AFRICA IN TRANSITION
PROSPECTS FOR A NEW CENTURY

A BACKGROUND PAPER
FOR STUDENT DELEGATES

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DAVID L. LAWRENCE CONVENTION CENTER
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African countries in March of 1998. Traveling to Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Botswana, South Africa and Senegal, President Clinton emphasized the dawning of Africa's "renaissance era" and promoted a new partnership between Africa and the U.S. This trip symbolized America's "re-engagement" with Africa as well as the redefining of U.S. policy towards a region undergoing enormous change.

In this paper, we will take a look at the following challenges to nation-building in sub-Saharan Africa* in the context of recent developments:

- Promoting political development
- Encouraging economic development
- Managing conflict

In addition to these three major challenges, we will discuss the impact societal issues will have on regional growth. Lastly, we will outline the implications such challenges will have on defining U.S. policy towards Africa.

To help us better understand the circumstances under which events are taking place today, we will first examine briefly Africa’s rich and tumultuous history.

These issues, along with renewed interest in Africa, prompted President Clinton to take a tour of sub-Saharan

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*This paper will concentrate on sub-Saharan Africa. Countries bordering the Mediterranean are usually considered within the context of the Middle East.
The history of Africa is open to a variety of interpretations, particularly regarding the effects of colonization and the slave trade upon modern Africa. Conflicting views on the impact of history and the accountability of nations greatly affect attitudes today regarding policy towards African countries. In the following section, we attempt to examine objectively African history.

Africa’s pre-colonial history consists of diverse, migrant ethnic peoples, farming villages, tribal kingdoms, and empires spreading throughout the lush landscape. There existed numerous trading nation-states and village communities ruled by various political systems including hereditary monarchies. In his book, *Into the House of the Ancestors: Inside the New Africa*, Karl Maier, a longtime foreign correspondent in Africa, writes, "Whether in the stateless nomadic groups that herded their livestock across the vast savannahs of the continent or in more complex centralized systems, such as the Ashante state in Ghana or the Shona kingdoms in what is today Zimbabwe, in the eyes of citizens, these regimes were legitimate. There was a moral order to life, a belief by most of the peoples that they had a stake in it."

European intervention, begun by Portuguese exploration in the early 15th century, exposed Africa to European influence and established the beginning of 500 years of exploitation and intervention. The Portuguese dominated the slave, gold, and spice trade for nearly a century before the Dutch, British, French, Swedish, Spanish, Arabs and North Americans became involved.

Forms of slavery were practiced in Africa prior to European involvement, but not to the extent of the Atlantic Slave Trade initiated by Europeans and Arabs. The Atlantic Slave Trade, named for the ocean route by which millions of Africans were shipped from Africa to colonies in North America, South America, and the West Indies, expanded slavery to immense proportions. It is estimated that between 1450 and 1850, 12 million slaves were exported across the Atlantic Ocean. During this period, an additional estimated 20 million slaves were sent to other areas of the world, the Middle East and North Africa in particular. The diaspora of over 30 million Africans disrupted the foundation and growth of the African continent, while in places like North America and Europe, African slave labor had an enormous impact on the agricultural revolution and the advancement of capitalism.

The Atlantic Slave Trade industry grew exponentially, and led to the establishment of colonies in Africa by Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Germany. Colonization spread over the western and southern coast of Africa and moved progressively inward as Europe sought to capitalize on Africa’s internal trade and source of raw materials. Between 1880 and 1900, the “Scramble for Africa” created European spheres of influence over most of the African continent. The 1884 meeting of European nations at the Berlin West Africa Conference, plus a series of treaties, led to the designation of colonial territories despite African resistance. Arbitrary lines acted as territorial boundaries and sliced through nation-states and ethnic communities that had been established long before the colonial conquest.

The European powers practiced “indirect rule” over colonies, controlling political and economic arenas and leaving administrative responsibilities in the hands of traditional ethnic aristocracies and hereditary chiefs. Colonial powers ruled indirectly through the turn of the century and through the First and Second World Wars. After the wars, Europe’s colonial grip began to loosen. Measures were implemented to grant power back to the colonies. Colonial powers supported a formula for gradual democratization, by which the power of central chiefs would be shared with legislative councils and eventually broadened to include open suffrage and representative government. However, as historian Kevin Shillington writes, “Colonial powers soon learned that they could no longer dictate the pace of political change in Africa. It was the rising tide of African nationalism which now forced the pace of change and led most African states to political independence by the early 1960’s.”

