28 July 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

FROM: Jonathan Fredrickson

SUBJECT: Summary of Symposium on “*African Leadership Development”*

On 18 July 2014, the symposium on *“African Leadership Development,”* hosted by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) brought together diverse representatives from the military, US government, NGOs, and academic community with the intent of discussing important trends, challenges and potential solutions in Africa’s developing leadership environment.

During the morning discussion, which was moderated by LTC Craig Myatt, Ph.D., the panelists explored the subject of African Leadership from a number of unique perspectives. Touching on the role of the African Diaspora, native intelligence communities, business, and others, the panelists presented a very cohesive and thorough picture of the changes necessary to combat the crisis of weak leadership on the continent.

**MORNING KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Dr. Raymond Gilpin, the Academic Dean at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, opened the conference by discussing some of the challenges on the African continent for the United States and its local partners. He opened by describing Africa as “a story of progress and challenges.” For those who did not know, he briefly outlined the recent history of the continent and explained how the global opinion on African economic prosperity flipped from doubt to hope between 2000-2013. The cause, as he told us, came from “fewer civil wars, greater participation in democracy, and sustained growth.”

He continued to discuss the avenues for further growth by highlighting the role of natural resources and the potential to utilize them in order to “push itself over the cusp and into real, permanent change.” Although he did not know what facts, on the ground, would be necessary to push Africa, as a whole, over this cusp, Dr. Gilpin was confident that the economic revolution was close.

**Keynote Q&A**

**Q1: What is the role of patronage in African countries and how is it a threat the real growth**?

**A1:** Patronage has its roots in the post-colonial era. Immediately after independence, African rulers saw the need to cement support and curry loyalty from certain segments of society. This need led to the creation of closely held groups in the manufacturing and industrial sectors, which would support them politically and economically in return for contracts. Today, these economic strangleholds bar the emergence of new actors and industries.

**Q2: What are contemporary examples of capacity utilization that you want utilized**?

**A2:** One of the most prominent examples can be seen in USAID. They focus on supporting local and sustainable solutions. Part of this interest shows that the right conversations are happening inter-government.

**Q3: If companies refuse to develop fair contracts, should the home nations further regulate them?**

**A3:** No, there are enough regulations on the books. Even attempts at bringing transparency don’t expose corruption. We need Africans, themselves, to raise the clamor that outsiders do over corruption and unfair contracts.

**Main Discussion**

Starting our discussion was Col.Thomas Dempsey, an Assistant Professor and Academic Chair for Security Studies at the Africa Center for Security Studies, who focused his presentation on the strength found in the African people. Although, he admitted, the idea was a cliché at this point, he lauded the “ICT revolution is giving countless people access to the world in ways that has never happened beforehand.” Through this digital access, the world can influence the African people and, by extension, the growing youth bulge.

Although the U.S. already tries to influence Africa through technology, institutions, and leadership, more effort needs to be exerted on the “main street” in order to push leadership reform. In Col. Dempsey’s opinion, the definition of leadership is one who “has the ability to develop vision and strategy, identify key players and develop consensus, and the capability to establish and environment that fosters predictability, equality, and opportunity.” In order to establish the foundation for such a leader, based on his definition, to arise, the paradigm needs to be shifted away from the threat-centric outlook and emphasis placed on an ethic of public service and respect for rule of law.

Following Col. Dempsey, Dr. Ferreira da Silva took the stage and opened with an analysis of the language that is typically applied to African leaders. Unlike the rest of the world, the term “bad” is often used, whereas European leaders never get such a blunt description. In Dr. Ferreira da Silva’s opinion, leaders should only be judged on their ability to make the best possible choice among many, which serve the best interests of the country and not his own. Rather than empowering civil-society, the international community should focus their energy and resources on reforming the policy-makers and the institutions, which produce national leadership.

His primary suggestions, to the representatives of the African Diaspora, were to endorse the promotion of good professionals over the below-average ones. Great leadership comes from those who climb the ladder; it cannot be developed in the moment. In addition to promoting those who merit it, existing intra-societal relationships need to be nurtured further. In particular, the local-political relationships in the intelligence field are strategic.

