

Developing national security strategies in the African context

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Perception is strong and sight weak. In strategy it is important to see distant things as if they were close and to take a distanced view of close things.

– Miyamoto Musashi

Introduction

African nations face an increasing need to develop national security strategies to deal with the wide array of challenges resulting from rapidly changing strategic environments.

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After the end of the colonial era, African nations began dealing with security issues independently of European politics in which the nation's interests were subservient to those of the colonial powers. However, for most African nations this new independent focus was distorted by Cold War politics, during which the global protagonists wooed client states. Again, the national interests were often subordinated to external Cold War interests.

Now that the Cold War has ended, African nations are freer than ever to pursue their national interests without direct interference. But indirect forces can just as severely impact on the protection of those interests. Those forces at present include globalisation, the US 'war on terror', disease and climate change.

The challenge for African nations is now to articulate coherent national security strategies in the face of significant and evolving external forces. There is much that African nations can learn from the efforts of Western nations to develop such strategies. But at the same time consideration must be given to the unique circumstances on the African continent. Increasingly, attention is being focused on the need for coherent strategies in Africa (Koetje 1999; Hough 2006).

The purpose of this paper is to advance the discussion of this issue by describing generally American approaches to the development of national security strategies in the context of unique African circumstances.

General considerations

Several considerations must be kept in mind when discussing national security strategy. First, it is necessary to understand that the development of national security strategy and its terminology, methodology and purpose are rapidly evolving subjects upon which there is no universal agreement. The methodology is best understood as an analytical framework that can be used to advance a nation's security interests, and not as an immutable truth.

Second, national security strategy is not military strategy. Military strategy deals with only one element of a national security strategy, namely the use of military power to achieve strategic objectives. Other strategies, including economic and diplomatic strategies, are at least as important and often more important in achieving strategic objectives than military strategy.¹

Third, traditional national security strategy has focused on external threats to national security. This approach does not serve the African continent where frequently the greatest threat to national security comes from within. Even with Western nations, including the

US, this approach is becoming increasingly problematic as a result of the development of threats from non-state actors such as drug cartels and terrorist organisations which frequently operate both within and outside the nation. Furthermore, this approach can result in the failure to properly assess the importance of economic power in the achievement of national security objectives. Accordingly this paper will proceed on the assumption that an effective national security strategy for many African nations should deal with both internal and external threats to national interests.

Finally, it is important to recognise that the approaches to national security development discussed in this paper are primarily American approaches, although they are often based on the work of European or Asian theorists such as Carl von Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, Martin van Creveld and Basil Liddell Hart. They were also developed and applied in the context of a Western liberal democracy with well developed institutions, widespread acceptance of the legitimacy of the government, and a strong unified national identity. Because these conditions do not exist in all African nations, it should be recognised that, in the application of the approaches discussed in this paper, they must be adapted to the unique circumstances of each nation.

National interests

National security strategy flows from national security policy. That policy is developed to advance and protect national interests. So the first step is to identify national interests, and therein lies the first level of complexity in our analysis.

A discussion of national interests is based on the assumption that the primary organising principle underlying global affairs is the concept of the 'nation state'; in other words, the world is largely organised as a group of geographically defined political units, possessed of government and sovereignty, with fixed borders and a national identity. It was not always the case. For millennia Africa's organising principle was based on a variety of complex social and political structures that bear little resemblance to the modern nation state (Berman 1998). European and Asian empires were states operating under the notion that borders need not be fixed, but could be continually expanded to bring within the empire's ambit new peoples and territory.

Since the end of the Cold War the nation state concept as an organising principle has been challenged on a variety of fronts. First, there are a number of instances where the state imploded and although borders were maintained, there was no effective government. Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Somalia are some of the most recent examples.

Second, nation states at their creation often contained the seeds of their own destruction. Disparate tribal, religious, political or cultural units were often incorporated into a single

state and the tensions that had historically existed between these groups continued to exist. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia may be the most prominent examples of recent collapses, but the African continent is rife with intertribal conflict that challenges states.

Third, so-called non-state actors increasingly operate outside the control of any single state and threaten the ordered existence of some states. The most notable threats come from international drug cartels and terrorists. But there are other more benign actors that nevertheless impact on world order in new ways. For example, the rise of the multinational corporation, the Internet, world financial markets, the evolving role of the United Nations and other international bodies, and the myriad impacts of globalisation all pose challenges to the notion of discrete sovereign entities operating and controlling activity within their own borders.