This wave of African nationalism, in part stimulated by the independence of the former British colony of India in 1947, ignited anti-colonial political movements across Africa, many marked by violence. In 1957, after numerous rallies, boycotts and strikes, Ghana became the first independent African nation. Zaire (presently Democratic Republic of the Congo) won independence from Belgium in 1960. Uprisings in Kenya in the 1950’s initiated a guerrilla movement that forced negotiations for independence from Great Britain, which was gained officially in 1963. By the close of the 1960’s, the European colonial era was over, as most colonies gained independence.

After achieving independence, African countries faced various challenges in nation-building. As Marina Ottaway, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, explains, “Artificial creations of colonial powers, many African states were weak at independence, with poorly developed human and physical resources, rudimentary administrative systems, and, inevitably, inexperienced leadership.”

New leaders were also challenged to instill a sense of nationalism in people who historically lived in their respective ethnic or language-based communities. For example, the former colony of Nigeria brought together people in a new state who identified themselves more with their ethnic backgrounds, like Yoruba, Ibo or Hausa, instead of being “Nigerian.”
Aspiring to promote effective means of nation-building, 32 independent African states in 1963 founded the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The OAU was created to enhance political and economic cooperation between new African nations and to encourage the de-colonization of the African continent. Countries pledged to respect international boundaries at independence and not to meddle in the internal affairs of other states.

In attempts to promote stability and national unity, many of Africa's new leaders established one-party states and recognized colonial boundaries as those of their newly independent nations. Ironically, though, as Shillington states, "The dual legacy of authoritarian rule and artificial nation-states was to bedevil political stability on the continent in the early years of African independence."

In his book entitled, Africa in Chaos, George B.N. Ayittey, a Ghanaian-born economics professor at American University, describes Africa's post-colonial political development in many African countries: "African leaders, by design or default, established two key yet defective systems: sultanism and statism...[these] political systems established after independence have exhibited various shades of the 'Big Man' patrimonial rule. The nationalist leaders did not dismantle the authoritarian colonial state they inherited. Instead, they strengthened and expanded its scope, despite Africa's own rich tradition of participatory democracy at the village level."

Due to the significant lack of economic and political development resulting from corrupt rule, the public became disillusioned with new leaders. Instead of heroes who had won independence, many were seen as failures.

A number of coups followed and gave way to government by an elite minority. In the former Zaire and Uganda, for example, military regimes began to take over as they were seen to be more efficient and disciplined than their civilian counterparts. In fact, they reinitiated the pattern of "Big Man" or dictatorial rule. In South Africa, white South Africans assumed power within the system of apartheid. In Rwanda and Burundi, power waxed and waned between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups.

During the Cold War, when rival power blocs vied for global influence, many corrupt leaders stayed in power because of external backing, mainly in the forms of monetary or military assistance, by countries such as the United States and the former Soviet Union. At the end of the Cold War, however, many African states were exposed as weak and hollow—evidence of the neglect of governments to invest in infrastructure development, a situation with which African countries continue to grapple today.

**CHALLENGES**

The legacy of centuries of colonization, exploitation, and post-colonial statism has greatly affected countries in tackling nation-building. Political and economic instability along with conflict have turned some countries into "humanitarian disasters." On the other hand, in recent years a number of countries in Africa have instituted political, economic and societal reforms that have been heralded as among the most amazing changes taking place in Africa since independence.

In the following sections, we will begin to explore the challenges to nation-building as well as Africa's future potential in effectively utilizing its vast natural resources and the most valuable resource of all—its people.

**PROMOTING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The political and infrastructure building process can be long and arduous, one filled with various obstacles that constantly threaten stability. This holds true especially in most of Africa, where the fragility of stability is seen over and over again, as countries lapse in and out of conflict and leaders come and go.

Past systems have unveiled a frail framework for governance in Africa. For instance, notorious "big men" like Uganda's Idi Amin and former Zaire's Mobuto Sese Seko ruled ruthlessly over their citizens for many years. Such tyrannical regimes were characterized by corrupt governmental practices that forced citizens to live in poverty while rulers squandered valuable resources and enjoyed lives filled with immense wealth. The elite that ruled much of Africa after independence neglected to invest in their countries' futures. Some current leaders are often criticized for doing the same.

