coherence and success. This subject has been treated in depth often enough that it needs little elaboration here.[1] It is relevant, however, to recall that military options constitute only some of those available when developing foreign policy. Policymakers assign roles to each policy instrument--diplomatic, economic, informational, and military--commensurate with its capability and relevance; sometimes the military instrument has been of primary importance, at other times, it has been marginal, if not irrelevant.[2]

The instruments used in the conduct of foreign policy are simply means to an end, the end in this case being the advancement of national interests. The effectiveness of a specific instrument, such as military power, can be evaluated only in the context of the ways in which it might be applied to attain the desired end. Such evaluations are neither easy nor straightforward, particularly in US relations with underdeveloped regions of the world, and most particularly in regard to Africa.

Theoretical treatments of the subject often assume that national interests can be identified with precision, and that there is broad agreement on their content. From that it follows, for some, that national interests are evident to national policymakers, who then have access to a full range of instruments of national power and can be relatively unconstrained in pursuing those interests. According to this view, policymakers follow a rational procedure to craft national security strategies using the appropriate mechanisms and tools of national power. None of these assumptions is true of US relations with Africa.

The US Constitution unambiguously confers on the executive branch the preponderance of responsibility for managing foreign relations, but Americans have never endowed their presidency with the exclusive prerogative to identify national interests. Nor have US administrations ever enjoyed an entirely free hand in developing and implementing foreign policy.[3] At times, public opinion or Congress has severely constrained an administration's options, sometimes

to the extent of forcing its hand.[4]

Americans do not necessarily agree among themselves on US national interests, in Africa or anywhere else. The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986 has required administrations to publish annually a National Security Strategy which (presumably) identifies those interests. But that document is more a starting point for debate than a final word on interests or policy. And although the current Administration has specified regional interests for executive branch agencies,[5] it has resisted doing so via the more widely disseminated National Security Strategy.[6]

Various groups inside and outside of government debate what is or is not in the national interest in Africa and elsewhere in the world.[7] The debate turns on a variety of axes, some of which are ideological: conservatives tend to be minimalists, liberals maximalists in specifying interests in the developing world. Other axes are cultural, reflecting the values of academic and ethnic communities.[8] Still others reflect the values of the business community, humanitarian organizations, and religious or other groups. Many voices compete for the right to define US interests in Africa, and they are by no means in harmony.

Nor is it easier to prioritize the interests once they are identified. Academic treatments characteristically identify intensities of interests as, for instance, "survival," "vital," "important," or "peripheral." [9] The Clinton Administration has added "humanitarian" interests; like all such classifications, this one is subjective and contextual. Because articulation of interests is hardly an exact science, it is sufficient to acknowledge a basic interest without an accompanying effort to prioritize intensities. "Intensities," of course, reflect the need to build constituencies for budget debates.



Figure 1. Sub-Saharan Africa

So what are US interests in Sub-Saharan Africa? Certainly the annual National Security Strategy (NSS) provides an administration's perspective on interests, but it never gets around to listing them as such. The 1997 version suggests that they include attenuation of regional conflict, the growth of democratic institutions and regard for human rights, sustainable economic development, and security from weapons of mass destruction and transnational threats.[10] By contrast, a 1995 Department of Defense document bluntly declares that the United States has "very little traditional strategic interest in Africa,"[11] a remarkable assertion in light of the fact that the United States has intervened in the region with military forces more than a dozen times since 1990.[12]

Minimalists may argue that the United States has no vital interests in Sub-Saharan Africa and only two important interests: regional stability and access. By contrast, one author has recently argued that safety from "hot-zone diseases" such as ebola is a vital national interest, equivalent in importance to safety from attack by weapons of mass destruction.[13] Likewise, whether or not the discussion is specifically tied to Africa, many Americans would agree that safety from transnational threats such as terrorism and the importation of illegal narcotics is an important national interest.

US foreign policy in Africa is unsteady and reactive, allowing events and crises to drive policy.[14] US administrations struggle with Africa policy because of the inconsistent attention paid to the continent by senior policymakers and their

reluctance to consult regularly with a broad range of African leaders. One result is a failure to clarify regional interests and establish a broad national consensus on the ways and means to secure them. This failure, in turn, compromises the focus, sophistication, and potential for success of efforts to secure US regional interests. US policymakers have not been able to develop a coherent national security strategy for the region, one that clearly identifies regional interests and then specifies appropriate ways and means to secure them. As a result, regional use of the instruments of US power--such as diplomacy, military assistance, and economic aid--often is not well coordinated. That said, continuing US activities in the region suggest that Americans agree that there are interests worth pursuing in Africa, whether or not the interests are articulated in any official medium, and even if commitment to these interests is sometimes transient and media-driven.[15]