Finally, the 'clash of civilisations' described by Samuel P Huntington in his 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs* may pose the most serious threat to nation state organisational principles. Huntington's hypothesis is that the principal conflicts in the future will not be based on ideological or economic grounds, but between nations and groups of civilisations. He identifies the primary civilisations at issue as Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilisation (Huntington 1993). The article has stirred much debate and his hypothesis is currently being tested in the laboratory of southwest and central Asia in states such as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran.

Why is this discussion of changing threats to the nation state important in the analysis of national interests? There are several reasons for this. First, Western national security strategy traditionally focused on conflict and interrelationships between nations, that is, 'balance of power' strategies. The first and second world wars, the Korean War and the Cold War dominated the 20th century and were conflicts between nation states. The current environment is more complex.

Second, historically 'national interest' was a term of art associated with interests in the international arena. National interests were contrasted with 'public interests' which focused on the internal interests of the nation. This tendency to analyse national interest in the context of a strategic environment dominated by threats primarily from other nation states does not satisfactorily acknowledge the current strategic environment in Africa and elsewhere.

In particular, this approach is increasingly problematic in the context of modern conflict which is dominated by civil wars, insurgencies and conflicts involving non-state actors. Just in terms of numbers, most current conflicts are civil wars, and this is particularly true in Africa (Nobel Foundation 2001). Adding an additional degree of complexity to these internal conflicts are civil wars which frequently attract international

participation, as has occurred in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sudan and Mozambique.

Accordingly, for purposes of this paper 'national interests' are defined as 'a nation's perceived needs and aspirations as they relate to both international and domestic matters'. This approach takes into account that what happens domestically inevitably impacts on the international situation and vice versa. Costly foreign wars can undermine the economic foundation that underlies the domestic society, thereby affecting both internal and external interests.

How are national interests divined? Generally, they are based on the fundamental values of the nation – those values that are typically enshrined in the core documents establishing the nation. They frequently reflect the unique history and culture of the nation and give a sense of national purpose. A common theme among many African constitutions is the recognition that a history of racial, ethnic, religious and other internal strife has fostered national unity as a key national value.² Also, many African constitutions contain an expressed value in developing national unity while at the same time accommodating diversity within the culture.³

It is important to also recognise that national values can conflict with each other. For example, the South African constitution recognises the value of cultural and religious practices but establishes the principle that they may not be exercised in contravention of the Bill of Rights.⁴

National values often reflect deeply held societal values. For example, Western nations consider individual freedom to be especially important while African nations frequently place communal welfare ahead of individual prerogatives. Islamic societies tend to place greater emphasis on the role of religion in all aspects of everyday life than do Western societies. Sometimes these societal values come into conflict with national values and threaten the nation, as is evident in some secular Islamic countries where clashes are occurring between religious and political leadership.

With a clear understanding of national values in mind it is then possible to begin articulating national interests that are consistent with, or flow out of, those values. For example, from the foregoing discussions of national values the conclusion might be drawn that 'national unity' is a national interest of some African states, whereas it is a given for most long-established Western democracies. But that appears to be changing as immigration issues come to the fore and concerns are voiced regarding the impact of large groups of non-natives on the security, economy and culture of the host country.

Certainly, one national interest shared by virtually every nation is that of defence of the homeland. The current US security strategy states unequivocally that 'defending

our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government' (National Security Strategy 2002). A second universal interest is economic well-being. Beyond that, the interests of nations may vary greatly. In the case of the US, Donald Neuchterlein (1985:8) postulates that in addition to the two foregoing interests, the US has two other enduring interests – a favourable world order and the promotion of American values.

A cursory review of the chapter headings of the current US national security strategy reveals how each strategic aim supports one or more of the four overriding interests:

- Overview of America's international strategy
- Champion aspirations for human dignity
- Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against the US and its friends
- Work with others to defuse regional conflicts
- Prevent US enemies from threatening the US, its allies, and its friends with weapons of mass destruction
- Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade
- Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy
- Develop agendas for cooperative action with the other main centres of global power
- Transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century (US Office of the Press Secretary 2006)

The four broadly stated interests are perhaps best described as categories in which more specific interests might be grouped. For example, economic well-being might well include such specific interests as free and open access to ports and other transportation facilities, a region free of internal conflict, food and energy self-sufficiency and sustainable resource development.