Many African governments have consistently failed to provide the basic requirements for statehood, including control over territory and security for citizens. A recent United Nations (UN) report described Somalia as "lacking all attributes of statehood." *The New York Times* summary of the report mentioned, "The functions states perform—providing social services, regulating the movement of goods and people, controlling air space, and representing Somalia in international bodies—all are absent...no national government exists and pervasive lawlessness attracts criminals and bandits."

However, many countries in Africa are now undergoing immense political transition and reconstruction. Recently, the region has seen the democratization of political systems, where longtime one-party states have ushered in new leaders through multi-party elections. Just in the past few years alone, more than 30 African countries have consolidated some form of democratic government. Nigeria held elections in May of this year, bringing back to power President Olusegun Obasanjo after twenty years of predominantly military rule.

*Do these changes foreshadow a new direction for Africa?*

Some experts feel that countries like South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia, where violent struggle has given way to democratization and economic growth, offer inspiration to other African countries. Gordon remarks, "South Africa stands as a model to the world in the thoughtful and innovative approach it has taken to systematically righting the wrongs of its morally corrupt apartheid past, to remaking a historically autocratic, institution-
ally racist, and divided society into a united democracy.” Indeed, former South African President Nelson Mandela, who led the movement to end apartheid, set the tone for national reconciliation and is a renowned and respected international figure.

Some analysts feel that such countries are the exception rather than the rule, and much needs to be done in terms of political and infrastructure development. Even basic infrastructure, such as the supply of electricity and clean water, is lacking in many parts of Africa.

There has been much discussion lately regarding the emergence of a “new generation” of leaders, such as Uganda’s Yoweri Museveni and Ghana’s Jerry Rawlings. These leaders have been credited with bringing about economic and political reform, and creating the infrastructure vital to supporting such changes. In actuality, these leaders are not so new—Museveni has been in power for over ten years. They are being touted as “new” because of their desire to empower Africans in directing positively Africa’s development by remedying failing policies of corrupt regimes, both past and present.

Will such leaders be able to steer their countries down the road of political and economic progress and, with them, the rest of Africa?

Ghana, for example, has experienced significant political reform under Rawlings. Ghana’s 1992 presidential elections and the adoption of a new constitution marked the revival of democratic institutions in Ghana. When the 1996 elections took place, the political process had improved greatly in Ghana. Opposition parties engaged in heated debates, and the elections were seen with a new sense of legitimacy by Ghanaians.

Experts also describe the emergence of “hybrid” governments in some African nations, where leaders mix characteristics of a western-style democracy with an authoritarian-style government. Uganda’s Museveni, for instance, has instituted a “no-party” government where the emphasis is on individuals rather than political groups. Granted, Museveni has embraced free market principles and decentralized the economy. However, he feels that most African nations are not ready for western-style democracy and consequently stifles political dissent.

This reluctance to loosen political control has led many to criticize the legitimacy of such new leaders in Africa, especially with respect to their commitment to political reform. In 1997, when Laurent Kabila came into power after overthrowing Congo’s former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, the world waited to see if this new leader would provide stability for the large central African nation. After a few months, it was apparent that Kabila’s regime exhibited many of the same corrupt characteristics as those before him. The country again fell into conflict.

Another trend Africa is experiencing is the role of regional intervention of states in defining and developing the internal politics of other countries. This is best exemplified by the current situation in the Congo. Despite OAU principles of respecting the governments of other states, central Africa has become engulfed in conflict due to differing political agendas of surrounding countries, such as Rwanda and Uganda seeking to oust Kabila’s regime. Even the recent Congo peace agreement shows signs of strain due to the conflicting agendas of those involved in politically reconstructing the country.

Levels of political development vary greatly in Africa, with different trends and styles of leadership. These differences also influence Africa’s economic development.

**PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

After independence, almost all African economies were dominated by the state. New leaders distrusted capitalism. Ayyitey notes, “The state took over all commercial banks, insurance companies, grain mills, and the main import-export firms, and acquired a controlling interest in the major multinational corporation subsidiaries and industries...enormous economic powers concentrated in the hands of the state and, ultimately, one individual.”

