

**Africa in 2020
National Intelligence Council 2020 Project
Summary of Discussion by Select Panel of US Experts
January 9, 2004**

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Introduction

The 2020 scenario exercise is designed to extend the comprehensive 2015 exercise completed by the National Intelligence Council in December 2000.¹

This paper first reviews the 2015 document and then discusses several important issues central to attempting to describe Africa in 2020. The paper is based on a day-long discussion held on January 9, 2004.²

Learning from 2015

The 2015 exercise was notable for its focus on seven global drivers (including demographics, natural resources and environment, and science and technology) and, primarily because of the nature of the publication, a relatively limited review of Africa. Generally, for a more Africa-focused analysis of 2020:

- More attention should be devoted to how the drivers identified as globally important affect specific processes in Africa. For instance, democracy, perhaps taken for granted as a general condition in most of the world, will be an important driver of change in Africa over the next twenty years.
- It should be understood that the drivers themselves may interact in complex manners, especially a decade or more from now. For instance, there almost certainly will be a vaccine for malaria and HIV/AIDS by 2020, although new diseases will also undoubtedly appear.

¹ See, National Intelligence Council, ***Global Trends 2015: A Conversation with Nongovernmental Experts*** (National Intelligence Council, 2000). Found at: http://www.cia.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2015.html

² The final version of this paper also includes written comments on an earlier draft from several of the January conference participants.

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- Greater appreciation should be demonstrated for the potential of states and other actors to affect the political processes across the continent over the next twenty years. States may exacerbate the effect of the drivers or they may moderate them. For instance, the “technology” of conflict resolution had improved in the last few years and has been on display in the recent burst of peace negotiations across the continent.
- Critically, a better understanding of how Africa will become more differentiated must be developed. Perhaps the most important trend in Africa in the forty years since independence has been the increased heterogeneity of the continent. Countries are increasingly differentiating themselves based on performance and there is some indication that regions are becoming differentiated.

The decision in the 2015 document to place considerable emphasis on demographics is certainly justifiable but demands separate attention. No one would deny the importance of demographics in Africa. Rather, the problem with focusing on this driver is that there is arguably more uncertainty about demographics in Africa than elsewhere. Eighty percent of the people in Japan who will be alive in 2020 have already been born, but only fifty percent of the Africans who will be alive in two decades are here today. In addition, there are other uncertainties in the demographic projections that are especially pertinent to Africa. For instance, whether vaccines for malaria and AIDS are developed will be enormously consequential for Africa. Similarly, Africans may be especially prone to airborne illnesses like SARS. Finally, Africa may be an especially important breeding ground for zoonoses, diseases that jump from animals to humans. The demographic driver is especially powerful when straight-line projections portray the cumulative effect of compounding growth rates but what those rates will be in Africa is uncertain. There is, for instance, so much

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uncertainty in some regions that it is not clear if we can predict with confidence even whether population growth will be positive or negative.

The 2020 Exercise

In order to see how the drivers play out in Africa, to highlight the importance of human agency, and to explore the possibility of heterogeneity, this paper will now focus on three constellations of issues that will certainly dominate much of African politics for the next twenty years: the future of economic management, the future of democracy, and the future of the state system itself.

Economic Management in Africa over the Next Twenty Years

The profound economic crisis and conditions of scarcity that affect all of Africa will be the most serious challenge faced by African leaders in the next two decades. If African leaders can manage to reverse the current decline and help their economies begin to grow again, there is at least the possibility that the myriad other challenges facing the continent can be addressed. Indeed, the possibility of economic growth prompting the drivers to begin to work in a virtuous circle should not be ignored. For instance, greater economic growth will lead to more robust government income which could lead to more expenditures on education for girls which will lead to a decline in the fertility rate (because better educated girls tend to delay the age of marriage and age when they have their first child). Similarly, an Africa that at least had the prospect of prosperity may be able to decrease the amount of deadly conflict that occurs because there may

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not be such desperation to control the state if there are other avenues to wealth. Finally, a more prosperous Africa would attract foreign investment and make it more profitable for foreign companies to increase the amount of research they do on the deadly diseases that imperil the continent.³