Next, no nation, no matter how wealthy, has the resources to fully protect and advance all national interests. In recognition of this fact national interests are commonly categorised in order of importance to facilitate allocation of resources and effort. Hans Morgenthau (1962:191) postulated vital and secondary interests – the first being those interests for

which it is worth going to war and the second those interests in which compromise is a possibility. Donald Nuechterlein (1979:76) describes four levels:

... (1) survival interests, where the very existence of the nation is in peril; (2) vital interests, where probably serious harm to the security and well-being of the nation will result if strong measures, including military ones, are not taken by the government within a short period of time; (3) major interests, where potential serious harm could come to the nation if no action is taken to counter an unfavorable trend abroad; and (4) peripheral (minor) interests, where little if any harm to the entire nation will result if a 'wait and see' policy is adopted.

In sum, it is important to understand that not every threat to a nation's interests deserves a military response, that allocation of resources should be prioritised to match the importance of the interest, and that the urgency of the response varies with the interest involved.

Strategic appraisal

Once national interests have been identified, described and prioritised, the next step in the development of national security strategy is to conduct an appraisal of the international and domestic environments. Developments in those environments can either pose threats or present opportunities for the protection and advancement of national interests. The strategic appraisal process is critical to the success or failure of the ultimate strategy. Consider the erroneous conclusions drawn by the US and others regarding a strategic environment which supposedly included Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, and the ultimate consequences that flowed from that (Davidson 2004).

The strategic appraisal process is especially challenging because of the nature of the strategic environment. That environment has been described as volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (Department of Command, Leadership and Management 2004:12).

Volatility refers to the rate of change in the situation at hand. Volatility has increased as technology has speeded the pace at which information is conveyed. We no longer have to wait weeks for delivery and response to messages – they now occur virtually instantaneously for all participants.

Uncertainty flows from a variety of factors, including insufficient or faulty intelligence, disinformation and deception, conflicting data, and the inability to predict the effect that today's changes will have on events of tomorrow.

Complexity results from the myriad factors that can have a bearing on the eventual outcome and the difficulty of identifying those factors that will eventually be definitive. It also results from the difficulty of identifying second, third and fourth order effects of strategic actions.

Ambiguity exists when the meaning of events can be interpreted in more than one way. For example, Saddam Hussein's refusal to permit UN inspection was interpreted by some as an indication that he was hiding weapons of mass destruction and by others that he was hiding his lack of weapons of mass destruction, so as not to embolden Iran (Kessler 2007:155).

The appraisal process identifies those forces and trends in the strategic environment that present either threats to, or opportunities for, national interests. Elements of the strategic environment should be described in a manner that analyses and explains their impact on national interests. So, for example, let us assume that a national security interest is a 'secure and sustainable food supply'. One trend that might threaten that security interest is desertification,⁵ which may threaten the interest in a variety of ways. Obviously the loss of arable land is one way. It may also increase migration of farmers and pastoralists to urban areas, which will mean that fewer food producers have to produce food for more consumers. Desertification also often results in greater erosion, causing siltation of rivers and streams and making areas more prone to floods. Internal migration of peoples displaced by desertification increases the likelihood that conflict will develop among groups competing for an ever shrinking land base. A similar analysis of other factors that might affect this interest, including ballooning populations, disease, climate change, land tenure practices and capital shortages, must likewise be undertaken.

Such analyses help political leaders to assess the level of threat that a particular trend or force may pose to a national interest and provide a rational basis for allocating scarce funds to address myriad threats or opportunities.

National security policy

It is the duty of political leaders to establish policies that will protect and secure national interests. Although there are many definitions of the term, for purposes of this article 'policy' is defined as 'a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcome(s) ... Policy differs from rules or law. While law can compel or prohibit behaviors (eg a law requiring the payment of taxes on income) policy merely guides actions toward those that are most likely to achieve a desired outcome' (Wikipedia 2008). Policies are courses of action that are designed to protect and advance national interests. They are generally broadly stated courses of action that can inform the development of national

strategies. Policy can be found in the speeches of political leaders, agency websites and other political pronouncements.