Emerging from this legacy, much of Africa faces a number of economic challenges. These include:

- a foreign debt of an estimated $350 billion
- foreign investment and trade threatened by conflict
- the declining price of commodities for export
- the absence or ineffectiveness of institutions that support economic development

In recent years, however, many countries in Africa have been experiencing economic growth, largely due to decentralization and macroeconomic reform. In 1997, the annual economic growth for Africa was valued at 4.5%, as opposed to negative growth in prior years. Increased trade has doubled the amount of exports in the last few years, and over 30 countries have seen positive per capita growth, led by economic engines like South Africa. Also, trading blocs like the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) strive to implement free trade zones within Africa in an effort to become regional players in the global economy.

Despite its wealth of natural resources and recent economic growth, Africa remains the poorest continent in the world. Some analysts believe that African countries’ tendencies to rely on extractive industries hurt their chances for furthering economic development. When resources flow out of a country for production, instead of the process occurring within a country, the potential for adding value is lost. The presence of one new plant could create hundreds of new jobs, add value to products and lead to higher export prices and more revenue.

Conflict and political instability continue to threaten economic development. Karl Maier comments, “Africa’s contribution to total world trade is declining rapidly, to about one percent, as millions of people have fled their homes to escape famine and war, and hundreds of thousands more have migrated to Europe and the United States to avoid oppressive governments and the lack of economic opportunity.”
In the same respect, foreign investors generally tend to shy away from regions that are prone to instability and conflict, even if resources are abundant. Also, political instability, corruption and stifling policies often prevent effective macroeconomic management and microeconomic development. This is seen in Nigeria where the government’s exploitation of the country’s oil-rich economy has undermined economic progress in many other sectors. An article in the May 1999 issue of Current History states, “The excessive centralization of Nigeria’s oil-dominated economy has been a major obstacle to development, inciting ethnic and regional competition, military intervention, and large-scale corruption.”

Still, many countries are being labeled as “big emerging markets.” South Africa is an economic giant—it represents over 45% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the entire African continent. It boasts an advanced and productive economy with modern infrastructure and a stock exchange that ranks among the ten largest in the world.

Furthermore, companies like Pittsburgh-based H.J. Heinz Company are investing in more stable countries in Africa, such as Ghana and the Seychelles. Last year, President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana visited Pittsburgh to commemorate over 30 years of business with Heinz. William R. Johnson, President and CEO of Heinz, said about Rawlings, “Under his visionary leadership, Ghana has become a model for development and a vibrant partner for investment.” In 1994, Heinz opened a tuna cannery in Tema, Ghana, that currently employs thousands of Ghanaians, including hundreds of local fishermen. Such steps in other countries could help relieve the heavy emphasis on extractive industry.

The “new” leaders who have opened the door politically have also taken similar steps economically. In fact, many of the leaders have recently honed their business skills by taking courses in business administration. Analysts compare the economic policies of these leaders to those in Southeast Asian nations like Singapore and South Korea, where governments exert concentrated political control but allow for economic liberalization.

Though many experts recognize the advent of economic progress, they criticize that economic growth is occurring too slowly. Jean-Louis Sarbib, Vice President for the Africa Regional Office at the World Bank, believes, “To accelerate growth [in Africa], the lessons of the past few years are clear: good policies and expanding trade are vital. In policy, many African countries need to push ahead into a ‘second generation’ of reforms—in institutions, in governance, in privatizations, and in attracting more investment.”

Hoping to nurture economic development, many African countries receive aid and loans from donor countries and international organizations, such as the World Bank. The role of aid has been frequently debated. Many argue that aid has been poorly managed and often translates into better automobiles and homes for corrupt leaders or ends up in private Swiss bank accounts. The level of debt resulting from outstanding loans African nations owe to institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reached over $350 billion.

This debt is seen as a major obstacle to Africa’s economic development. Many believe that debt relief is a precondition in order for Africa to be able to grow economically. Most experts agree that other essential preconditions are sound governmental policies that encourage confidence and entrepreneurship. This past August, a group of African finance ministers and central bank governors from 17 of Africa’s most indebted nations met for a two-day conference in Kenya. Botswana’s president, Festus G. Mogae, stated, “We need both debt relief and inflows of investment so that debt relief is not a substitute for new inflows.”

