

## **SCUSA 71 Policy Memo**

**FROM: SCUSA 71 Sub-Saharan Africa Table Group**

**SUBJECT: US Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa over the next decade**

**DATE: November 2, 2019**

### **Executive Summary:**

The United States should maintain and increase its engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa as it seeks to facilitate democratic institutions, develop regional security and stability, and foster the region's economic development and trade. Doing so will benefit both ourselves and Africa.

### **Background:**

Sub-Saharan Africa is a dynamic region. Its current population of 1.2 billion may double by 2050. It contains immense natural resource deposits, arable land, and energetic populations. These dynamics have created a landscape ready for market expansion and tech innovation, illustrated by a prediction of reaching a combined GDP of \$29 trillion by 2050. Meanwhile, it is increasingly becoming a battleground for geopolitical competition between players such as China, Russia, and the US. Certain regions on the continent have struggled with terrorism, domestic violence, and civil wars. These transnational threats have the potential to leak out and directly affect the United States through terrorist attacks. Despite these threats, the United States has a history of engagement in the continent. For decades, it has supported the security, governance, and developing institutions of various nations. However, recent U.S. politics have challenged these norms as domestic leaders have called for a retreat from international engagement. This memo reacts to this question: how should the United States engage in Africa over the next decade?

### **Analysis:**

Because of African dynamism and our shared interests, US engagement in Africa should focus on finding ways to support mutual interests of African countries and the United States. Over the next ten years, the US should maintain and increase its current involvement with African countries. This engagement, expressed in numerous ways, can be grouped into three categories: strengthening democratic institutions, security and stability, and economic development and trade.

Democratic forms of government are the most efficient means of achieving human welfare due to their ability to preserve sovereignty in the people while establishing governance based on the consent of the governed. Sub-Saharan Africa is a region of great potential but due to its inconsistent application of democracy, America's ability to work effectively with African countries is compromised by political instability. The opportunity and dynamism of the region will be unlocked through stronger democratic institutions.

The United States' national interest in strengthening African democratic institutions lies in the strategic advantage of being able to cultivate friendly and cooperative relationships and regional and international peace through shared democratic values. There is also a moral interest in realizing our founding principles of human dignity and democracy that are universal to all persons. 71.8% percent of Sub-Saharan Africans want some form of democratic government, indicating that this is a popularly supported change.<sup>1</sup> Majorities in every sub-Saharan country say they have a democratic system, but they still struggle with rigged elections, government accountability, and civil engagement. There is also widespread distrust of government institutions that hinders progress and democratization.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Online Data Analysis Tool." Afrobarometer. Accessed November 1, 2019. <http://afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis/analyse-online>.

The United States should strengthen stability and security within Sub-Saharan Africa because our national security depends on the regional stability of our partners and economic allies. Around the world, four out of five fragile states are in Sub Saharan Africa. Fragile states are defined by weak state capacity and/or weak state legitimacy that leave citizens vulnerable to shocks. Even though it seems far away from the US, instability has no borders: ongoing conflicts and transnational threats challenge peace and security. Insecurity sparks human displacement and harms United States interests as violent non-state actors emerge.

The US has a vested interest in an economically interconnected world where our businesses can develop industries that are the most efficient and profitable. By facilitating economic growth in Africa, the US can secure lasting economic advantage through strong partnerships and strategic trade. The US can affect these arenas through strengthening intra-African trade, facilitating African countries' access to global markets, providing macro-economic advice, collaboration with US business owners, promoting cutting-edge communications technology in Africa, providing debt relief programs, and developing intellectual property rights throughout Africa.

**Recommendations:**

- To facilitate democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, the United States needs to help secure credible elections. We recommend that the United States uses its international leverage to denounce stolen or unfair elections, encourage sub-Saharan nations to repeal repressive campaign restrictions, and offer to conduct parallel vote counts to help determine the validity of election results.
- The United States should provide counsel to legislatures in sub-Saharan states to pass statutes and constitutional amendments to develop their systems of checks and balances.
- Develop a fund designed to contribute towards enhancing security institutions in the region. This fund would serve as a centralized source of capital supplied by allies, partner nations, and any other private interested parties. Implementation of this fund would reduce the spread of the responsibility of producing funds to all interested parties while also increasing the capabilities of security institutions.
- The United States should strengthen our cooperation with subregional organizations and provide expertise. These organizations can function more efficiently when bolstered by the support of the US and therefore better achieve desired resolutions without direct US engagement.
- The United States should work to help develop and facilitate multilateral trade agreements with participant nations of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) through the use of Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFA) and regional trade blocs, by sending technical specialists and commercial mediators to meet with the leaders of the AfCFTA.
- The United States should provide multilateral, collaborative, and transparent debt relief to high priority countries in an effort to ease the budgetary burden caused by interest rate payments.
- The United States should incentivize American businesses to invest in the expansion of African telecommunication corporations with transactional capabilities and promote a willingness to work with small and medium business enterprises within Africa. This will increase African jobs, provide investment opportunities, and increase productivity in the region.