Certainly an important part of the strategic assessment for African nations is to analyse the stated policies of other nations directed towards Africa. The current US administration has articulated a series of policies that some African nations may identify as either threats to or opportunities for advancing their national interests. For example, the policy aimed at fighting infectious disease in other countries provides opportunity to African nations.⁶ Similarly, the US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act is an indication of a US policy towards Africa that could also provide opportunities for growing African nations.⁷

In contrast, the establishment of the US African Command (AFRICOM) has raised substantial concerns among many African nations about its possible impact on their own security situations (see, for example, *Defense News* 2007 and *US Policy World* 2007). Although it may be well intended from a US Department of Defense point of view, a variety of questions have been raised by African leaders and others about its wisdom. The national interests of African nations may very well be at odds with those of nations from outside the continent seeking to interact with them. Understanding which external policies are consistent or inconsistent with the interests of one's own country is an important part of the strategic assessment.

The distinction between national security policy and national security strategy is not always clear. As the specificity of national security policies increase, they tend to resemble national security strategies. In some respects the difference between the two is not so much one of kind but one of degree.

National security strategy

National security strategy may be defined as 'the art and science of using all the elements of national power during peace and war to secure national interests' (Yarger & Barber 1987). It describes the ways in which national power are used to obtain identified objectives. The development of national security strategy is guided and influenced by a 'strategic vision', which is derived from, supports and influences national security strategy. It is the articulation of an overarching end state by national leadership that will encapsulate all that the national security strategy is intended to achieve. It is not developed by the leadership in a vacuum. Rather, it is the result of an ongoing dialogue between senior leaders and at all levels of government. It takes into consideration national values and the will of the people, and is shaped by an assessment of the strategic environment.

Consider this strategic vision expressed by President George W Bush during a speech at the West Point Military Academy on 1 June 2002:

Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace – a peace that favors liberty. We will defend the peace against the threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.

The wisdom of this vision has been widely debated, but whether one agrees with it or not, there can be no question that it gives broad guidance for the development of one aspect of US national security strategy. Further, consider how such statements guide strategies used to advance the US interest in establishing a favourable world order. What do they say about the importance of alliances? About unilateral intervention? About preferences for military action? About support for democratic elections? How could the strategic vision be altered to provide different general guidance regarding US efforts to achieve a favourable world order?

In this regard also consider the strategic vision of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865, expressed in his inaugural address near the end of the American Civil War that had deeply divided the country:

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

The fact that nations use their power to protect and advance their interests begs the question from what sources a nation derives its power? In this context, national power consists of both physical/natural determinants and social determinants. For example, with regard to physical determinants, Egypt has power by virtue of the fact that the Suez Canal runs through it. Persian Gulf states have power because they control large oil reserves. Countries with large populations relative to other countries in the vicinity, like Nigeria, have resultant national power. Countries with good maritime ports have power. However, none of these physical/natural determinants are necessarily conclusive, for they must be considered in conjunction with the social determinants of power.

The military forces of a nation are one such social determinant. The amount of military power possessed by a nation is related to many factors, other than simply size and equipment. Levels of training, operational experience, esprit de corps, ability to operate as a coalition member, willingness of military forces to subordinate themselves to civil authorities, and degree of support by the civilian populace all affect the ultimate level of military power.

A military force without the underlying economic power and will of the people to sustain it during a protracted engagement may ultimately be of little value. Furthermore, maximising military power may render the achievement of objectives related to the economic interests of a nation impossible. It is important to recognise that a nation's powers are not static. For example, once military forces are committed to a conflict, the military power of a nation may decrease because of limited abilities to use already committed forces in additional conflicts. Clearly the commitment of US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan has restricted the military options available to deal with issues involving Iran and North Korea.

It is also important to recognise that until military power is actually used, as a practical matter a nation possesses the amount of military power that other nations perceive it to have. Once the military power is used the perceptions of other nations will be adjusted to account for actual performance. Questions one could ask in this regard include, for example, what was the perception of US military power before the Iraq war? Did it change with the fall of Baghdad? Has it changed since then?

Diplomatic power, another social determinant, is the ability of national leadership to influence actions of other nations. A nation's diplomatic power is based not only on the quality and effectiveness of its diplomats, but on the underlying characteristics of the nation that give it credibility and influence in the diplomatic sphere. Nations with widely perceived legitimate governments, significant economic and military power, and a record of responsible international dealings have greater diplomatic power.