Such are the major obstacles to Africa’s economic development and, ultimately, to Africa’s inclusion into the global economy. In turn, these are exacerbated by the presence of conflict, another challenge to nation-building and regional development.

**MANAGING CONFLICT**

Political and economic instability can fuel conflict within and among nations—this has been happening in Africa, as conflicts continue to break out and spread regionally. Much of the conflict in Africa is rooted in ethnic differences; there are also border wars such as the one between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and civil wars without ethnic tensions (Somalia) or with ethno-religious disputes (Sudan).

One of the greatest challenges Africa faces is managing conflict, as conflict serves to undermine attempts for political and economic stability. Conflict also has the potential to spread to neighboring countries and to further disrupt development regionally. Some countries, like Tanzania, suffer enormously from the negative economic impact due to conflicts elsewhere. Callisto Madavo, Vice President for Africa at the World Bank, states, “Conflict has begun to dim the glow that has been spreading over Africa for the past few years. Where there is war there can be no lasting development.”

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**Non-Governmental and Grassroots Organizations In Africa**

Most African nations welcome international and local non-governmental groups in working with Africans to improve political, economic and social sectors.

Because of the disillusionment with aid and loans, the presence of non-governmental organizations has grown enormously in the area of economic development and management.

In 1961, the first Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Ghana. Since then, over 57,000 Americans have served in Africa. Today, an average of 2,200 Volunteers in 28 African countries contribute to development projects in sectors such as education, business and agriculture.

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The brutality of ethnic conflict is evidenced by the 1994 Rwandan genocide where Hutu-led army and militias killed an estimated 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu in just 100 days. Rwanda's neighbor, Burundi, is now making headlines due to the recent rash of violent Hutu raids on Tutsi, adding hundreds more civilians to the death toll. Nigeria, the "giant" of Africa, is struggling with conflict between two of its largest ethnic groups, the Hausas and Yorubas. News channels broadcast images of ordinary people mutilated by rebels in Sierra Leone and of children toting machine guns in Liberia.

Most Africa scholars contend that ethnic conflicts in Africa are politically fueled and are not due solely to "ancient, ethnic hatreds" or "artificial borders." Instead, many experts describe the "politics of exclusion" as being a major defining principle when attempting to understand the overwhelming presence of ethnic conflict in Africa. They feel the exclusion of specific ethnic communities from effective political participation exacerbates ethnic tensions and causes conflict to break out between rival ethnic groups.

Poverty and the struggle over resources are other underlying factors contributing to conflict. Once conflict breaks out, it may quickly get out of control. Armed opposition movements further fuel the flames of conflict. Marina Ottaway, in "Post-Imperial Africa at War," states, "Conflict festers in the vacuum of power that exists when governments are only nominally in control."

The Economist offers the following description of the civil war in Sierra Leone: "It is not a struggle between political parties or ethnic groups. As bands of warriors defect and redefect, it is not even a straight fight between 'government' and 'rebels.' It is partly of young against old, partly of countryside against town, the interior of the country resenting its exploitation by people living on the coast...both a political and moral order have collapsed."

The war in the Congo depicts the dangerous complexity of inter-state war in Africa, where eight countries have been drawn into the conflict. Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Angola had been backing Kabila's regime, while Uganda and Rwanda had been supporting rebels trying to overthrow Kabila, despite Ugandan and Rwandan initial support for Kabila in overthrowing Congo's previous dictator. Changing alliances between countries can alter the composition and intensity of conflicts. Uganda and Rwanda, though technically on the same "team" against Kabila, support different rebel factions that aim to overthrow Congo's leader. This adds another dimension of intricacy to one of the largest conflicts in modern African history.

How are these conflicts impacting African nations?

There is a recurring refugee problem. The World Bank estimates that recent conflicts in Africa have created 5 million refugees and 16 million displaced people. Current History states, "Angola is now in the throes of a full-scale civil war, with an estimated 600,000 internally displaced people and tens of thousands more fleeing to neighboring Congo."

Conflicts constantly threaten political stability as well as the potential for economic growth. Whether people flee or take up arms, economic productivity decreases or is suspended. This can have a domino effect on neighboring nations' economies, especially when an entire region becomes mired in conflict.

How are more stable African nations responding to such conflicts?