Economic Management in Africa

The current status of economic management in Africa can be described relatively simply. The agenda of economic reform and governance that has been developed by the Washington-based international financial institutions over the last twenty years remains, formally, the unchallenged orthodoxy in Africa. However, there is relatively little enthusiasm to promote reform in Africa and many governments do only what they have to do in order to make sure that the flow of aid—vital to the very existence of their states—continues. Few African leaders or challengers campaign on platforms of economic reform and governance, and the domestic constituencies for reform are limited. Indeed, even when reforms clearly help a particular group—as many marketing changes have aided farmers—it has been hard to mobilize that group around the reform because overall levels of social organization are low and politics in many African countries for so long has been devoted to keeping people from organizing. Further, when economic reform has been implemented, the results have often been disappointing. Whether the relatively poor performance of reform measures has been due to technical errors in implementation, lack of credibility of the instituting regime, or the simple difficulty of getting anything done in Africa

³ Currently, in the US, far more money is spent on diseases that affect pets in the United States

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is uncertain, but the continent is currently stuck with an orthodoxy that does not generate much enthusiasm.

The only notable change in the last few years has been the return of foreign investment to Africa, almost all of it related to the development of energy resources in West and Southern Africa. As offshore oil and natural gas can be developed autonomously from the rest of the economy, it is hard to see these investments as a vote of confidence in the economic management of the destination countries. Indeed, Angola, Nigeria, and Equatorial Guinea are most notable for how far their implementation of economic policy diverges from orthodoxy.

Differential government performance in implementing economic reform and governance measures will be one of the most important drivers in contributing to the growing heterogeneity of Africa. Some African countries that are not seen as very good performers today will almost certainly adopt economic reforms that will put them on a relatively high growth rate. Relatively good performers like Botswana, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, and Uganda (albeit at very different levels) probably will continue. Some countries will also do rather worse and their growth rate will slip further. The cumulative effect of these increasingly differential rates over twenty years will be stark. Africa in 2020 will increasingly resemble a patchwork quilt with different parts coexisting with each other more because of accidents of geography than similarities in economic, political, or social performance.

than afflict humans in Africa.

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Several factors will affect the likelihood of countries adopting economic reforms. First, Africans must take ownership of economic reform and governance and translate these ideas into concepts that the local population supports. Whether this is done through NEPAD or through many different national-level efforts may not matter but it remains true that, twenty years after economic reform was proposed in Africa, capitalism remains a dirty word and African leaders seem most comfortable discussing reforms in Washington. They are uncomfortable taking their record to Wall Street and largely abandon any attempt at explaining economic reform when meeting with their own citizens, even with farmers who have benefited directly from many of the reforms. Second, if successful countries begin to have a demonstration effect and embolden other leaders to implement reform, economic growth may be contagious. Relatively successful reformers such as Ghana and Uganda have not had this effect yet but if those who are economically successful begin to lead Africa, the continent may become safe for reform.

Differential performance in implementing economic reform may also lead to increasing contrasts between Africa's regions. The most plausible scenario is that Southern Africa begins to look increasingly different from the rest of Africa as the economic spillover from South Africa draws the region together and promotes growth. Southern Africa is the only region of Africa where the largest country is doing relatively well. In other areas (West Africa—Nigeria, Central Africa—Democratic Republic of the Congo (DROC), and the Horn of Africa—Ethiopia), the performance of the largest country is and will continue to be a drag on its

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region. Of course, nothing about Southern Africa's economic performance is guaranteed. South Africa, still dealing with the multiple legacies of apartheid, must increase its growth rate or be doomed to always being a sub-standard performer. It must also draw an increasing percentage of the majority black population into the formal economy. Not until Africans can look to a regular job as their source of income and save their money in banks will South Africa will be secure. The profound governance problems in Zimbabwe and Angola may continue to disrupt the region. It is also possible that East Africa, with three relatively large countries but no regional hegemon, may begin to grow again, especially if Kenya resumes a relatively high growth rate.

A Continuing Orthodoxy

Given the disappointment associated with economic reform and governance in Africa, it might be expected that the public consensus regarding economic reform governance might be challenged in the next few years. However, such a departure is unlikely. First, critically, there is no intellectual challenger to today's orthodoxy. As a result, while there are critical controversies about implementation, there is no challenger paradigm that has emerged, nor is one likely to emerge in the near future. The international aid community also remains committed to enforcing at least nominal allegiance to the current beliefs. Finally, African leaders have generally found ways of meeting their political needs, especially rewarding politically important clients, while staying within the general parameters of the economic reform program.

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While the formal economic agenda facing African countries may not change, it is possible that there will be a significant evolution in the way states view their domestic responsibilities. Those African states that are failing will increasingly try to spin-off their basic responsibilities (including education, health and security), to a variety of other actors. In some cases, such as domestic and international NGOs that have been developing increasingly impressive capabilities in service delivery, such a reallocation of responsibilities may result in some increase in overall welfare. However, states may also try to escape their basic responsibilities to provide security by allowing those who can afford it to provide their own police and paramilitary services while simply not ruling large stretches of their own country.

