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MADN-SOC

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MEMORANDUM FOR: REPRESENTATIVES TO U.S.-AFRICA LEADERS SUMMIT

SUBJECT: AFRICA: A GROWING U.S. INTEREST

1. **Issue:** The purpose of this memorandum is to provide recommended strategic priorities for the upcoming summit of African leaders to be hosted in December 2022, including the articulation of defense, diplomatic and developmental goals for pursuing American strategic interests as outlined by the August 2022 U.S Strategy Toward Sub Saharan Africa.

2. **Strategic Analysis:** The United States is faced with a variety of challenges and opportunities in Africa, spanning defense, diplomatic, and developmental spaces. Africa has significant economic potential with a large youth population and emerging markets. However, it is underdeveloped, with 34% of African households making below \$1.90 per day. Given potential for growth, Africa has become a stage for great power competition. China is engaged in malign economic and political activities to further their influence in the region, and Russia is engaged in mercenary diplomacy. This is significant given the power of the African voting bloc in the UN and the size of the eight regional economic communities in the continent. Russia and China also seek to enhance their military footprint through arms sales and establishment of bases. In addition, Africa has emerged as the new epicenter of Jihadi terrorist groups, seeing a 17-fold increase in attacks by African terrorist actors over the last decade. Resource scarcity, ethnic tensions, and border disputes add to growing challenges facing Africa.

3. **Relevant National Interests:** American interests in Africa span the security, economic, and diplomatic spaces. Primary interests include promoting liberal democracies, countering malign Russian and Chinese influence, promoting mutually beneficial economic opportunities, and preventing attacks on the homeland or U.S. interests from violent extremist groups.

4. **Strategic Options:**

Security-focused: The first US approach could see an increase in state security capacity through supplying equipment and training to strengthen long term military cooperation and stability. A benefit of this model is that the US has a comparative advantage in military capacity building programs that assist states with developing professional security forces, which can help bolster U.S. allies abroad and promote American security interests. A negative aspect of this approach would be that placing less focus on the development of African states, economies, and infrastructure does not address the root of the problems causing security issues.

Development-focused: The second US approach would focus on matching and surpassing Chinese and Russian economic influence in Africa by investing in development initiatives that forge strong economic ties to African states and address root causes of state and social instability. A positive impact is that this increases security by uplifting African civil society, lessening reasons for impoverished individuals to participate in militant extremism. It also emphasizes strong economic ties to these African countries which is an integral part of the accountable, liberal international order. A negative aspect is that this plan is unable to produce

quick deliverables, as development is inherently a long-term investment. Additionally, countries may not have the infrastructure in place to operate programs targeted towards education and public health.

A balanced approach: The third US approach could see a balance between emphasis on security and development, both being bolstered by diplomacy. One benefit of the approach is that the US would cede neither arena to her near peer rivals, Russia and China, and it would allow for flexibility based on region- or country-specific needs. A drawback is that, without focusing resources on one aspect, the US risks being spread too thin and being unable to make a meaningful impact in either arena.

5. **Recommendation:** In considering the above options, the committee recommends prioritizing a development-focused approach.

6. **Implementation:** To implement a development-focused approach, the committee recommends prioritizing programs focused on developing economic opportunities and empowering Africa's significant youth population.:

Economic Opportunities

Key Industries: The United States will promote private and public investment in key industries in order to address issues of livelihood in Africa. The necessary focuses must be on the agricultural, natural resource, technological, and manufacturing industries. This would also allow for increased American involvement across the continent.

Infrastructure: Investing in robust infrastructure creates resilient supply chains, thereby setting the pretenses for a strong economy. This will also increase the potential for long term employment and job security.

Resources: Promoting better practices for natural resource management ensures food and water security through efficient practices. Implementing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene projects helps to ensure safe water access. Advancing technology across the continent will achieve these goals.

Youth Empowerment

The youth empowerment initiative would focus on increasing equitable access to education, training-to-work programs, and access to technology as a means to uplift communities to hinder the success of recruitment by terrorist organizations. This initiative would focus on increasing funding to previously existing programs in local communities with the goal of making access to these programs more widespread and just. In addition, it would make space for an increase in leadership program possibilities, including the expansion of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). These programs would foster community growth, bolster relations with the United States, and promote liberal, democratic values.

7. **Contact:** The point of contact for this memorandum is CDT K. Ryan Gentry at kenneth.gentry@westpoint.edu or (801)946-0373.

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APPENDIX A: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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