Increasingly, countries are taking on the responsibility of overseeing negotiations and peace agreements. Recently, a Congo cease-fire was signed in Zambia. Negotiations had stretched for months during frequent episodes of renewed fighting. Zambia's president Frederick Chiluba, a major force behind the peace talks, said gravely, "We have a big responsibility that does not end with the signing. It begins with the signing." This reflects the growing tendency of African nations to take responsibility for managing regional conflict.

There have been numerous attempts by African organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), to establish order in the region. Peacekeeping assistance has also been offered by the United Nations and the U.S. The New York Times recently reported on the Congo accord, "U.N. officials estimate the future of peacekeeping operation could require a minimum of 25,000 soldiers. South Africa has already promised troops. The U.S. has said that, if asked, it would take part in an 'internationally recognized' peacekeeping effort." Many question the success of the peace talks, given that only a week after the peace accord aimed at ending the year-long war in Congo was signed, Congo-based rebels recommenced the fighting in Uganda.

Most experts feel that, as represented by the situation in Congo, managing conflict and maintaining peace are integral elements to achieving stability and progress in Africa.

Other Societal Issues

Africa is also dealing with a beleaguering number of societal issues, particularly in the sectors of health, education and the environment. These issues directly affect Africa's development potential.

Health: The Outbreak and Spread of AIDS

The epidemic of AIDS is growing at a seemingly uncontrollable rate in Africa. The New York Times notes, "AIDS is hitting Africa so fiercely that it now rivals the great epidemics of history. Countries south of the Sahara account
for the world's 21 highest rates of HIV among adults aged 15 to 49 years. In Botswana and Zimbabwe, a quarter of adults are infected, a rate even an expert described as 'shocking.' Studies also show that sub-Saharan Africa is home to two-thirds of the world's entire HIV population—nearly 21 million men, women and children. AIDS has killed around 11 million Africans in the past 15 years—83% of the world's AIDS deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 5,500 Africans die daily of AIDS.

Such statistics imply grave consequences for sub-Saharan Africa, especially in terms of growth. In its profile of sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank states, "What sets HIV/AIDS apart is its impact on development. Because it kills so many adults in the prime of their lives, it decimates the workforce, fractures and impoverishes families, orphans millions, and shreds the fabric of communities. Given the scale of the emergency, it is no longer just a public health issue."

Ugandan and South African governments have responded by launching AIDS awareness programs and campaigns to educate people about the dangers and realities of the disease. Still, the harshest reality is that treatment is extremely costly. Many Africans cannot afford treatment and governments do not have the means to subsidize medication. South Africa's Minister of Health states, "With the limited resources we have, we have to make choices in terms of what we prioritize—even about AIDS. And at the moment, the priority is prevention."

Missed Education

Crucial to each country's development is the education of its people—this is especially lacking in Africa. A number of countries still face dropping enrollment rates for primary school. The World Bank stated in its 1999 report on Africa, "Only half the pupils reach fifth grade in Africa compared with four in five in the other regions. Low quality [of education] leads to parents withdrawing their children from school." Less than one quarter of Africa's youth pursue secondary education, and only half of the adult population is literate. The causes for this vary—economic stagnation, conflict or a mismanaged educational system—but all lead to the same result: the absence of universal education and an obstacle to effective political and economic development.

There have been some positive advancements in the area of education. Between 1960 and 1991, the literacy rate doubled, though the majority of countries still lag behind more industrialized nations. Some governments, with support from international and non-governmental organizations, have initiated efforts to improve the quality of education. They are also trying to close the gap in the education of girls. Most countries realize that in order to become globally competitive, good market skills are vital—this is what many countries are trying to achieve, with much work ahead. As a result, more and more Africans are studying at U.S. colleges and universities.
What can we do about Africa? The right question today is, they would ask, “What can we do for Africa?” or “Whatever be when American policymakers thought of Africa at all, Clinton remarked in his speech at Cape Town, “It used to be when American policymakers thought of Africa at all, they would ask, ‘What can we do for Africa?’ or ‘Whatever can we do about Africa?’ The right question today is, ‘What can we do with Africa?’”

Environmental Concerns

Africa’s environmental problems range from those of immediate threat to the public to those that will have a long-term effect climatically and economically. According to the World Bank, nearly two-thirds of people who live in rural areas and a quarter of those in more urbanized areas in sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to safe drinking water. Thousands of deaths each year are attributed to water contamination and water-borne diseases. In addition, Africans must deal with air pollution, primitive sanitation systems, and toxins from industrial plants.