The Role of the International Community

An important issue affecting Africa's long-term economic health is the involvement of the international community. Western nations are unlikely to take the steps, especially agricultural trade liberalization, that would dramatically improve African economic possibilities. Nor, at the same time, will Western nations walk away from Africa, despite the fact that the return on investment of the many billions devoted to foreign aid has been exceptionally low. The internal incentives within the aid community point heavily to continual engagement as leaving Africa will only hurt these bureaucracies. It is also likely to be politically impossible for Western leaders to publicly advocate leaving Africa. The NGO community will likely only become more influential, especially in Europe, and will continue to have an important role in shaping the policy agenda in Africa. The

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success that NGOs had in getting the money saved from debt relief to be devoted to poverty reduction, instead of infrastructure development or other activities that might actually have promoted growth in African countries, shows both their power as one of the few international forces to want to be actively engaged in Africa and their problematic policy agenda.

The West may also not continue to accept arguably Africa's most successful export, its people. The new African diaspora, composed overwhelmingly of economic (as opposed to political) migrants, is the cumulative result of the brain drain affecting many African countries. However, these migrants play an important economic role in their home countries because the money they send home has become an exceptionally important export earner. In Africa's more desperate countries, remittances are the major source of foreign currency. The West, due perhaps to domestic politics and increasing security concerns, may accept fewer of these migrants in the future. At the same time, the children of the new African diaspora may be less willing to send money to a homeland that they barely know.

A perhaps dramatic departure in the international community's approach to Africa in the next twenty years will be a formal recognition of the increasing differentiation of the continent and an acknowledgment that development for some countries is simply impossible because of their ecological conditions, their location, or their long-term political circumstances. Indeed, the cumulative effect of desertification, erosion, and, potentially, global warming, may push more African countries into the category of non-viable states. Also, as Western

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countries continue to try to identify winners that they can work with (a key aspect of the Millennium Challenge Account), the problem of what to do with countries that are not going to benefit from the traditional provision of foreign aid will only become more stark. There may be a movement to put these countries into a kind of economic receivership that, while formally recognizing them as sovereign countries, allows them to receive aid that is formally meant to be sustaining rather than developmental. Such economic receiverships may become more acceptable if African failed states are perceived as sources of instability for the West or their neighbors.

The Future of the African State

The most basic responsibility of the state is to provide security. It is one of the signal aspects of the failure of so many African states that basic public safety in many countries, especially the major cities, has deteriorated over the last two decades and, in many areas, may get considerably worse in the future. The combustible elements that have caused growing insecurity are well-known: the economic desperation of millions, the absence of working police forces, the presence of large amounts of weapons, and the political grievances of whole communities. Some states might therefore look increasingly like archipelagoes: in control of the capital and a few economic resources that can feed the state but not involved, and perhaps not concerned, with providing security for the areas in-between. Such a development is possible in many African countries because

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point control of mines or other natural resources can give the state a basic revenue stream. Indeed, since taxes are so difficult to collect in poor countries, seeking to control key economic assets while disengaging from large areas that would cost much to rule is obviously a tempting strategy, no matter how disastrous it would be for the relevant populations. Further, as the international community grants sovereignty on the basis of who controls the capital rather than if a state can meet its sovereign responsibilities across its territory, the incentives are further tilted for failed states to abandon some of their own land. As politics abhors a vacuum, others who are willing to provide security—be they warlords, revolutionaries, NGOs, or traditional leaders—will inevitably step forward. The privatization of security—fueled by the desire of African citizens to purchase protection that the state cannot provide—will inevitably become more important.

Towards the Tipping Point

Once public safety begins to deteriorate, the spiral downward can accelerate quickly. Rebuilding police forces that have been starved of resources for a decade or more is exceptionally difficult and costly. Countries with oil or other natural resources that might have fungible resources that could be devoted to rebuilding security forces are probably relatively uninterested in promoting the rule of law throughout their territories. To date, the international community has also not seen fit to provide assistance to security forces within African countries at anything like the level that health and education are normally supported. Absent a fundamental change in the way the international community aids

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African police and military institutions, further deterioration in public safety is probably inevitable and catastrophic collapse of order increasingly likely.

