

SCUSA 60 THEME:
“MEASURING PROGRESS AND DEFINING NEW CHALLENGES”

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Goals and Interests

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in the early years of the 21st century offers an array of both challenges and opportunities to most observers. In the Niger Delta, a climate of increasing violence and chaos is threatening one of the world’s critical energy hubs; the crisis in Darfur shows little sign of abatement, despite the presence of the African Union (AU); in Somalia, amid the pirates, warlords, and anarchy, a new Islamic insurgency is violently taking control of government and commerce; and al Qaida cells are known to exist across SSA. Rebel movements and internal instability continue in countries like Chad and the Central African Republic. Militias and refugees are scattered throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo (especially in the Ituri province in the northeast and the mineral-rich Katanga province in the southeast), while Côte d’Ivoire teeters on the brink of renewed civil war. And Zimbabwe wilts under the mismanagement and dictatorial rule of Robert Mugabe, despite the resent presidential elections. Even Kenya came dangerously close to collapsing into anarchy during the past year. In essence, a host of conflicts and security vulnerabilities can be seen throughout SSA. The sub-continent is ripe with a harvest of ungoverned spaces and zones of competing governance—places of insecurity and instability where criminal and terrorist networks can thrive.

Underscoring these challenges is the impact of widespread poverty: SSA contains a majority of the world’s 48 poorest countries, and the number of people estimated to be living in extreme poverty has doubled in the last two decades.¹ Indeed, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair observed that Africa, and SSA in particular, is the only continent to have grown poorer in the last 25 years.² In virtually all the countries of SSA, the infrastructure is in significant need of improvement. SSA countries have the lowest primary school completion rates in the world, while average life expectancy has declined from 50 to 46 years since 1990, primarily due to HIV/AIDs. Recurrent droughts and famines stalk the countryside. In short, a history of civil war, political corruption, and a variety of both natural and man-made catastrophes frame our contemporary view of SSA’s future.

And yet, the promise of a new, more positive SSA story is emerging. The African Union recently launched a new Peer Review Mechanism, an initiative meant to promote good governance, and a new Peace and Security Council, aimed at the prevention, management and resolution of conflict in not only SSA, but the entire continent. In the past several years, some (but certainly not all) elections that have taken place throughout SSA can be considered truly democratic. In 2005, SSA’s economy grew by 5%—the best performance in eight years—although only a small handful of countries are expected to meet the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination.³ For its part, the United States has shown increasing interest in SSA’s potential as a trading partner, energy source, and collaborator in the global war on terror. Indeed, President Bush has met with multiple SSA heads-of-state since coming to office and has dispatched five cabinet members to the region. The purpose of this SCUSA roundtable is to *evaluate* how the U.S. is responding to the foreign policy challenges of SSA, and explore recommendations for the future.

¹ Jagdish Bhagwati and Ibrahim Gambari, “Political will, not just aid, can lift Africa out of despair,” *Financial Times*, July 5, 2005.

² Doyle, Mark. “Blair Unveils Africa Action Plan.” *BBC News* (Feb. 27, 2004).

³ See the UN Millennium Goals website, at: <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org>

U.S. Foreign Policy Issues and Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa

The theme of SCUSA 60 asks us to define current and future challenges, and develop policy recommendations that are rooted in a careful appreciation of the progress that has already been made in the region. One of the enduring dilemmas of the 21st Century is evident in each of the issue areas discussed below: How can the U.S. develop policies to secure international order and stability without sacrificing individual rights, justice, and democracy. This background paper highlights just a few of the many important foreign policy challenges for the U.S. to consider in SSA.

1) Fighting the Global War on Terror

Marine Corps General(Ret) James L. Jones, former commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Europe, recently commented that “the large, ungoverned spaces in Africa are very tempting” to terrorist organizations.⁴ Indeed, recent intelligence reports have indicated that violent extremist groups are increasingly looking to SSA in particular as an attractive transit route for illegal materials and money laundering. According to a 2003 Congressional Research Service report, al Qaeda has already established at least tenuous links in parts of Western SSA.⁵ Organized criminal cartels take advantage of a variety of security vulnerabilities throughout Western SSA, including porous borders and weak border controls. The extensive land and sea boundaries of many SSA states often are virtually unpatrolled. Many points of entry cannot be monitored by states with limited resources, resulting in opportunities for illegal immigration, and constituting entry points for organized criminals. Customs and immigration services generally are poorly developed, trained, equipped, and paid. As such, they are readily circumvented or intimidated by the relatively sophisticated methods employed by drug dealers and others who can offer bribes and have access to speedboats and overwhelming firepower.⁶ These same regional security vulnerabilities can also facilitate the activities of terrorist networks—a key concern of U.S. policymakers as we look to achieve the long-term objectives of SSA’s economic and political development strategies. What should the U.S. do to address the growing potential for terrorist activity in SSA? What roles and responsibilities might the U.S. Department of Defense, Department of State, Department of Commerce, and Department of Trade each have in developing and implementing an integrated policy that addresses new challenges, while continuing current successes?