Forests are disappearing rapidly, caused mainly by commercial logging where market demand outpaces the number of new trees planted. Deforestation not only has a future impact on climate change but is also economically harmful. Many analysts forecast that such non-sustainable approaches to utilizing valuable resources will negatively impact economic growth potential as well as the availability of natural resources.

What are the implications for U.S. policy towards Africa?

Until the beginning of this decade, the U.S. viewed Africa through a Cold War lens. The former Soviet Union as well as the U.S. and other countries exerted influence over areas of the world in maintaining a balance of power. In Africa, the U.S. often established a presence by supporting various dictators. For instance, the U.S. for years supported former Zaire’s dictator Mobutu Sese Seko because of the country’s Cold War strategic value—its mineral wealth and central location on the African continent.

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has attempted to redirect policy towards Africa, with the most recent shift being made in striving towards a new form of partnership between Africa and the U.S.

When President Clinton visited Africa last year, many were abuzz about the “new” U.S. policy towards Africa. Clinton remarked in his speech at Cape Town, “It used to be when American policymakers thought of Africa at all, they would ask, ‘What can we do for Africa?’ or ‘Whatever can we do about Africa?’ The right question today is, ‘What can we do with Africa?’”

Economic Development

The slogan “Trade vs. Aid” is used often to describe current policy goals towards Africa’s economic development. The effectiveness of foreign aid in Africa’s long-term development has been largely debated and the emphasis on a U.S.-Africa partnership reflects the rethink of aid as a major policy agenda. The Clinton Administration has initiated and begun implementing an economic policy toward Africa called the Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity, which aims to increase two-way trade and private sector investment.

Susan E. Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, remarks, “Each of us also has a tremendous eco-

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<th>Who attends primary school?</th>
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<tr>
<td>In sub-Saharan Africa: 55% of boys and 47% of girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>In developed countries: 92% of both boys and girls</td>
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Environmental Concerns

Africa’s environmental problems range from those of immediate threat to the public to those that will have a long-term effect climatically and economically. According to the World Bank, nearly two-thirds of people who live in rural areas and a quarter of those in more urbanized areas in sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to safe drinking water. Thousands of deaths each year are attributed to water contamination and water-borne diseases. In addition, Africans must deal with air pollution, primitive sanitation systems, and toxins from industrial plants.

Forests are disappearing rapidly, caused mainly by commercial logging where market demand outpaces the number of new trees planted. Deforestation not only has a future impact on climate change but is also economically harmful. Many analysts forecast that such non-sustainable approaches to utilizing valuable resources will negatively impact economic growth potential as well as the availability of natural resources.

What are the implications for U.S. policy towards Africa?

Until the beginning of this decade, the U.S. viewed Africa through a Cold War lens. The former Soviet Union as well as the U.S. and other countries exerted influence over areas of the world in maintaining a balance of power. In Africa, the U.S. often established a presence by supporting various dictators. For instance, the U.S. for years supported former Zaire’s dictator Mobutu Sese Seko because of the country’s Cold War strategic value—its mineral wealth and central location on the African continent.

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has attempted to redirect policy towards Africa, with the most recent shift being made in striving towards a new form of partnership between Africa and the U.S.

When President Clinton visited Africa last year, many were abuzz about the “new” U.S. policy towards Africa. Clinton remarked in his speech at Cape Town, “It used to be when American policymakers thought of Africa at all, they would ask, ‘What can we do for Africa?’ or ‘Whatever can we do about Africa?’ The right question today is, ‘What can we do with Africa?’”

Economic Development

The slogan “Trade vs. Aid” is used often to describe current policy goals towards Africa’s economic development. The effectiveness of foreign aid in Africa’s long-term development has been largely debated and the emphasis on a U.S.-Africa partnership reflects the rethink of aid as a major policy agenda. The Clinton Administration has initiated and begun implementing an economic policy toward Africa called the Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity, which aims to increase two-way trade and private sector investment.