African countries face increasingly complex networks of external and internal actors that will greatly complicate efforts at state consolidation. During the Cold War, the external environment may have been difficult but it was relatively simple to describe and many African countries navigated the global strategic competition between the superpowers with considerable success. Now, African leaders face alliances of international and domestic NGOs that may want to supplant certain state services, criminal networks that operate freely across borders, money launderers, poachers, refugees, and free agent military who may be employed by states or by rebel groups. Islamic groups bent on destabilizing the West are unlikely to try to overthrow existing African states but will also seek the havens open to them in African states that are failing for other reasons. The technologies of distributed networking—including cell phones, the internet, and private satellites—will increasingly allow networks outside the state to prosper. Some states may be able to pick-and-choose from this extraordinarily complex environment to their benefit. It is more likely that the overload that so many competing forces present will cause African states that are deteriorating to decline at an even faster rate.

The forces challenging order in any one country will be helped by the disappearance of authority in neighboring areas. Even countries that have a state that desires control over its territory and citizens will find that the political swamps caused by the failure of their neighbors make the task of governing ever

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more difficult. These anarchic areas will provide important bases of operation for the many networks that seek to disrupt other African states. Indeed, the potential negative spillover from collapsed states is one of the important forces working toward homogenization in Africa. It may not be the case that a successful state can be right next to a failed state because the “bads” (e.g. drugs, crime, refugees, and terrorists) exported by a failed territory may overwhelm those that are trying to produce “goods.” At the very least, the forces of negative spillover may mean that states can only consolidate when their region is doing relatively well and there is therefore some insulation against a neighboring state that is failing. The potential for negative spillover to disrupt the otherwise successful experiment in West Africa is especially great because that region has a large number of relatively small states, some of which will inevitably fail.

The tipping point at which states go from the normal chaos associated with most of Africa to state failure is a difficult one to identify. The presence of competing networks to the state and increasingly weak security institutions may move the tipping point closer to the status quo as African citizens, businessmen, and foreign investors find it increasingly easy to do business with those who compete with the state. At the same time, the international community, as demonstrated most dramatically by the Millennium Challenge Account, is increasingly devoted to helping African successes but does not know what to do with those countries that are failing. Finally, highly trained African citizens can move out of failing states and, as the African in-migration to South Africa

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demonstrates, toward countries that are doing relatively well. As a result, the rate of state failure in Africa probably will increase over the next twenty years.

Democratization

At the same time, democratization will continue to be a driving force in Africa. It is stunning just how quickly democracy has come to monopolize the political marketplace in Africa. Two decades ago, there were still some principled arguments in favor of one-party rule and authoritarian leaders, either military or civilian, ruled much of the continent. Today, almost all African countries have had multiparty elections, albeit of dramatically varying qualities, and there is no one making the argument that African countries cannot become democratic. While the substance of democracy (e.g. quality of elections, viability of basic democratic institutions, such as courts and legislatures) in Africa may be low on average (albeit variable), there is now a strong African norm against elected regimes being overthrown. Over the next twenty years, it is highly unlikely that democracy will be challenged as the norm in Africa. Indeed, the average level of democratic quality will probably increase, although the substance will again remain highly variable. As with the conventional wisdom regarding economic reform, it is unlikely that there will be a competitor to democracy. The international community will also continue to support democratic reforms in Africa. Finally, there is a strong demand for democracy from many within Africa. Indeed, a new generation of leaders can clearly be identified in Africa, many emerging from the private sector, who are much more comfortable with

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democracy than their predecessors and who may be counted upon to provide a strong internal dynamic for democracy in the future.

Again, there will be important differences in how individual African countries implement democracy. Now that the elections are held routinely almost everywhere on the continent, attention will turn to whether some states are able to build local institutions, especially parliaments, courts, and sub-national administrations, to begin the task of every-day implementation of democracy. This will be dependent on political will, national circumstances, and the ability of leaders to translate abstract (and, to date, western) notions of democracies into concepts that are appealing to national populations. Most democratic experiments in the West failed repeatedly before countries came up with an institutional mix that worked well for their particular circumstances. There is no reason not to expect such halting progress on democracy from African countries.

One possible predictor of how well democracy will be consolidated in a given country is the success that the new political institutions allow in fighting corruption. As the Moi regime in Kenya clearly demonstrated, it is not inevitable that the adoption of the form of multiparty elections inevitably causes even a small decline in corruption. However, democracy's stress on public accountability could be used by other regimes in other countries to significantly reduce corruption. Such a gambit would earn the new political system great legitimacy and probably make an authoritarian reversal very difficult.