This focus on the intelligence field defined the remainder of his presentation. In his words, “The best information is always at the local level and nurturing that local cooperation creates a healthier and more informed leadership.” Healthier leadership also informs and encourages greater levels of trust. On that note, he ended.

After Dr. Ferreira, Mr. Michel Dzaringa, founder and Executive Director of Africa United/Congo United presented to the conference. His experiences in Central Africa helped him develop his opinion on leadership, which is simply that leadership is for the people. Without this sense of humanity and one’s history, it is impossible to lead effectively.

On leaders, themselves, Michel was emphatic about the support that the US can implement in developing healthy leadership at the national level. He cited the ethos of then-Senator Barack Obama when he stated the National Democratic Convention that “It is fundamental that I am my brother and my sister’s keeper.” This theme of familial and communal relations is stronger than any economic or political program and the US, as well as the Diaspora, has the influence to make this a priority.

Changing the tone of the conversation, Gambino Guerengomba took the stage with his presentation on the role of the international business community and the free market economy in cultivating the necessary leadership for Africa as a whole. The role of the international business community in this new, developing paradigm is to help revise and reinstitute the societal frameworks.

Yet, when he calls on the international community, he does not mean to insinuate that it is the responsibility of the United States. Instead, this task falls on the African Diaspora. Utilizing the strength of the Diaspora with local talent can create a pool of potential that has the possibility of transforming the continent. Mr. Guerengomba is quick to note, however, that every country is different and these societal frameworks “cannot be applied in a cookie-cutter style.”

Ending the long list of panelist was Semhar Araia, Founder and Director of the Diaspora African Women’s Network (DAWN). Given her roots in civil society, she was an adamant proponent of the role of public service in cultivating strong local leadership. As she stated, “leadership has its roots in both loyalty to the people and transparency to the system.” Without one of these traits, the other cannot exist.

There are countless challenges that face Africa today, which all stem from the lack of solid leadership. According to Ms. Araia, they are systemic bureaucratic corruption, intra and international conflict, and repression of civil society. The last one, civil society repression, is the most worrisome in her mind as they are “agents of societal change”. Yet, despite these challenges, there are also many opportunities for the future that can be utilized to bring the change that is needed.

The central opportunity that she highlighted was a focus on the growing youth bulge within Africa and the pool of increasingly talented individuals that will be developed over the next 30 years. As globalization continues unabated, this youth bulge will become more attuned to technology, information, and knowledge. This combination has the power to revolutionize the post-colonial governmental frameworks into something far greater.

To tackle these opportunities, there were several recommendations that were necessary. Firstly, the power of the African Diaspora had to be developed and implemented effectively, which requires greater networking throughout the world. Secondly, the U.S. and the international community must continue to invest in capacity building throughout Africa. Lastly, both African governments and the US must work together and develop the infrastructure that will facilitate an explosion in the “knowledge economy”, which will only foster greater societal participation from the incoming youth bulge. Ending her segment, she emphasized, summarizing the spirit of the entire conference, that “everyone deserves an equal chance.”

**Q&A**

1. **Ghana is headed towards economic crisis and what can institutions do to aid good governance?**

**A**: (Araia) Ghana is in need of a paradigm shift, one that emphasizes collaboration. The role of civil society can be groundbreaking in this regard and the development of West Africa is evidence of that.

**A**: (Da Silva) Institutions can both be agents of change and agents of stagnation. Case in point: Portugal has been institutionally stagnant for nearly 500 years. Many institutions that were established during the imperial era have remained in their respective forms since their creation.

1. **What is the role of technology in fostering leadership?**

**A**: (Guerengomba) Leaders need to be mindful of the fact that innovation has a direct correlation to prosperity and that Africa has the potential to be a driver of technology sales and market creation. If the rights factors are managed well, Africa can see a real revolution within our lifetime.