A test with two criteria can help to identify a regional interest. The first criterion is that the United States has committed or is likely to commit significant public-sector resources to advance or protect it; the second is that it is a major foreign policy end in itself, not simply a contributor to a larger objective. Such interests should be relatively long-term and enduring, and they should transcend the ideological perspectives of individual administrations. The list below would seem to meet these two criteria; like all such lists, it is subjective. All entries are interrelated and at least somewhat codependent. Each is discussed in the article:

- . Regional stability
- . US access to key persons, institutions, facilities, and economic opportunity
- . Information and warning
- . Safety of American citizens
- . Region free of weapons of mass destruction
- . Region free of sponsors or safe havens for transnational threats
- . Regional comity and cooperation
- . Freedom from egregious suffering
- . Regional governance that is humane, managerially competent, and accountable
- . Sustained economic development
- . Unthreatened natural environment

### *Regional Stability*

"Stability" could be defined in several different ways; here it has the narrow sense of the absence of significant interstate or intrastate violence. Manifestations of instability include conflict between warlords in "failed states" (Liberia or Somalia during the 1990s); violent border disputes; interstate aggression (such as that committed by South Africa against its neighbors during the *apartheid* era or by Libya against Chad in the mid-1980s); civil wars (in Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Sudan); insurgencies (such as that in Rwanda or those currently conducted by Tuareg groups in Niger and Mali); large-scale banditry; oppressive regimes (like Nigeria in the 1990s); and other unsettled or violent circumstances which provoke large-scale flows of refugees.

State or subregional violence is a symptom of more fundamental problems, often traceable to inequitable access to the benefits of the state, dire poverty, weak civil societies, unrestrained ambitions of opportunists, lack of transparency and accountability in governance, and ready availability of arms. While interventions by external actors often can halt immediate outbreaks of violence, enduring stability requires the reduction or elimination of the problems that create the conditions for violence.

Instability in Africa has recently produced private "security firms" that offer to national leaders what once were considered to be mercenaries--military professionals with services for hire. Such services are equally available to duly constituted, democratic governments and to dictatorial autocrats and warlords. The United States tends to see private

security firms as an obstacle to regional stability.[16]

Regional stability also is threatened by the ready availability of conventional arms. Many are left over from Cold War proxy conflicts and decolonization struggles. However, the international "black" or "gray" arms markets--in which unscrupulous entrepreneurs provide arms to any buyer--have serviced African customers such as Angola's Jonas Savimbi, and have contributed to continuing instability elsewhere in the region. Such arms transfers are very difficult to monitor and almost impossible to prevent.

Virtually all US regional interests are threatened by breakdowns in regional or subregional stability. And the United States has pursued its interest in regional stability with diplomatic, economic, and military efforts. So it could be argued that stability is the basic US interest in Africa, and that protection of all of the other interests depends on this one.

#### *US access to key persons, institutions, facilities, and economic opportunity*

Access, which has several dimensions, is an important US interest in Africa. It can include occasional military use of African ports, airfields, and other infrastructure for contingency operations in Africa or elsewhere in the world. In this instance, access encompasses unimpeded use of the sea lines of communication around the continent. Another dimension is access to African political decisionmakers, which enhances the ability of US diplomats to communicate regularly with African government officials on matters of interest to the United States.[17]

Still another dimension is economic access, involving the ability of US commercial enterprises to enter African markets, participate in African economic development, and compete for fair profit. African mineral and oil resources are also of interest. The real issue here is access to local and regional economic decisionmakers, whether in government and business communities or as consumers of goods and services. Openness of African media to messages from the United States is important if we are to influence African political and economic choices.

Access includes the ability of American private-sector groups, such as scholars and humanitarian organizations, to establish relations with individual Africans and indigenous institutions.[18] It also involves the ability of American citizens to enjoy firsthand exposure to Africa's rich natural and cultural environments.

Access should be inherent in relations between countries that share important cultural ties and common goals. It allows for informational exchanges that help assuage normal suspicions and tensions. No country's interests will be identical to those of another, and mutual access facilitates resolution of disagreements over divergent interests.

Much of the access which Americans enjoy in Africa is not controlled in any organized way by the US government. However, continuing US diplomatic engagement is an important factor in promoting both private and public sector access. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has reduced its regional diplomatic presence, sending an unfortunate signal to Africans.

