
Sub-Saharan Africa and The United States — Part II

[The following article is the second of two parts that are based on the publication *Sub-Saharan Africa and the United States*. The first part (printed in *The DISAM Journal*, Winter 1991/92, pp. 40-42), presented an overview of the history and the current situation in Sub-Saharan Africa. The second part deals with the U.S. role in the region and challenges for future cooperation. The complete publication was released by the Office of Public Communication, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, in October 1991 and is sold by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office.]

U.S. DIPLOMACY SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Sub-Saharan Africa is important to the United States chiefly for the following reasons.

- With its 47 nations, Sub-Saharan Africa plays an important, often decisive, role in international organizations and at multilateral meetings.
- The region possesses natural resources important to the American economy—oil, copper, iron, bauxite, uranium, cobalt, chromium, platinum, manganese, gold, and diamonds.
- While the United States needs to buy African raw materials, Africa requires capital investment, new technology, managerial skills, and markets to develop other products.
- The continent is strategically important, as the oil tanker routes from the Persian Gulf to Europe and the Americas pass through African waters. Thus, strategic cooperation with African states is important to the exercise of U.S. global responsibilities.
- Continuing regional conflicts and economic instability make Sub-Saharan Africa a potential arena for rivalry and confrontation between external powers.
- Africa has a particular significance for the United States because of the many Americans of African descent who take a deep interest in the continent's progress.

The guiding principle of U.S. diplomacy toward Sub-Saharan Africa since 1960, the year in which so many countries achieved independence, is to promote political stability, economic reform, and democracy. None is possible without the others. And U.S. interests are not served unless these goals can be achieved.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND ASSISTANCE

Development assistance has always been an important element in U.S. diplomacy in Africa.

Since the countries achieved independence, the United States has been a major contributor of economic aid in Africa, both bilaterally and through international financial institutions, primarily the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the African Development Bank. Most bilateral assistance has been administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

TRADE

As the largest single-country market in the world, the United States has always been an important market for African exports. The largest multi-country market is the European Community which, since the 1974 Lome Convention, grants special trade preferences to former European colonies. But in 1990, with imports totaling almost \$11 billion, the U.S. market for African goods was more than twice as large as that of any other single country. Most African countries, except for members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries—Gabon and Nigeria—qualify for the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences, which permits the import of more than 1,400 manufactured goods and products at zero tariff rates. Oil, however, supplied chiefly by Nigeria, accounts for more than half of U.S. imports from Sub-Saharan Africa.

EMERGENCY AID

Sub-Saharan Africa repeatedly has required emergency aid, chiefly medical supplies, food, and refugee resettlement, because of drought, civil strife, and warfare. The United States is a major contributor of such humanitarian assistance and does not exact political concessions for such aid. Thus, food and medical supplies in the past have gone to countries—notably Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola—that rejected Western ideas of democracy, hosted Cuban combat troops, and granted military and naval facilities to the Soviet Union.

U.S. systematic food aid began in 1954 with Public Law 480 (Food for Peace), which authorized low-priced credit sales or outright grants of surplus agricultural commodities. The United States now is the largest single donor of aid in the Horn of Africa, where drought and civil strife have caused famine and displaced millions. The United States also contributes more than half the supplies distributed by international food aid programs.

In FY 1990, the United States provided more than \$61 million toward UNHCR's [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] African programs and 20 percent of the relief efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The United States also provided food aid to African countries valued at \$448 million and another \$31 million in non-food disaster assistance.

POLITICAL RELATIONS

The goal of U.S. diplomacy is to promote political stability and democracy. The United States does not support one party over another in any intra-African territorial disputes, in accordance with the OAU position that the post-colonial borders must be respected and in support of African efforts to find peaceful solutions to such conflicts.

U.S. policy considers the interests and the special responsibilities of those NATO allies who were colonial powers and who have continuing connections and influence in Africa. Also of importance was the activity of the Soviet Union and its allies. The Soviet-bloc countries trained and equipped insurgent movements and sent them large stocks of arms and materiel, military technicians, secret police advisers, and, in the case of Cuba, field troops to bolster regimes that had come to power with a Marxist-Leninist program, as in Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique.

The Soviet navy, in its quest for expansion beyond home waters, acquired bases or facilities in Luba (Equatorial Guinea), Dahlak (Ethiopia), Maputo (Mozambique), Luanda (Angola), and Conakry (Guinea). The Soviet Union also acquired a base at Mogadishu, Somalia, but the Somalians expelled them in 1977, when the Soviet Union supported Ethiopia in the Somalian-Ethiopian dispute over the Ogaden region.

