



Using Sustainability to Build Stability in Africa: Strategic Policy Issues for the Army

Building a Dialogue for Using Sustainability as an Approach to Engagement

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The Center for Strategic Leadership hosted the second *Using Sustainability to Build Stability in Africa: Strategic Policy Issues for the Army* workshop at the Collins Center on 2-4 October 2007. This workshop series is sponsored by the Army Environmental Policy Institute and its partner organizations: U.S. Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership (CSL), the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), the Environmental Change and Security Program of the Woodrow Wilson Center (WWC), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Sustainability means meeting the demands placed on the system today without compromising the needs of future generations. Thus, the over consumption, abuse, or pollution of a country's natural resource base today will cause the country to fail when it cannot meet the demands placed upon the political system by future generations. The workshop series aims at to examine how the Army can leverage sustainability as an approach to engaging African nations. Working within the context of U.S. Africa Command's (USAFRICOM) strategic vision, sustainability provides an approach to engagement that will support the capacity of African militaries so that they may help civilian governments address sustainability issues and maintain the legitimacy necessary to prevent state failure and instability.

The U.S. has a number of strategically important national security interests in the security, stability, and development of Africa, including maintaining access to resources, maintaining U.S. influence in the region, and the denial of safe havens to international terrorists. The primary challenge to each of these interests is the persistent specter of political and societal instability. By using the concept of sustainability as an approach to engagement in Africa, the Army, through its participation in the new USAFRICOM, can address the underlying conditions that lead to instability and protect vital U.S. interests on the continent. As stated in the Army Strategy for the Environment, "Local and regional issues, such as famine, natural disasters, ecological degradation, economic decline, political upheaval, and disputes over precious and sometimes scarce natural resources are evolving into global issues that influence how the United States must respond and interact through political, economic, and when necessary, military engagement."



This most recent workshop is part of a series to examine how the Army can use the concept of sustainability as an approach to engagement activities in Africa. The series is focused on identifying opportunities for leveraging sustainability to further U.S. capacity building, security, stability, and development objectives on the continent, and to identify policy requirements to take advantage of those opportunities.

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The first workshop, *Factors Shaping the Strategic Environment in Africa*, was held 18-19 July 2007 at the U.S. Army War College. A diverse group of stakeholders discussed why Africa is important to U.S. foreign policy and the issues that are currently shaping the strategic environment in Africa. The workshop brought together speakers and participants from the WWC, USAID, the Department of State, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Army Staff, the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Installations and Environment (I&E), the U.S. Military Academy, the Air War College, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for Policy (Africa), OSD Policy (Humanitarian Affairs/Disaster Relief), and the U.S. Forest Service.

Key Points from Workshop #1

The presentations and discussion of the first workshop brought out a number of key points:

- The Army will lead few of the development or aid efforts in Africa, while supporting an array of others
- Active and persistent engagement now will prevent problems later
- Sustainability is a national security issue because it contributes to stability
- Sustainability as an approach to engagement protects U.S. strategic interests
- The environment is an important component of sustainability
- African views of security are more rooted in human security than national security
- Climate change effects in Africa will exacerbate current tensions and threaten stability

The second workshop, *Building a Dialogue for Using Sustainability as an Approach to Engagement*, had an equally diverse group of senior officials and stakeholders that included the U.S. European Command/Africa Command, OSD for Policy (Africa), Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Environmental Safety and Occupational Health (ESOH), U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Ocean, Environment, and Science from the State Department, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (I&E) ERS, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, PKSOI, numerous academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector representatives. Discussions focused on:

- Identifying programs and operations to support sustainability in Africa
- The challenges and the opportunities for building stability in Africa
- Opportunities for cooperation among the organizations that are working sustainability issues in Africa to support USAFRICOM

Key Points from Workshop #2

The presentations and discussion of the second workshop brought out a number of key points.