#### *Information and Warning*

Though related to access, another distinct US interest is that of obtaining timely, reliable information about African issues, trends, events, and personalities. Information and reliable local sources for it are particularly important when there is a likelihood that we could become involved in an expensive humanitarian operation or military intervention. Commercial opportunities and American concerns for the planetary environment also can be developed to mutual advantage only if US policymakers have timely and reliable information about local conditions.

One of the reasons why this is a salient interest in Sub-Saharan Africa is the difficulty in obtaining such information. The problem is compounded by authoritarian regimes which thrive on secrecy, by communications difficulties in Africa, by the limited US intelligence focus on the region, by the often sporadic media attention to events in Africa, and even by cultural differences between African and US interlocutors.

Absence of timely and reliable information can lead to humanitarian tragedies which might otherwise be moderated or averted if recognized in their early stages of development. It could lead to lethally slow responses to such transnational

threats as terrorism, narco-trafficking, and pandemic disease. It also puts US policymakers at risk of manipulation by foreign groups, foreign leaders, and even by the nongovernmental humanitarian organizations that respond to humanitarian crises.[19]

American embassies are a primary source of regional information for national policymakers. Reduction of the US diplomatic presence undermines US ability to secure this interest.

### *Safety of American Citizens*

It hardly needs to be said that the United States will expend enormous effort to protect or evacuate American citizens from conditions of escalating disorder. The Clinton Administration has even characterized the safety of American citizens as a vital national interest.[20]

In the mid-1990s, security threats to US citizens in Africa generally are caused by instability, poverty, and related violence, not by deliberate efforts of parties in the region to victimize Americans. The United States has employed its military forces to conduct eight evacuations of noncombatants from African countries since 1990.[21]

### *Region Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction*

The term "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD) refers to nuclear, chemical, or biological agents designed to kill or incapacitate human populations, or to render livestock, crops, and water unfit for human consumption. Almost by definition, but reinforced by recollections of the nuclear terror of the Cold War, nonproliferation of such weapons is a vital national interest. The Clinton Administration unambiguously asserts that "weapons of mass destruction pose the greatest potential threat to global security." [22] Not surprisingly, the Administration has strongly promoted, in Africa as elsewhere, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Sub-Saharan Africa has not been a significant venue for development or deployment of weapons of mass destruction. Save for South Africa, no country in the region is known to have possessed nuclear weapons, or even to have indicated a serious desire to possess them.[23] Only a handful of Sub-Saharan African countries are known to have chemical weapons. No country in the region is known to have a current interest in the development of biological weapons.

Unfortunately, technology at the end of the 20th century is sufficiently advanced that some forms of WMD could be developed surreptitiously and relatively rapidly anywhere in the world. Such weapons may be attractive to future leaders of rogue states, including those that might emerge in Sub-Saharan Africa. The most remote areas of the world probably also provide the best protection against discovery, and could thus be attractive to outside terrorist groups or criminal organizations willing to pay for locations for covert laboratories.

Africa also could be the venue for the development of natural WMD. As one of the world's "hot-zones," Central Africa seems to have been the origin of several virulent diseases, particularly hemorrhagic fevers, with the potential to develop into pandemics of tremendous lethality. Such diseases pose a threat not only to residents of the region, but to the world beyond the continent as well. At the end of the 20th century, any disease is but a plane ride away from the population centers of the world.[24]

### *Region Free of Sponsors or Safe Havens for Transnational Threats*

The United States has a distinct interest in ensuring that no African country sponsor or harbor the perpetrators of any of a range of transnational threats. Several threats in this category are not anchored in any one country; ideas and actors cross national borders with relative impunity. Transnational threats are created by the activities of international crime syndicates, including those that move illegal drugs and launder the proceeds, operations by international terrorist groups, activities of international "con artists," perpetrators of banking scams, and depredations against civil discourse by technologically sophisticated vandals.[25] It is another of the paradoxes of technological achievement that our increasingly computerized world is increasingly at the mercy of highwaymen on the information superhighway.[26]

It is very much in the US national interest that African governments participate as partners in the worldwide struggle against such threats. It also is in the US national interest that African law-enforcement institutions have the resources

and encouragement to do so within the region and as partners with the rest of the global community.

The United States maintains relations with African law enforcement agencies, participating with them in international organizations such as Interpol and in various bilateral programs. One serious constraint to better cooperation is the fact that US law severely limits our ability to provide law enforcement training to foreign military or police personnel.[27] In the mid-1980s, the Department of Justice adapted an innovative Western Hemisphere program, the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, and through it offered training to the African countries of Somalia, Rwanda, and Burundi. And, beginning in the early 1990s, both the Drug Enforcement Agency and the FBI have maintained regional contacts designed to combat transnational threats.