The United States supports the democratic trend in Africa and welcomes the entry of African countries into the democratic ranks. One of the most important U.S. contributions to the democratic movement is a series of projects, carried out under the auspices of the Human Rights Fund for Africa, to strengthen the values and institutions on which democracy rests—the electoral process, a free press, an independent judiciary, and the rule of law, among others. These projects have included the provision of training and support to African judicial systems in numerous countries, including Guinea, Mozambique, and Namibia; assistance to private legal and human rights organizations in countries such as Burundi, Kenya, and Zaire; and the dispatch of constitutional experts and election observers at the request of countries such as Benin and Sao Tome and Principe.

For fiscal year (FY) 1992, the Bush Administration has requested \$10 million from Congress to establish an African Democracy Support Fund, intended to provide assistance to countries undertaking fundamental political reforms.

South Africa. U.S. policy toward South Africa is based on fundamental opposition to apartheid (that is, the segregation of races and white political domination). It supports the process of peaceful change now underway. The U.S. Government urges all parties to commit themselves fully to negotiations in establishing a new non-racial and multi-party democracy in South Africa.

Cooperation In Southern Africa. Cooperation among the countries of Southern Africa is essential to each country's welfare—the ties to South Africa with its industry, rail system, and ports must be revised and extended.

The United States has been instrumental in lessening Southern African conflict. The most notable achievement has been the independence of Namibia consummated in March 1990. The United States played the major role in the negotiations that led to South Africa's agreement to give up control over the territory. The uninhibited formation of political parties and free elections in Namibia gives hope for future political stability in that country.

Part of the agreement on Namibia required the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, lessening the possibility of continuing conflict with South Africa. U.S. policy in Angola promoted a negotiated settlement to the civil war between the ruling party, the MPLA, and the opposition party, UNITA, as well as free and fair internationally supervised elections.

U.S.-Mozambican relations have expanded rapidly as the Government of Mozambique has moved to establish greater democracy and a more pro-Western orientation since 1986. The United States facilitates national reconciliation and peace talks, which are taking place between the government and the Mozambican National Resistance.

Other Conflict Resolution. Civil war has been raging in Ethiopia since 1962, in Sudan periodically since 1955, and in Liberia since early 1989. These and other internal conflicts, generating vast numbers of refugees and causing hunger and disease, and requiring food and medical assistance from international organizations and countries, have become global problems. With the end of the Cold War, there are new opportunities for the resolution of Africa's internal conflicts. The United States will help facilitate conflict resolution whenever it and the African parties involved believe U.S. participation would be useful. The U.S. Government is ready to do so because of its concern for peace and because these conflicts place a major strain on U.S. assistance resources and retard Africa's development.

However, resolution of Africa's internal conflicts is primarily the responsibility of the parties directly involved—with important roles to be played by the OAU [Organization of African Unity]

and other African regional organizations. The United States was impressed by the emphasis placed on conflict resolution at the 1990 OAU summit and supports the OAU's current efforts to bring peace to several parts of the continent.

In Liberia, peacekeeping forces from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have been deployed around the capital of Monrovia. The forces are drawn from and supported by six West African states. Their presence has allowed for the establishment of a cease-fire, food distribution, and negotiations on free and fair elections. As of August 1991, the conflict in Liberia remains unresolved, but ECOWAS cooperation to end the bloodshed is an important precedent in responding to African conflicts with African solutions.

Economic Reform. Faced with a steady decline in their economies, African governments, in the early 1980s, began to recognize that the centrally directed economic models adopted at independence were failing to bring about prosperity. Between 1979 and 1983, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, and Senegal all adopted economic reform programs under the tutelage of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. However, moving from a centrally directed economy to a market-oriented economy is difficult, painful, and therefore, politically hard to sustain. The reduction of subsidies and the removal of price controls required by such reform programs can mean a rapid decline in the standard of living of urban dwellers long before the benefits of higher prices reach the farmers, who are the majority in most African countries. For these reasons, most reform programs do not last more than a couple of years.

In spite of these difficulties, some countries do manage to continue their reform programs. Ghana, for example, is entering its eighth year of reform and is exhibiting steady economic growth, averaging almost 5 percent per year since 1983. Other African countries are seeing the wisdom of such reform programs, and there are now more than 30 Sub-Saharan African countries on various IMF-World Bank approved plans.

The United States strongly supports these programs and has taken important steps to promote economic reform in Sub-Saharan Africa. For some 30 years, the United States has provided economic assistance to African countries.