Again, there may be regional variations in the implementation of democracy. South Africa is already a democratic success while its economic

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prospects are more cloudy. It can therefore be expected to have a relatively strong effect on its region, except for oil-rich Angola. East Africa's immediate democratic trajectory is positive, although all three countries have an enormous amount of work to do. Democratic progress is much less likely in Central, West, and Northeastern Africa. Of course, there is some reason to believe that economic reform and political progress may go together in the very long term. Ghana is such an example, but Uganda demonstrates that considerable economic progress can be made without recourse to multiparty elections. Even Botswana, Africa's star economic performer, has not yet had the signal moment of democracy: the defeat of an incumbent in an election and succession by his opponent.

The presence of forces promoting state failure and forces promoting democracy do not contradict each other. Both are a reaction to the authoritarianism of the first thirty years of African independence and the weakness of African institutions. In some cases, the competitors to the African state will be controlled and, especially with regard to NGOs, harnessed in ways that may actually promote the state. Functioning courts and police systems will capture criminals and convince others that they cannot prosper illegally. At the same time, in other places, the networks threatening the state will overwhelm it and the very absence of effective authority will attract even more networks that challenge legitimate central authority.

The African State System and the International Community

The most prominent development in Africa since the end of the Cold War has been the lessening of importance of the great powers and the increasing willingness of Africans to act in a strategic manner to promote their own interests. Sometimes, this has been for the good, as when African countries have led or contributed significantly to peacekeeping efforts in neighboring countries. At other times, African initiatives have fueled conflict, as in DROC, where the armies from many different countries at one time competed for influence and treasure. There is sometimes a rhythm to war and peace in Africa with spasms of violence followed by relatively intense periods of conflict management. Currently, some of the conflicts that have been particularly pernicious are ending either because of outright military victory (Angola), successful negotiations (Sudan), or international intervention (Sierra Leone). However, given perilous economic circumstances, fantastic flows of small arms, and weak political institutions, it is probably inevitable that combat will break out again.

Technologies for war and peace have increased in Africa. Fighters can access weapons relatively easily and civilian platforms (such as the Somali technicals) can be converted for battle relatively quickly. Cell phone networks aid rebel movements as much as they help humanitarian agencies. There is also no doubt that there has been a certain amount of learning in Africa about how to resolve conflicts. One scenario, which almost certainly will come true in parts, is that Africa will experience increasingly severe bouts of conflict followed by

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equally intense episodes of peacemaking. This seesaw movement may be expected given the potential for warfare in Africa but it is not a promising future. The amount of damage that even relatively short periods of combat do to a country is severe, not only in civilians killed and buildings destroyed but also in the number of capable people who flee, criminal networks who are invited in, and investors who are dissuaded from investing. A fundamental goal of African countries must therefore be to prevent conflict from developing as, again, the tipping point where collapse is a possibility is always close.

Maps of Power

The African state system will remain relatively constant over the next twenty years. That is, the vast majority of the states currently portrayed on the map will remain. There will be some changes: an independent Somaliland and Southern Sudan are real possibilities and it is quite possible that Nigeria and DROC will fragment. However, the map of Africa will still be easily recognizable in twenty years. As noted above, the real changes will be in how power is actually deployed on the ground. Mapping how real power is exercised will be increasingly complicated.

One of the problems that the international community will have to face is how to understand violent challengers to existing states. As the great ideological conflicts that once undergird international relations have now collapsed, revolutionaries no longer march into battle with manifestos. Yet, there may well be some rebels who are acting on real grievances and who want to overthrow the existing state to better the commonweal. Other rebels, of course, will have much

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more parochial goals, including enriching themselves. At present, the international community has largely abandoned the language of victory in combat. Even with regard to the UNITA rebels in Angola, the international community was unwilling to say that Savimbi's movement should be defeated outright, even while imposing international sanctions to achieve that end. Elsewhere, NGOs, who increasingly dominate discussions of war, simply call for the laws of war to be obeyed even though such groups as the RUF in Sierra Leone or the LRA in Uganda should undoubtedly be defeated outright. The increasing volatility of the pace of conflict in Africa will make it impossible for the international community not to try to pick more winners during African combat although this exercise will undoubtedly be fraught with difficulty.