- The United States should take a longer term view for its programs in Africa and should base them on a strategic vision shared by African states.
- USAFRICOM provides an opportunity for a more coherent and comprehensive strategy on the continent.
- Government agencies need to emphasize interagency cooperation with regional organizations, states, and NGOs and collaboration over primacy in Africa.
- The main focus of government programs in Africa is on health, development, trade and governance.
- A key role for USAFRICOM is to develop the African military's capacity to proactively address sustainability issues



Workshop participants included Ms. Theresa Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, and Mr. Tad D. Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health.

- Engagement programs must be sustainable by the countries in Africa; the U.S. Government should ensure the future resources required to sustain these programs or not initiate them
- Training and equipment to enable sustainability should be a key element of effects based planning for USAFRICOM
- Sustainability needs to be incorporated into the National Security Strategy in order to make it a U.S. Government requirement for interagency support



Mr. Tad D. Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health, addressed the subject of Sustainability as a path to Stability.

The Role of Engagement in Africa

Through early, active, and persistent capacity building engagement with partners on the continent, USAFRICOM will be able to address destabilizing issues and limit the occurrence or escalation of threats to U.S. interests and coalition partners in Africa. Engagement should be preventive in nature, addressing issues when they are more manageable in terms of the resources required and the immediate consequences to the affected nations and societies. Sustainability has the potential to enhance USAFRICOM’s Theater Security Cooperation Plan.

Sustainability as an Approach to Engagement and as a Protector of U.S. Interests

Sustainability in Africa is a national security issue because it relates directly to the stability of the respective nations. States that can sustain their economic growth and diversification, social development, democratic maturation, and their natural resources and service base will maintain their legitimacy and be more stable than states that have difficulty managing these same issues. Sustainability is a catalytic concept with the potential to build partnerships of NGOs, militaries, other governmental agencies, and the private sector to achieve the strategic effect of stability; it is key to protecting U.S. strategic interests in Africa. Political instability is the primary challenge to the United States in the post-Cold War strategic environment, in part because it feeds the root causes and underlying conditions of issues such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and other illegal activities that erode and degrade the human condition.

Environment and Sustainability

Sustainability recognizes the importance of a suitable balance between the long-term viability of the *environment* and the use of natural resources; the importance of *economic* development and valuation of ecosystems; and concern for *community* and related *equity* in the distribution of resources. It remains a dynamic concept and may have different meanings in different contexts. Sustainability strives to satisfy the legitimate interests of different stakeholders, not only by providing an equitable distribution of resources today, but by ensuring that these resources will be available to support future generations. The Army views sustainability through a “triple bottom line” lens (Mission-Environment-Community) that recognizes the importance of simultaneously meeting current and future mission requirements worldwide, safeguarding human health, improving quality of life, and enhancing the natural environment.



Human Security and National Security in Africa

A key feature in the strategic environment in Africa is the importance of human security relative to the traditional national

security issues that are of importance in the West and the developed world in general. Africans view their security as more closely tied to the security of individual lives in terms of the ability to address food, shelter, disease and education on a regular basis. The differences between the African and U.S. views of security are key to understanding and addressing common issues and opportunities for cooperation. Given the unique nature of the African continent, USAFRICOM will need to take a different approach to its engagement program development than the other Combatant Commands.

The Impact of Global Climate Change on Africa

Climate change is a critical issue in Africa where it is more likely to exacerbate tensions over natural resource and health issues, radical Islam, reconstruction and stabilization, and create significant legitimacy issues for weak or failing state. Swings in agricultural production, the availability of food resources and prices for commodity products on world markets will become more difficult to manage and challenge the legitimacy of democratically elected governments. Sustainability offers an opportunity for defense cooperation between regional states on significant sustainability issues of common interest. This opportunity can enhance governmental legitimacy, diminish conditions terrorists seek to exploit, reduce regional instability, and enhance U.S. access and influence.



Ambassador George E. Moose, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, was the workshop's keynote speaker.

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