### *Regional Comity and Cooperation*

It is a significant US national interest that African countries engage in peaceful diplomatic and economic activity and participate as willing and capable partners with the United States in a wide variety of activities in Africa and elsewhere, to alleviate complex humanitarian emergencies, promote regional economic development, and fight transnational threats. The absence of comity and cooperation from Sub-Saharan Africa poses a significant barrier to pursuit of virtually all these US interests.

Comity and cooperation among African countries themselves also is a US national interest, contributing directly to economic development and regional stability. This interest is promoted by subregional economic organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This interest, which is difficult to advance for a variety of reasons, requires considerable, consistent effort. It is always important and could be of particular significance to the United States in dealing with regional or worldwide crises.

### *Freedom from Egregious Suffering*

One of the inevitable results of the information age is rapid access by the media, and thus by the American public, to information about human tragedy everywhere in the world. Whether at home or abroad, profound human suffering affronts basic American values and almost inevitably provokes a public response, including calls for the government to intervene. Though responses to such circumstances sometimes are superficial, inconsistent, or short-lived, they reflect a basic American belief that "we are our brother's keeper." [28]

US foreign policy has focused on encouraging respect for human rights and ending human rights abuses. The United States has exercised diplomatic, economic, informational, and military instruments of national power to further this interest, particularly in Africa.

Much of the suffering encountered in Africa results less from malice than from naturally occurring threats such as drought and disease. Hazards from the environment sometimes are compounded by inept or uncaring national authorities, by the overwhelming scale of the problems, and by the all-too-obvious austerity of infrastructure in many African countries. Again, the United States has committed resources to address all of these problems. For example, an extraordinary (and little known) drought relief effort in 1991 and 1992 coordinated by the US Agency for International Development helped to prevent widespread starvation in southern Africa.

While freedom from egregious suffering is strongly anchored in American values, protection of this interest is a prerequisite to others, including regional stability and safety of American citizens.[29]

### *Regional Governance that is Humane, Managerially Competent, and Accountable*

Some Americans, including policymakers in the current Administration, strongly believe that the United States should promote a more-or-less Western model of participatory democracy throughout the world.[30] This indicates a presumption that democratic institutions tend to protect human rights and that democracies are less likely to resort to conflict as a way to solve their foreign and domestic problems. It also is based on the view expressed in the 1997 National Security Strategy that "democracies have proved more peaceful, stable, and reliable partners and more likely to pursue sound economic policies." [31]



While Americans debate the propriety of advocating specific forms of governance for other countries, it is in the interest of the United States that African governments share respect for human rights, the rule of law, informed management of infrastructure and resources, and accountability of government to the society being served.[32] An important part of this ideal of governance is the belief that national security services, particularly the military establishments, should be under the firm control of civilian authorities. These interests support others, including regional stability, economic development, and freedom from egregious suffering. Since the early 1990s, US policy in Africa has emphasized the so-called "three Ds" regarding regional militaries: downsize, demobilize, and democratize. This policy has been supported with modest security assistance funding.

In this decade, Africa has seen some movement toward governmental transparency and accountability, although few African countries have the mature civil societies and political institutions that sustain these features in developed Western countries. One interesting phenomenon is the emergence of leaders such as Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and Yowery Museveni of Uganda, who, though not committed democrats in the Western model, have a vision and strong commitment to practical regional development.[33]

### *Sustained Economic Development*

There is little disagreement that many of Africa's problems derive from poverty and inequitable access to the limited goods and benefits of African states. Ironically, many African countries (including some of those most wracked by internal tensions) are rich in natural resources. Even superficial analysis leads to the conclusion that significant economic progress could moderate many of the region's most profound problems, including those that bear heavily on various US regional interests. The 1997 National Security Strategy establishes US interest in "a stable, economically dynamic Africa," and lists a variety of activities undertaken by the United States to pursue this interest.[34] The same document calls attention to the potential of Sub-Saharan Africa as a largely untapped market for US products. The clear implication is that economic development in Africa would bear tangibly and directly on US economic well-being as well as its own.

### *Unthreatened Natural Environment*

Unfortunately, economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa could conflict with another US interest, that of an unthreatened natural environment. Uncontrolled development that results in widespread environmental degradation is neither in Africa's long-term best interest nor that of the rest of the world. Because of the intense internal and external pressures for rapid improvement of economic conditions and the heavy dependence of some African countries on extractive industries, regional decisionmakers may encounter almost irresistible pressure to downplay the importance of protecting the environment in national development strategies. The pall of airborne industrial effluents over Lubumbashi (Congo) or parts of the Rand (in South Africa) bear visible testimony to the competition between economic development and preservation of the natural environment.