Susan E. Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, remarks, “Each of us also has a tremendous eco-
nomic stake in Africa. Today, the U.S. exports 45% more to Africa than to all of the countries of the former Soviet Union combined. Throughout Africa, East Coast companies from Kodak, AIG, Lucent Technologies to IBM are significantly investing or establishing a strong presence in the region. In an era where one-third of our GDP growth is dependent on exports, we cannot afford to leave any foreign market untapped. The fact is, Africa is a market of 700 million potential consumers already buying $6 billion worth of American products annually and supporting thousands of U.S. jobs right here in the Atlantic region."

The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act is a bill that, as of this writing, has been passed by the House of Representatives and awaits Senate approval. If passed, this Act would establish free trade zones with selected African countries that meet U.S. criteria for economic reform. Some criticize this bill, dubbing it the "Re-Colonization of Africa bill", claiming that the U.S. is acting in selfish economic interests. Still, many analysts feel that such economic cooperation is mutually beneficial.

In addition to economically engaging Africa, how will the U.S. deal with the issue of debt relief?

The international plea for debt relief has warranted serious discussion by world leaders. At the Cologne Summit in June of this year, President Clinton and G-7 leaders announced a $90 billion debt reduction initiative for African nations.

Decreasing the debt owed by heavily indebted nations has also spurred an international movement for complete and partial debt relief. Jubilee 2000 is a global campaign for international debt forgiveness by the end of the year 2000. This applies to debt owed by the poorest countries in the world to a combination of individual governments, the World Bank, and the IMF. We can expect the debate on Jubilee 2000 to grow over the next few months.

Managing Conflict

In assisting Africa with conflict management, the U.S. plays a substantive role in peace negotiations and advice on peacekeeping. Leonard H. Robinson, Jr., former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, comments, "The Africans have done the hard work to negotiate an end to the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Congo and Eritrea-Ethiopia. They are not asking for a handout, but simply a hand in making sure that the negotiated agreements are implemented and that peace holds."

One method of assistance is the U.S.-sponsored African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). This involves the U.S. providing for the equipment and training of over 10,000 soldiers from Senegal, Uganda, Malawi, Ghana and Ethiopia to respond effectively to crises and peacekeeping. Some African nations, like South Africa, are suspicious of the ACRI and feel that it is a tactic to force Africans to implement policies dictated by the international community.

Earlier this year, when the U.S. military intervened with NATO in Kosovo, many questioned why the U.S. had not reacted in a similar way during Rwanda’s genocide. Some suggested that the lack of action was to avoid any chance of repeating situations like the one that took place during the U.S. humanitarian mission in Somalia in 1993. Less than a year after U.S. troops arrived there, a failed raid took the lives of 18 American soldiers and U.S. troops were withdrawn without any resolution of the conflict.

What roles can and should the U.S. and the rest of the international community play in aiding Africa’s development?

In response to the question of outside intervention, Ayittey states, "To stand by idly and watch thousands die daily from starvation and disease would be immoral and cruel. But to barge into an African crisis situation without any understanding of the complexities of the issues involved and without any clue as to what the long-term solution should be, knowing full well that the mission will be abandoned should the going get tough, is even crueler."

Many assert that the international community should be sensitive to Africa’s desire for seeking “African solutions to African problems.” However, some argue there are concerns shared by the world, such as the spread of disease, that must be dealt with collectively by nations around the world, including the U.S.

CONCLUSION

In defining policy objectives in Africa, the U.S. must perform a careful balancing act, where special consideration is given to the nuances of each situation. The complexity and intricacy of the challenges Africa faces are inherent in the diversity of its political, economic and social development. It would be misleading to lump all of Africa together in the same category, as levels and rates of progress vary significantly among African countries.

In formulating and implementing Africa policy, U.S. policymakers will face tough choices in working with Africans to ensure the presence of peace and facilitate opportunities for growth and development. Controversy surrounds the question of where the U.S. should place emphasis on policy towards Africa, as there are a number of U.S. interests that demand attention. Furthermore, political, economic and social development in Africa are intertwined—this adds another level of complexity in shaping constructive policy towards Africa.

What are the prospects for Africa in a new century?

Clearly, the U.S. and the international community cannot ignore the challenges confronting Africa or be indifferent to the outcome. Neither can the solutions be dictated from outside the region. Politically, economically and socially, these challenges have an important impact on the rest of the globe. The lives and livelihood of millions of people depend on how these challenges are managed.
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