Political power, a third social determinant, is the ability of the nation's leadership to influence its own people and effectively use the elements of national power to achieve its objectives. Certainly the form of government will affect this ability, with different types having their own strengths and weaknesses. Democracies can be effective mechanisms for developing strategies that have broad national support and that ensure that the relative importance of competing interests are considered in decision making, but the process to do so can be much more difficult to manage, simply because the development of the strategy involves many voices. Authoritarian governments have the advantage of efficiency in developing a strategy, but often at the expense of the full consideration of all issues that take place in a broad debate. Political power is also directly related to the degree of legitimacy that the government has in the eyes of its citizens, and will in addition be determined by the strength, honesty and capabilities of the organs comprising the government.

Certainly for many Western democracies the socio/psychological power of its people may be the most important social determinant in the ultimate pursuit by the nation of its national interests. The will and character of the Russian people in World War II helped them through a dire situation. Conversely, the loss of public support for the US war

in Vietnam was without question the major reason for eventual US troop withdrawals (Krylov 2007; Morgenthau & Thompson 1985). The socio/psychological power of the American people may yet determine the ultimate outcome of the Iraq war. Perhaps no better examples of the importance of socio/psychological power are the struggles for independence on the African continent.

There are many facets to this power, being composed as it is of the broad characteristics of the population that enable a nation to achieve its objectives. High levels of education, belief in the legitimacy of the political system, honesty and lack of corruption, healthiness, ability to persevere, national unity, industriousness, and adaptability to change are but a few of the characteristics that strengthen a nation's socio/psychological power.

Power also has an information/communication element and its importance is increasing rapidly.⁸ The Internet, satellite television, 24-hour news organisations, and ubiquitous cell phones have all been a powerful force for globalisation. This power of communication has been one of the major tools for the protagonists in the war on terror and powerful images of bombings, beheadings, torture and assassination are used by all sides to advance their cause. This power can be used to reach into formerly closed societies to alter perceptions and influence government action.

The powers of a nation cannot be analysed in a vacuum. They are interrelated (for example political power influences the ability to exercise military power); they are dynamic (for example internal unrest can reduce political power); and they are contextual (for instance a regional military power may be an insignificant force in the international terrain).

With the foregoing in mind it becomes possible to articulate with some specificity why particular African nations have much power and others have little. More importantly, it makes clear that power is not static and when preparing national security strategies, states should consider how their actions and external forces may change national powers.

The use of power is the means by which nations seek to protect and advance their national interests. Therefore the next step in the strategic planning process is to identify strategic objectives that will protect and advance important national interests. Once those objectives have been identified and a strategic appraisal has been conducted, courses of action using elements of national power to achieve them can be developed and analysed.

Consider as an example the issue of port access in Africa. As a general rule landlocked countries are at an economic disadvantage because they lack direct access to means of maritime trade. Fifteen African nations are in this situation and only Europe has more, namely 16. However, Europe has an extensive river, canal, highway and rail system that has greatly mitigated the problem on that continent. The region most similar to Africa is central Asia where the landlocked countries of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan face perhaps even greater challenges with regard to port access. One of the national interests that might be categorised under the broad national economic interests of landlocked nations might be 'free and direct access to maritime port facilities'. Interests are best expressed as a desired end state.

Once a nation articulates its strategic objectives, it proceeds to an appraisal of the strategic environment. A host of factors would be examined, such as the state of existing highway, river and rail infrastructure; international agreements in the region that have a bearing on port access; identification and analysis of physically feasible ports; the political situation in each nation with potential port facilities; identification of nearby nations in a similar situation that might be interested in a common effort; and identification of the economic interests that will benefit most from access.

Potential courses of action are next identified, described and analysed. Each course of action should be evaluated in terms of its suitability, for example whether or not it would achieve the desired end; feasibility, or whether or not the resources are available to accomplish it; acceptability, that is, whether or not the consequences or collateral effects of carrying out the course of action are acceptable; and the risk of failure and its consequences. After conducting such an evaluation one or more of the most appropriate courses of action are selected.

Courses of action will utilise one or more elements of national power. For example, one course of action might be to use a combination of diplomatic and economic power to secure port access through a regional trade organisation. Courses of action through the use of military power when subjected to this analysis are frequently eliminated because of the risk of failure or unacceptable collateral consequences regardless of whether the action succeeds.