Africa's environment faces many threats at the end of the 20th century, a situation that is also true of other parts of the developing world. Rain forests are threatened by uncontrolled development and harvesting, other woodlands by increasing demands for fuel. Rapidly growing populations of humans and livestock stress already fragile ecologies, resulting in unwise cultivation of marginal soils and overgrazing of fragile savanna lands. Many areas in Africa are subject to recurring drought, periodic flooding, endemic human or livestock diseases, and other naturally occurring threats. Urbanization and increasing human populations have contaminated already inadequate water sources. Industrial waste and urban effluents often are discharged into the atmosphere, soil, or rivers without apparent regard for the effects of toxic materials on humans, plants, or animals. Increasing human populations result in declining habitats for wild animals and plant life, which can adversely affect biodiversity. Former US Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker, among others, has called attention to the "interplay between Africa's demographic, climatic, geological and conflict trends." He argues that this interplay requires serious research and that resolution demands US interest and leadership. He also notes that US health and well-being are at stake in these "African" issues.[35]

Many of the threats to Africa's natural environment do not originate in Africa. Irresponsible overfishing by commercial fleets from Europe and Asia may have permanently damaged the once lucrative fishing grounds off much of the African coast. Some African governments have been willing to allow disposal in their countries of highly toxic wastes

as a result of bribes from unscrupulous corporations in the developed countries. Asian cartels willingly pay vast sums of money to African poachers for rhinoceros horn, resulting in the likely extinction of that animal in the African wild.

Africa still has a magnificent natural environment which is an invaluable global heritage; its preservation is important to long-term, sustainable economic development in Africa. African biodiversity is important to world scientific research, possibly holding the keys to treatments for some human diseases. Stability of African flora may be important to regional, and possibly worldwide, weather patterns. It is very much in the interest of the developed world to foster responsible stewardship of the African natural environment.[36] The United States has pursued this interest through bilateral diplomatic efforts and in multinational fora. Some US aid to African countries has been targeted at environmental objectives.

### **The African Crisis Response Initiative**

A recent example of the limited and reactive character of US involvement in Africa is the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). The idea of supporting an indigenous African crisis response capability originated with Assistant Secretary of State Herman J. Cohen in the early 1990s, but it took specific form in 1996 as a Clinton Administration response to a looming crisis in the small central African nation of Burundi. The 1996 proposal envisioned a multinational African peacekeeping force supported by the United States and other developed world donors.

With little advance warning to Africans or to US diplomatic missions, the Administration used an October 1996 regional visit by then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher to announce the initiative and solicit African participation. The response, predictably, was tepid. America's European allies already were active in efforts to develop African capabilities for conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Africans were puzzled (in some cases annoyed) by the lack of prior consultation, by US failure to recognize the growing role in conflict resolution of subregional organizations (like ECOWAS and SADC), by the lack of definition in the proposal, and by its obvious appearance as an eleventh-hour response to an ongoing regional crisis.

Despite the lukewarm African response, the Administration continued to work on the idea, appointing a senior Foreign Service officer to head an Interagency Working Group. By mid-1997, this had resulted in multilateral agreements with the United Kingdom, France, other European donors, and Japan. The Interagency Working Group also crafted an important relationship between the ACRI concept and the United Nations. As this is written, the United States had obtained commitments from seven African countries for a total of eight battalions,[37] whose training, begun by US Special Forces in late summer 1997, emphasized communications, logistics, and leadership.

Africans remain ambivalent about the ACRI; some regard it as a patronizing attempt by outsiders to define Africa's problems and to dictate solutions to them.[38] Some see a hidden US agenda. Others doubt the promises of support, while still others find in it an effort to shift the "world's dirty work" onto the backs of Africans. The US initiative does not define how Africans might structure or use the ACRI-trained units. Until those and similar issues are resolved, ACRI will continue to be a tough sell in Africa.

### **Observations**

The United States does have interests in Africa, a fact clearly demonstrated by our commitment of resources and our exercise in the region of the various instruments of national power. There is, of course, some danger in treating those interests as if each one of them is both necessary and sufficient to meet US policy objectives. Progress on any of them almost inevitably requires sophisticated approaches that can address many of them simultaneously. And while Americans disagree among themselves on the exact nature and intensity of interests in Africa, and on the acceptable costs for securing them, it is nevertheless possible to identify a list of regional interests which most informed citizens could endorse.