2) Ensuring Access to Sub-Saharan Africa’s Energy Resources

Sub-Saharan Africa presents some unique opportunities for the future of U.S. energy policy. Oil is plentiful, much of it accessible offshore, and the U.S. has good relations with many SSA nations. Today, 18 percent of U.S. oil imports come from SSA – almost as much as from Saudi Arabia. According to projections by the National Intelligence Council, that proportion will reach 25 percent by 2015. The vast majority of it will come from a stretch of coastline between Nigeria and Angola called the Gulf of Guinea, where an estimated 50 billion barrels of oil reserves are located. Oil revenues dominate most of these SSA countries’ economies, but only Nigeria is a member of OPEC. Although SSA will likely never replace the Middle East as an important strategic resource region for the U.S., it will significantly increase the diversity of supply and reduce U.S. dependency on Middle East oil. What policies can the U.S. develop that will ensure long-term U.S. access to the important energy resources of SSA, while remembering that these policies must address newly defined and future challenges, while continuing current successes in the region? What might be the roles and responsibilities of the private sector?

⁴ Schrader, Esther, “U.S. Seeks Military Access in N. Africa.” New York Times, March 27, 2004.

⁵ Congressional Research Service, “Nation’s Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism,” Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, October, 2003.

⁶ Ibid.

3) Fostering Political and Economic Development

The Millennium Challenge Account, announced by President Bush in 2003, promises to nearly double the amount of American aid for development in poor countries. This program basically demands that applicants for this aid prove their worthiness by demonstrating a commitment to the rule of law, investment in human capital, and supporting free markets. Under this approach, Western SSA countries like Senegal and Ghana that respect civil liberties stand to benefit considerably. The U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) also plays a vital role in meeting the economic development needs of the region, by ensuring greater access to global markets for SSA nations. AGOA conditions include: adopting neo-liberal policies, removing subsidies and price controls, and privatizing state assets. By 2003, thirty-eight African countries (the vast majority in SSA) had been declared eligible for the AGOA, though only slightly more than half of these had exported goods under the program by mid-2002. Debt relief is another critical component of an integrated economic development initiative. At the July 2005 G-8 Summit,⁷ the leaders of the world's most industrialized countries agreed to an unprecedented \$50 billion aid package for the developing world—the majority of it targeted toward the nations of SSA. These nations also agreed to cancel the multilateral debt of the 18 poorest countries of the world; all but four of them are in Africa, with most of those being in SSA.⁸ How well are these programs doing toward developing the long-term goal of a self-sustaining, free, secure, and well-governed SSA? Once this evaluation of current successes has been analyzed, what parts will continue to be useful, given the future challenges we define?

4) Addressing HIV/AIDS and Other Health Crises

Much of the world is familiar with the terrible devastation that HIV/AIDS is causing throughout SSA. Those most affected by rampant disease epidemics are the economically active population, resulting in severely reduced productivity, stunted economic growth prospects, and shockingly high youth dependency ratios. President Bush's proposed \$15 billion HIV program offers some hope that the world is not turning a blind eye to this massive problem. Major health programs like the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Malaria, and Tuberculosis, and the Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative hold much promise for relieving suffering throughout the region. Funding public health programs like these has had some success. What other programs have been successful, and how can we use this information to address future challenges?

Additional Issues

In addition to these issues, this roundtable should consider such social-political topics as how the liberal democratic character of the United States might affect the way we develop our relationship with SSA countries, particularly in the area of human rights and democratization. What are the most effective tools for promoting liberalization and democratization in SSA? Should the United States be more concerned with helping SSA build effective and legitimate states, even if they are not immediately committed to democratic rule?

Further, the general sense of fear and insecurity after 9/11 may or may not be affecting opinions on foreign policy choices. Other key moments in American history (such as Vietnam and Somalia) might still affect the way American leaders and the public conceive of America's obligations to itself and the rest of the international community. This roundtable could also take up the question of how we should

⁷ The "G-8" is the nickname for the group of eight major industrialized nations: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S.

⁸ The debt relief agreement must be approved by the IMF before it can be implemented. Also, it is important to note that while this agreement focuses on multilateral debt, it does not address the bilateral debt. In many African countries, particularly Nigeria, the majority of debt is actually bilateral.

define the term “national interest” itself, and the degree to which domestic and personal interests enter the debate on exactly what the U.S. should pursue through its foreign policy toward SSA.

Finally, should the United States be in the business of “exporting security” to SSA? The newly created U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), our newest Geographical Combatant Command (GCC), represents an important political shift – and underlines a significant economic commitment – on the part of the U.S. government to SSA. Much of the work of AFRICOM will focus on helping to build the fledgling Africa Standby Force. It is hoped the force, being organized by the Ethiopia-based African Union will be ready by 2010. It will consist of five multinational brigades based in different regions of the continent. Each brigade will perform missions in its given region, such as peacekeeping, when the need arises. Gen. William E. Ward, the first AFRICOM commander, noted to the U.S. Senate that “AFRICOM will assume sponsorship of ongoing command and control infrastructure development and liaison officer support....It will continue to resource military mentors for peacekeeping training, and develop new approaches to supporting the AU and African Standby Forces.” For years, the United States has been sending troops to train one-to-one with the militaries of SSA nations. In the future, it is expected that troops from these nations will comprise the standby brigades. Is this a fruitful approach at assisting SSA in obtaining security and stability, the essential foundations for durable liberalization and democratization? How is AFRICOM organized? What are its stated goals? Is AFRICOM’s organization aligned with its goals? What operations has it conducted, and are they a significant departure from normal military operations?

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Africa Center for Strategic Studies

<http://www.africacenter.org>

Africa Growth and Opportunity Act

<http://www.agoa.gov>

Africa Policy of the Bush Administration: An Overview

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/africa>

African Coastal Security (ACS) Program

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/acsp.htm>

African Union Peace and Security Council

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<http://www.africom.mil/>

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