Alternatives to Sovereignty

There may be a few cases where African countries have reverted to some kind of international trusteeship. This will be, by and large, due to humanitarian collapse. The international community will generally be unwilling to undertake this kind of "new colonialism" and the Africans will also chafe. It is likely that only small countries that can be governed by the international community relatively cheaply will be taken over, and then only for limited amounts of time. Likewise, the international community will undoubtedly favor authoritarian leaders who can quickly impose some semblance of order over chaos that might, after a long and difficult process, lead to more legitimate rule. There will be no comprehensive response to the failure of large countries. At the same time, the international community in no case will be able to stay away from a failed state for very long,

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irrespective of any evidence that further international intervention is doing any good. The international community will generally be tempted to try to fix failed states but not with initiatives that are well resourced enough or sustained to actually rebuild fundamental institutions.

Africa's Strategic Value

Africa's importance to the international community will not change dramatically on a continental basis. Terrorism will not be a reason for the international community to engage comprehensively in Africa. Terrorists can probably be combated more directly by quick strokes of military intervention. Oil and natural gas exports will increase from Africa dramatically over the next twenty years, but this will lead to less engagement than is commonly thought. The offshore nature of natural resource production and the extremely limited ties to the rest of the economy make production largely immune to most political developments. For instance, exploration and production continued in Angola during the long civil war. It is also the case that no single African country has so much oil that it will matter greatly to the international economy, although the cumulative effect of a large number of oil producers coming on-line will be important in lessening the world's dependence on the Persian Gulf.

It is not so much that the world will not care about Africa as the questions that Africa poses will become ever more different than the issues the rest of the world faces. Already, conferences of leaders in most of the developing world focus on economic growth and how to participate in the international economy. African leaders are still fixated, as they should be, on the problems of order and

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of ending large-scale violence in many parts of the continent. Africans also still do not view as legitimate many of the economic strategies commonly embraced by other poor countries to develop. Indeed, NEPAD can be read as an attempt to finally legitimize the “Washington consensus” by putting those reforms in more palatable terms. As there seems to be little chance of a fundamental change in state consolidation across Africa, in twenty years countries south of the Sahara will not only be more differentiated but also, as a group, increasingly different from the rest of the developing world. That will make it much more difficult for the West to continue to engage in Africa.

Those African countries that are successful will, of course, attract Western attention. If only small countries are successful, the West can develop ties on a bilateral basis without affecting the relatively low level of international engagement with the continent. Botswana or Ghana or Uganda becoming increasingly integrated with the international community will be a great boon to those countries but will not affect how the world views Africa. However, if one of Africa’s big countries (Nigeria, DROC, Ethiopia) were to somehow takeoff, international perceptions and engagement with Africa would become more comprehensive. Alternatively, and perhaps more plausibly, if an entire region were to begin to develop, international attention to that part of Africa, and perhaps the entire continent, would change. Again, the most probable region for increased international engagement is Southern Africa, although a resurgent East Africa is certainly plausible.

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Conclusion

There are no foregone conclusions in Africa. No state is hopeless and none, certainly, are preordained for success. The overall conclusion from a review of these complex trends is that Africa will become more differentiated. It will be ever-harder for African countries to succeed but the rewards for success will be significant in terms of investment and engagement in the international economy. It will be ever-easier for African countries to fail, given the number of challengers to the state, the difficulty of promoting economic growth, and prospects for violence. The number of African countries that spin past the “tipping point” and become failed states will increase.

As Secretary Rumsfeld has noted, there are things that we know that we do not know and other things that we don't know that we don't know. There will be “wildcards” that affect Africa dramatically in the next twenty years that we cannot predict now. Drastic ecological change, traumatic international conflict, the development of technologies that replace African exports, and many other scenarios could affect some African countries by 2020. The easiest prediction to make at the present time is that most of the wildcards will affect Africa negatively. It is very hard to imagine wildcards that would, by themselves, push African countries on to a more positive trajectory. If nothing else, the oil bonanza that several African countries have wasted shows that even the discovery of enormous wealth does not necessarily help a country and can, in fact, impoverish it. On the other hand, traumatic change can push already weakened African countries past the tipping point relatively quickly. Thus, most of the

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uncertainty surrounding Africa over the next twenty years concerns how bad things could possibly get.

However, the ultimate wildcard for African countries is leadership. Good leadership, even in desperate circumstances, can make a huge difference. Neither Ghana nor Uganda was destined to experience sharp declines after independence and neither could be guaranteed recovery in the 1980s and 1990s. Both trajectories were due to complex factors, but good and bad leadership certainly played an important role. Those African countries that have, by dint of good luck or other factors, good leadership that is able to promote order, institutions, and conflict resolution have a chance at progressing. Those that have poor leadership will find it ever harder not to fail.