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Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

13 May 1984

AFRICA: Prospects for the OAU

Summary

The death of President Toure of Guinea and the subsequent military coup in that country have clouded the already uncertain outlook for the OAU by reopening the potentially divisive issues of the timing and venue of the organization's next summit and the choice of its next chairman. Toure was to have hosted the annual OAU summit this month and thus to have become the organization's chairman for the coming year.

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We believe an attempt to hold a summit in the fall is likely, probably at the OAU's permanent headquarters in Addis Ababa. Wherever the summit is held, OAU members will probably replace the current chairman, Ethiopian leader Mengistu. If a moderate, pro-Western African leader is selected, that would invite Libyan opposition and further divisions within the organization. If the OAU chooses as chairman a more independent man with broader acceptability--such as Tanzania's Nyerere, Zimbabwe's Mugabe, or Zambia's Kaunda--he would try to lead the organization along a nonaligned course. Any of these

This memorandum was requested by Frederick L. Wattering, Director, African Affairs, National Security Council. It was prepared by the Regional Issues Branch, Africa Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Questions and comments are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA,

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three would give high priority to southern African issues and would not hesitate to criticize US policies, although we believe that Kaunda would be more susceptible to US influence than Nyerere or Mugabe. [REDACTED]

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US interests in Africa would not be served if the summit is cancelled this year, which would result in Mengistu staying on as the OAU chairman. During Mengistu's term, the organization has made little serious effort to resolve the Western Sahara and Chad disputes and has ignored Libyan adventurism. In a worst case scenario, the organization could split formally into rival moderate and radical groups, leading to further polarization in Africa and encouraging increased Libyan and Soviet meddling. [REDACTED]

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The OAU: Problems and Discord

The death of Guinean President Toure in April and the subsequent military coup in Guinea have muddled the already uncertain outlook for the OAU by reopening the potentially divisive issues of who should next lead the organization and the timing and venue of the next OAU summit. Toure was to have hosted a summit in Conakry this month and to have become the next OAU chairman. [REDACTED]

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We believe Toure's death has left the moderate, pro-Western OAU states in disarray, giving the more radical states more room for maneuver.* Toure was a forceful personality and had stature as an elder statesman in Africa. He led the moderate group that blocked Libyan leader Qadhafi from becoming OAU chairman two years ago. We believe few pro-Western African leaders are as willing as Toure was to stand up to Qadhafi and the more radical states. [REDACTED]

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*Although the terms "moderate" and "radical" are commonly used to describe the split in the OAU, few African countries fall rigidly into one camp or the other. Most African leaders are pragmatic and decide what position to take on issues on a case by case basis. Zambian President Kaunda, for example, has supported the United States on southern African matters but is allied with Algeria and the "radicals" on the Western Sahara question. [REDACTED]

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The rift between the moderates and the radicals has been widened in recent years by deep divisions over the Western Sahara dispute and Chad. Two attempts to achieve a quorum for a summit in Tripoli in 1982 failed because of Qadhafi's heavy-handed favoritism toward the Polisario Front and his antipathy for Chadian leader Habre. The Western Sahara controversy delayed and nearly prevented the summit last year in Addis Ababa until a compromise enabled a quorum to be reached and Ethiopian leader Mengistu to become chairman. [redacted]

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We believe the OAU's disarray has been exacerbated by eroding African confidence in the organization's leadership. Many heads of state have virtually given up on Mengistu's ability to promote reconciliation among Chad's rival factions, according to US Embassy reporting. Moreover, dealing with seemingly intractable pan-African politics is a time-consuming distraction from the domestic concerns that take priority for almost all African leaders. [redacted]

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Choosing a Chairman

The OAU's pressing need to agree on a summit site and a chairman is complicated by the lack of specific rules governing the process. The choice is normally made by consensus after informal negotiations and without any voting. The host of a OAU summit usually becomes chairman until the next annual summit, but there have been a number of exceptions:

- Kenyan President Moi served a two-year term as chairman (1981-83) because of the failure to reach a quorum at Tripoli in 1982.
- When Liberian President Tolbert was killed in 1980 during a military coup while he was serving as OAU chairman, Senegalese President Senghor was chosen to fill out the remainder of Tolbert's term rather than Tolbert's successor, Head of State Doe.
- Several summits have been held at the OAU's permanent headquarters in Addis Ababa, with an OAU chairman being chosen from among the organization's members. [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

The chairmanship formerly was a much-sought-after plum owing to the prestige attached to hosting the summit and to speaking for Africa, but in recent years few African leaders have been eager to assume the role. The duties of the OAU chairman are now viewed as costly extravagances by African leaders, almost all of whom are facing serious economic difficulties. Reporting from US Embassies in Africa indicates that there is some sentiment for holding all future summits in Addis Ababa to reduce their cost. In that case, we assume the chairmanship would continue to rotate among the various member states. [REDACTED]

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Controversial Issues

The Western Sahara dispute is the OAU's most contentious problem. The controversy was aggravated by a decision at a Council of Ministers meeting in 1982 by then OAU Secretary General Kodjo, a Togolese, to seat the self-proclaimed government of the Polisario Front, the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR), as the organization's 51st member. Although a majority of the other 50 African states have granted recognition to the SDAR, Morocco and its allies were able to prevent seating of the SDAR at the abortive meeting in Tripoli in 1982 by mustering enough opposition to block a quorum of the two-thirds of the OAU membership that is needed to convene a summit. The 1983 meeting in Addis Ababa proceeded only after the Polisario Front's supporters backed down and persuaded the SDAR to withdraw voluntarily. [REDACTED]

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Reporting from US Embassies in Africa indicates that Morocco's tough stand against negotiating a solution to the Western Sahara dispute is costing Rabat support in the OAU and could threaten its ability to continue blocking the seating of the SDAR. Last year's summit in Addis Ababa passed a resolution that called for direct negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario, a ceasefire and referendum under UN and OAU auspices on self-determination in the disputed territory, and a peacekeeping force provided by the UN and the OAU. The Algerians, in our view, might be willing to avoid another crisis over the issue of seating the SDAR by inducing their Polisario client to stay away from a summit. [REDACTED]

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Chad is another divisive issue. The OAU has gone through the motions of trying to promote a settlement since French intervention last summer led to a military stalemate. An OAU reconciliation conference on Chad in January in Addis Ababa collapsed over procedural matters because of Mengistu's bias against Chadian President Habre. We do not expect the question of Chad to cause a major rift at the next OAU summit, however, because most members want to avoid splitting the organization over the issue. [REDACTED]

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The African states are also divided over the question of relations

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with Israel and the Middle East. During the 1970s, when many impoverished African nations were seeking to curry favor with Arab oil producers, denunciations of Israel were standard OAU fare. Now, Zaire and Liberia have restored diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv, and some other black African states, according to US Embassies in Africa, are disillusioned over the paucity of Arab economic aid. In our view, many Africans are coming to regard as a one way street the old arrangement under which they supported the Arab cause in the Middle East in return for Arab support against South Africa. The summit meeting in Addis Ababa last year did not pass a resolution denouncing Israel, and we do not expect Middle Eastern issues to play a significant role at the next OAU summit. [redacted]

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Even such traditionally unifying issues within the OAU as southern Africa, however, are becoming divisive. African leaders still unanimously condemn South Africa's racial policies and support the goal of liberating South Africa and Namibia, but they vary widely in their attitudes toward the security agreements that Mozambique and Angola have recently concluded with South Africa, [redacted]. There are significant differences even among southern Africa's Frontline States [redacted]

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Summit Options: Where, When, and Who

OAU members are maneuvering behind the scenes to influence the choice of the next chairman and the time and place of the next summit. Although the new leaders in Guinea have expressed a willingness to host the meeting, their recent statements suggest that they would prefer a change in venue. In our view, the most likely time for a summit will be sometime after September; by then, members will have had time to lay out plans and current Chairman Mengistu will not be distracted by preparations for the 10th anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution on 12 September. [redacted]