What the United States does not have is a clear vision at the national level of how to use the available ways and means to attain the strategic objectives reflected in those interests. As a result, some of the most visible involvements (notably the commitment of military forces for noncombatant evacuations, humanitarian relief operations, and peace support) seem to be hasty reactions to events over which the United States has little control. When policy serves mainly to react to events rather than actively seeking to shape them, one must look to national security strategy objectives to discover

the reasons for our inability to anticipate crises.

The appearance of floundering in Africa policy is exacerbated by a puzzling failure of senior US policymakers to consult regularly with African leaders. When US leaders propose a major shift in regional policy, it sometimes seems to be a unilateral US decision with inadequate consideration of the sensitivities of allies or partners, as was clearly the case with the African Crisis Response Initiative. It is true that Africa has never been, and may never be, at the center of US foreign policy concerns. Nor will the United States likely devote substantially more resources than it now does in pursuit of its regional interests. That's all the more reason for US policy to be well informed, subtle, and dependent on close cooperation with regional partners. Africans currently are looking to the United States for that kind of leadership.

The appearance of incoherence and inconsistency in US policy masks some very productive, long-term relationships between the United States and many African countries. These relationships--political, economic, and military--have generally improved in the wake of the Cold War, and they protect US interests in Africa reasonably well. However, they are not indicative of truly visionary efforts to shape the security environment in the region. US policy would benefit from a clearer definition of interests, a national debate on interests and costs, and a well-thought-out national security strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa.

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## NOTES

1. See, for instance, Michael G. Roskin, *National Interest: From Abstraction to Strategy* (Carlisle, Pa.: US Army Strategic Studies Institute, 1994), and Robert D. Blackwill, "A Taxonomy for Defining U.S. National Security Interests in the 1990s and Beyond," in *Europe in Global Change* (Gutersloh, Germany: 1993), pp. 100-19.

2. It would be very misleading for anyone to infer that there is a group of senior government officials who meet regularly with the sole intention of constructing "grand strategy." The US political system does not lend itself to that degree of focus. Rather, executive branch agencies have a variety of approaches--generally described as the "interagency process"--to deal with specific crises or issues. Even the construction of the annual National Security Strategy is an interagency coordination process resulting to date in a relatively generalized discussion of administration policy. For a succinct discussion of the process as a whole, see particularly Donald M. Snow and Eugene Brown, *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom: U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy-making in the 1990's* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 146-78.

3. See, for example, Jeremy D. Rosner, *The New Tug-of-War: Congress, the Executive Branch and National Security* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1995).

4. This is illustrated in, inter alia, the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (in which Congress forced a reluctant Reagan Administration to apply economic pressure against South Africa to force political change) or in the late 1992 US intervention in Somalia (in which the Bush Administration reacted to public outrage over media depiction of violence and starvation in Somalia). For a useful discussion of the roles of interest groups and think tanks, see Snow and Brown, pp. 179-232. For implications in Africa policy, see Herman J. Cohen, "Finding Friends in Congress," *Africa Report*, 40 (March-April 1995), 13-16.

5. See, specifically, Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 35.

6. Herman J. Cohen, clearly one of the most gifted foreign service professionals ever responsible for Africa, wrote in 1995 that he had "yet to see a credible definition of US national security interests beyond the Israel-Egypt-Persian Gulf nexus." He went on to suggest that US interests in Africa included access to the Horn region, to petroleum in Africa, and to Africa as a market for US goods, circumstances in which Sudan would not be a threat to its neighbors, healthy regional biodiversity, and increasing regional food production. Herman J. Cohen, "US Policy Toward Africa," *Foreign Service Journal*, June 1995, p. 38.

7. One such group, the American Assembly, described a recent conference as follows:

On March 13, 1997, sixty-nine men and women representing government, business, academia, nongovernmental organizations, the law, international financial institutions, labor, the military, religion and the media gathered at Arden House, Harriman, New York, for the Ninetieth American Assembly entitled "Africa and U.S. National Interests" . . . . This Assembly was designed as a prelude to the National Summit on Africa, which begins this year with regional meetings and culminates with major national events in 1999 . . . . This project is chaired by former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Donald F. McHenry.

Document reposted on-line by the Africa Policy Information Center, 6 May 1997, <http://www.igc.apc.org/apic/docs97/amas9704.1.htm>.