A special Development Fund for Africa (DFA) was established in late 1987 to channel all development assistance to the region. It was Congress' clear intent in approving this mechanism that Africa was to receive special attention. Funding for the DFA increased some 44 percent in FY 1991 to \$800 million. While promoting policy reform, USAID emphasizes certain critical sectors in carrying out programs under the DFA: agricultural production in connection with preservation of natural resources, health, voluntary family planning, education, and income generation.

The United States provides grants to bolster the economies of countries of special political or security interest (increasingly those undertaking political reforms), through the Economic Support Fund (ESF). The United States also provides grants to friendly countries to acquire certain American military equipment. And through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, the United States provides military education and instruction in technical skills to foreign military forces. In FY 1990, 659 African students were trained under IMET; 745 were proposed for FY 1991.

The United States has joined the international effort to relieve the international debt burden of Sub-Saharan Africa. The agreement reached at the Toronto economic summit in June 1988 provides for the generous rescheduling of official bilateral non-concessional debt (provided at market rates) for severely indebted low-income countries that have undertaken economic reform programs.

In addition, following the 1990 Houston summit, agreement was reached to provide better rescheduling terms for lower- and middle-income countries. And as a result of the 1991 London summit, the developed countries are considering further action to improve the 1988 "Toronto terms."

In July 1989, President Bush announced that the United States would forgive Sub-Saharan African debt resulting from official U.S. development assistance loans. The program began in November 1989. To qualify for the relief, a country must be implementing economic reform programs endorsed by the World Bank or the IMF. So far, 15 African countries have been eligible for this relief: \$755 million of this debt already has been forgiven.

Environment. African countries also have had to face the environmental consequences of economic activity. Population growth—the world's fastest—has forced food producers to take over forest and scrublands and further strain the delicate ecosystem. Where governments have embarked on development programs stressing industrial growth, little attention is paid to the problem of industrial waste. And a worldwide demand for ivory, hunting trophies, and animal pelts has endangered many wildlife species and threatened to reduce the continent's biological diversity.

To confront desertification in the Sahel, several African governments, along with the United States and several European countries as members of the *Club du Sahel*,¹ have assisted affected countries with plans to alleviate this problem. In 1985, the African environmental ministers—all African countries have such ministries devoted to the environment—held their first summit, at which they agreed that the African countries themselves must bear primary responsibility for improving the environment. Many African countries have initiated local community action programs for planting trees and improving soil and water quality.

But with limited financial and technical resources, African countries must depend on international development programs for technical and economic assistance.

The United States is an important contributor to multilateral agencies and programs and long has made the environment a focus in its development strategy for Africa. The USAID's Plan for Supporting Natural Resources Management in Sub-Saharan Africa, initiated in 1987, aims to strengthen African capacity to manage natural resources in order to prevent soil erosion and declining soil fertility, loss of vegetative cover, surface and groundwater degradation, mismanagement of coastal resources, and loss of biological diversity.

Wildlife preservation is an important U.S. policy goal. The United States was an original party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) signed in Washington in 1973. The convention remains the centerpiece of U.S. conservation policy abroad, and it has special relevance for Africa.

The United States has taken a leading role in protecting the African elephant. In 9 years, Africa's elephant population has fallen, due to poaching, from an estimated 1.3 million to 600,000. In October 1988, Congress enacted the African Elephant Conservation Act, establishing an African elephant conservation fund. In June 1989, the Administration banned the import of ivory. And in October 1989, all CITES members agreed to halt trade in ivory, providing for its resumption only under a secure system in the future for countries with healthy and well-managed elephant populations.

¹The *Club du Sahel*, also known as the "*Club des Amis du Sahel*," is an informal association of the nine members of CILSS (*Comite inter-etats pour la Lutte Centre la Secheresse au Sahel*) and any other governments and multilateral development agencies that share in finding long-range solutions of the problems of the Sahelian zone countries.

Under the 1988 African Elephant Conservation Act, the Interior Department provides anti-poaching assistance to Africa elephant management programs. USAID, through its biodiversity program, also is involved in elephant conservation; FY 1990 funding for such activities exceeded the Congressional earmark of \$2 million.

Congress provided \$15 million in FY 1991 Foreign Military Financing grant funds to encourage African military establishments to become more involved in anti-poaching activities, wildlife protection, and to their efforts in support of Africa's environment.

The United States was also instrumental in executing the Montreal Protocol, which established measures to protect the ozone layer by decreasing the production of chlorofluorocarbon chemicals. This is an important step regarding Africa, which—because of its growing population and less flexible economies—is more vulnerable to problems caused by climatic change.