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We believe that an attempt to hold a summit in Addis Ababa this fall is most likely but that an African leader other than Mengistu will probably be selected as the next chairman. There is no precedent for a chairman gaining the endorsement of a summit for a second consecutive term. Moreover, the US Embassy in Addis Ababa believes Mengistu is eager to unburden himself of the chairmanship. In addition, many African states are disappointed with Mengistu's performance as chairman--particularly by his failure last fall to address the UN General Assembly on behalf of Africa and his more recent decision to visit the Soviet Union instead of attending Toure's funeral. [redacted]

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Although Libya and some other radical states might try to prolong

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Mengistu's tenure as chairman by delaying a summit for as long as possible, we doubt that Qadhafi will renew his own bid for the chairmanship. Qadhafi remains in disfavor among many OAU members because of his intemperate performances at the abortive meetings in Tripoli in 1982 and his walkout from the summit in Addis Ababa last year. We believe that Qadhafi realizes it would still be difficult for him to get a quorum and would want to avoid further humiliation. [redacted]

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The leaders of Gabon and Togo are being promoted by some moderate West and Central African states as candidates for the OAU chairmanship.

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[redacted] US Embassy reporting indicates that Bongo and Ivorian President Houphouet Boigny are urging Togolese President Eyadema to declare his candidacy. Gabon might be an attractive alternative because it is stable and prosperous and could take on the burden of hosting a summit more easily than most other states in the region. President Bongo, however, is reluctant to become involved in disputes between moderate and radical OAU states that might invite Libyan interference. The US Embassy in Lome believes Eyadema would be willing to serve as host and chairman but doubts he would lead a campaign to do so; Togo has the facilities to host a summit. [redacted]

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Other African leaders are seriously considering the leaders of Tanzania and Zimbabwe for the OAU chairmanship as compromise choices that would be acceptable to both moderates and radicals, [redacted]

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[redacted] Nyerere, Mugabe, and possibly also Kaunda have the stature to play such a role, even though serious economic problems would probably prevent them from holding the OAU summit in their own countries. Nyerere and Kaunda helped mediate between the radicals and moderates to assure a quorum at the summit in 1983. They were also considered as possible candidates for the chairmanship then, according to the US Embassy in Addis Ababa. [redacted]

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Outlook and Implications for the United States

US interests in Africa would not be served if the summit is cancelled this year, which would result in Mengistu staying on indefinitely as OAU chairman. In our view, Mengistu's favoritism toward the Polisario and anti-Habre Chadians would continue to undermine the ability of the OAU to contribute to a solution in the Western Sahara and Chad. Moreover, the OAU under Mengistu would continue to turn a blind eye to Libyan adventurism. [redacted]

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Despite the OAU's problems, we expect a majority of the organization's members will try to hold a summit later this year. Most Africans still view the OAU--for all its faults--as a symbol of the continent's interests and aspirations. Probably all of its members want

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to see the organization survive as at least a potentially useful forum for settling disputes and for articulating collective African positions on issues. [REDACTED]

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While Eyadema or Bongo as OAU chairman would share US political, economic, and security concerns for the continent, their strong pro-Western orientation would invite active Libyan opposition and further divisions within the OAU. We doubt that much real progress on the Western Sahara and Chad would be possible under their leadership. According to US Embassy reporting, both Eyadema and Bongo fear Libyan subversion against their own countries and might prove more accommodating to Qadhafi than would serve US interests. [REDACTED]

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The prospect of Mugabe, Nyerere, or Kaunda as OAU chairman would also be a mixed blessing for the United States. On the positive side, any of the three would increase OAU unity and effectiveness simply by being more acceptable to a broad consensus of OAU members than the others discussed above. In addition, none of them is beholden to Qadhafi. On the other hand, none of the three would be hesitant to speak out critically about US African policies, although we believe Kaunda would be more susceptible to US influence than Mugabe or Nyerere. As OAU chairman, any of the three probably would try to steer the organization along a nonaligned course. Mugabe, Nyerere, or Kaunda probably would also give lower priority to the Western Sahara and Chad and higher priority to southern African issues. [REDACTED]

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In a worst case scenario, the OAU could split formally into rival moderate and radical groups. The resulting polarization in Africa and the absence of a single forum for dealing with African problems would give further encouragement to Qadhafi's and Moscow's meddling on the continent. [REDACTED]

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