8. See, for example, Witney W. Schneidman, "U.S. Priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa: Looking Toward the 21st Century," *CSIS Africa Notes*, May 1996; Francis A. Kornegay, Jr., "Setting a New Agenda," *Africa Report*, 39 (September-October 1994), 72-76; and Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 42-45.

9. See, for example, Donald E. Neuchterlein, *America Overcommitted* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1985).

10. The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, May 1997, pp. 27-28. The National Military Strategy reflects the same basic perspective when it identifies "four principal dangers" to the United States in the international environment: regional instability, weapons of mass destruction, transnational dangers (like crime, drugs, refugees, diseases), and dangers to democracy and reform. These points were evident early in the Clinton Administration. See, for instance, Warren Christopher, "A New Relationship," *Africa Report*, 38 (July-August 1993), 36-39.

11. US Department of Defense, *United States Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington: US Dept. of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, August 1995), p. 3.

12. Interventions include: noncombatant evacuations from Liberia (1990, 1996), Somalia (1991), Zaire/Congo (1991), Sierra Leone (1992, 1997), Rwanda (1994), and Central African Republic (1996); humanitarian relief operations in Somalia (1992), Rwanda (1994), and Central Africa (1996); election support in Angola (1992); support of UN withdrawal from Somalia (1995); and support to deployment of the monitoring group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOMOG) in Liberia (1997). There were multiple operations in some countries in some years.

13. William Fox, Jr., "Phantom Warriors: Disease as a Threat to US National Interest," *Parameters*, 27 (Winter 1997-98), 121-36.

14. When it comes to US policy toward Africa, senior decisionmakers in all administrations have tended not to pay close attention until times of crisis. This tends to result in event-driven policies rather than the more desirable condition of policies which effectively pursue US regional interest by shaping events. For a useful discussion, see Schraeder, pp. 2-10.

15. This was anecdotally illustrated by an Administration official in a 1996 "off-the-record" discussion who, when asked to specify US interests in Africa, cynically responded by asking: "Where is [CNN correspondent] Christianne Amanpour reporting from today?"

16. See, for example, "Have Gun, Will Prop Up Regime," *US News and World Report*, 20 January 1997, pp. 46-48; Herman J. Cohen, "Conflict Management in Africa," *CSIS Africa Notes*, Number 181, February 1996; and Herb Howe, "South Africa's 9-1-1 Force," in *Armed Forces Journal International*, November 1996, pp. 38-39.

17. An important but less-visible need for access is that of a West African airfield for emergency landing of the space shuttle, if a Florida launch results in an early abort.

18. The importance of this dimension of access should not be overlooked. An important contributor to the demise of the Haile Selassie government in Ethiopia in the mid-1970s was the Emperor's refusal to acknowledge the incapacity

of the Ethiopian government to attenuate the suffering caused by drought in the early 1970s. The Ethiopian government refused external humanitarian aid, resulting in substantial unnecessary suffering and death.

19. See John Pomfret, "Aid Groups Help Needy and Greedy," *The Washington Post*, 3 September 1997, p. A-1. Several of the US diplomats and military officials associated with a near US humanitarian relief intervention in eastern Zaire (now Congo) in late 1996 told the author that humanitarian organizations which had been providing care to Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire had consistently (and publicly) overstated the dimensions of the problem in efforts to force an international intervention. When a very careful US military effort to assess the problem could not verify the claims of the humanitarian organizations, the latter publicly accused the United States of coverups, complicity with the Rwandan government, and a hidden agenda. These accusations soured relations between US diplomats in the region and the humanitarian organizations, an unfortunate and unnecessary development, since the ultimate objectives of both groups should have been essentially the same: mitigation of suffering, a solution to the refugee crisis, national reconciliation in Rwanda, and regional economic development.

20. National Security Strategy, May 1997, p. 9.

21. These include evacuations from Somalia (1991), Liberia (1990 and 1996), Angola (1992), Rwanda (1994), Central African Republic (1996), and Sierra Leone (1992 and 1997). The United States also deployed forces to conduct an expected (but never executed) evacuation from Zaire in 1997.

22. Ibid., p. 3. See also Charles L. Mercier, Jr., "Terrorists, WMD, and the US Army Reserve," *Parameters*, 27 (Autumn 1997), 98-118; and Chris Seiple, "Consequence Management: Domestic Response to Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Parameters*, 27 (Autumn 1997), 119-34.

23. South Africa possessed a limited arsenal of air-deliverable tactical nuclear weapons until the early 1990s, when the weapons were dismantled on orders of the de Klerk government. Interestingly, US officials have heard African leaders (particularly Nigerians) express regret at this South African action. The Nigerians argued that possession of nuclear weapons by at least one African country would give the continent more international clout. (Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Anthony D. Marley [US Army, Ret.], 12 August 1997.)

24. Fox.

25. In this category, it is worth recalling that the perpetrators of the 1994 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City had their ideological origins in a particularly virulent form of fundamentalist Islam centered in Sudan. During the author's research in mid 1997, a former senior Kenyan police official stated that Kenyan authorities had found and destroyed several fields of cultivated poppies in recent years. While Sub-Saharan Africa does not seem, at this time, to be a significant center for production of narcotics, Africans (particularly from Nigeria) have been heavily involved in the transport of narcotics from the Far East to Western Europe and North America. Many businesses in Europe and North America have received letters or faxes from West African con-artists offering "get-rich quick" opportunities for investment.

26. To date, Africa has not been the venue for major cyberspace crime, but criminal groups (or individuals) in a number of African countries have the technology and probably the motive for such assaults. See Dan Henk, "Susceptibility of African Societies to Information Warfare," 1996, a report furnished to the US Air Force Institute for National Security Studies.

27. Sec. 660, Prohibiting Police Training, Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. The prohibition stems from congressional concern in the 1960s and 1970s that foreign law enforcement personnel, trained in the United States, were implicated in human rights abuses.

28. For example, Mortimer Zuckerman argues that "we have a stake in human rights in every country of the world, but American policy has been most successful when we have brought that interest in balance with other objectives." Mortimer Zuckerman, "Realism about China," *US News & World Report*, 9 June 1997, p. 104. For a useful discussion of the ramifications of this interest, see David Tucker, "Engaging in Humanitarian Operations: Parameters for the Arguments," in Robert B. Oakley and David Tucker, *Two Perspectives on Interventions and Humanitarian Operations*

(Carlisle, Pa.: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), pp. 25-46.

29. American responses to this interest are by no means limited to the public sector. A variety of charities and private voluntary organizations, active in Africa and elsewhere, depend upon the generosity of the American public. It may be argued that such organizations pursue this US interest more consistently and coherently over time than the public sector.

30. The 1997 National Security Strategy characterizes "promoting democracy" as a "core objective" (p. 19). However, the Administration's policy of "Democratic Enlargement" has more of a "gocioeconomic" than "geopolitical" foundation--with free trade at the center. See Douglas Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine," *Foreign Policy*, Number 106 (Spring 1997), pp. 111-27.

31. National Security Strategy, May 1997, p. 28.

32. Citizens of foreign countries often comment on this objective of US foreign policy. Some find it indicative of American naïveté, others argue that it smacks of cultural imperialism. Some, of course, find it appropriate and desirable.

33. See, for instance, Lynne Duke, "Africa Inciting to Renewal from Economic Stagnation," *The Washington Post*, 15 August 1997, p. A-1.

34. National Security Strategy, May 1997, p. 28.

35. Chester A. Crocker, "Why Africa is Important," *Foreign Service Journal*, June 1995, pp. 24-33.

36. This interest was well articulated by former Secretary of State Warren Christopher in a 1996 speech at Stanford. Christopher argued that the United States "must also lead in safeguarding the global environment on which . . . prosperity and peace ultimately depend."

37. By mid-1997, countries that had agreed to commit forces to ACRI were Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Senegal, Tunisia, and Uganda. Ethiopia offered two battalions, the other countries one each. See also John P. J. Brooks, "A Military Model for Conflict Resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Parameters*, 27 (Winter 1997-98), 108-20. See also James Rupert, "U.S. Troops Teach Peacekeeping to Africans," *The Washington Post*, 26 September 1997, p. A16; "Next Series of ACRI Peacekeeping Training Under Way," DOD news release, 17 September 1997; Judith Matloff, "A Recipe for Peace: U.S. Know-How, Local Troops," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 August 1997, p. 1; and Thomas W. Lippman, "U.S. Ready to Train African Peacekeepers," *The Washington Post*, 30 June 1997, p. A16.

38. See, for instance, "O.A.U. Cool on U.S. Idea of an African Force," Panafrican News Agency electronic newswire, 14 October 1996; Paul Ejime, "Lagos Not Impressed by U.S. Proposal for an African Force," Panafrican News Agency electronic newswire, 16 October 1996; Radio Nigeria (Lagos) broadcast of 29 October 1996, transcript in FBIS-AFR-96-211; editorial in *The Star* (Johannesburg), 10 October 1996, reprinted in FBIS-AFR-96-198; and SAPA (Johannesburg) broadcast of 11 February 1997, transcript in FBIS-AFR-97-028.

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