It is also necessary to analyse potential second and third order effects of chosen courses of action. That is, an original action will have an effect and this effect can in turn become a cause resulting in another effect. That effect can become another effect, causing a third order effect. That third order effect may not be consistent with the original objective (Miller 2006:36). It is possible to argue, for instance, that a third order effect of the US loss of the war in Vietnam was the collapse of the Soviet Union. The reasoning would be that the US experience in Vietnam caused many military leaders to resolve that they would 'never again' countenance such a war. A variety of military reforms were undertaken to ensure that a repeat situation would not be possible – creation of an all-volunteer military force, integration of active and reserve forces, joint operation doctrine development, and a host of other reforms. On the political front, a demoralised US was ripe for the entrance of a charismatic politician – Ronald Reagan – who campaigned on a 'morning in America' theme emphasising a 'prouder, stronger, better' nation. He succeeded in changing the mood of America, leading to a US military build-up that

the Soviet Union simply could not match. Many may disagree with this analysis, but the point is that it can be very difficult to predict the ultimate effects of a major policy action.

In the contemporary context, what might be the second, third and fourth order effects of a US loss in Iraq? Or of a US victory? How the events may eventually play out is extraordinarily difficult to predict, but certainly they must be considered.

Setting the stage for development of African national security strategies

The methodology for the development of national security strategies is relatively straight forward, but the complexity of its execution could be rather daunting. However, a well thought out strategy offers so many advantages that it is worth the effort. The following are some points to consider.

In 1986 the US congress passed legislation requiring the administration to periodically submit to Congress a report setting out the strategic objectives for the country. As a result, each president since that time has issued one or more security strategy reports. The report is a public document, available to all, for several reasons. First, the nation as a whole needs to understand the agreed-upon approach to national security. Second, it helps reduce the chance that other nations will misread US intent with regard to security strategy. Third, it provides guidance to all arms of government, which helps to ensure that their plans are consistent with the unified national approach to security. Although there may be individual components of the security strategy that are classified, the major thrust is available to all.

Security strategy has traditionally been the domain of the military arm of government in many countries. However, if the strategy sets forth how all elements of national power will be used to attain the desired objectives, clearly many state organs need to be involved in its crafting. Furthermore, no individual, no matter how powerful, will be able to effectively mobilise all the elements of national power to achieve strategic ends. The overall security strategy will then allow different ministries or agencies to develop a pyramid structure to fit their strategic plans to the national security strategy. The natural tendency of most bureaucracies is to create 'stovepipe' type planning operations, in which only those within their agency participate. However, effective national security strategy planning requires breaking down these barriers so that interagency cooperation is possible. Strategic planning, interagency cooperation and consensus building are learned skills and those engaged in the planning process need to acquire these skills before they can progress through what is at best a difficult process. Seminars, joint agency exercises and instruction courses at universities are some of the tools available to develop these

skills. Agencies often create formal cooperative relationships through memorandums of understanding. Trained facilitators and dispute resolution experts may be used when difficult issues arise between agencies. Consensus is especially important with regard to strategic planning. Unless a broad consensus is achieved among both the general public and the institutions that must implement it, the viability of the strategy over the long term will be at risk.

Strategic planning needs to incorporate both a top-down and a bottom-up process. Sufficient planning guidance needs to be communicated from senior levels so that lower level strategists and planners can know in general what is expected of them. They can then begin to develop a variety of strategic options for consideration by senior executives. This loop is iterative, with frequent communication between senior and lower levels. The initial guidance from senior leaders is expressed as strategic vision.

Strategy is both proactive and reactive. Strategy is designed to proactively shape the strategic environment through execution of selected courses of action. On the other hand, it must also be flexible enough to react to external events. Its development is a dynamic process because threats and opportunities are constantly changing and strategy must change and evolve in response.

Conclusions

The myriad issues facing African leaders can seem overwhelming, but there are organising strategies that can help to create order out of chaos. These analytical frameworks are a means of dealing with information overload. At the same time, leaders should bear in mind they are just frameworks and cannot be used to create 'cookbook' solutions. Rather, properly used, they allow for an ordered dialogue about the great issues facing us. Furthermore, those analytical frameworks are not ends in themselves, but serve as the basis for the development of a plan of action that must be implemented, evaluated and adjusted as conditions change.

Notes

- 1 At the inception of the Cold War George Kennan, US Deputy Chief of Mission, analysed the Soviet threat and in his 1946 'long telegram' and subsequent 1947 article in *Foreign Affairs* recommended measures to counter the threat. Available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm> [accessed 24 April 2008] and discussed at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Sources_of_Soviet_Conduct [accessed 30 March 2008]. Kennan described a variety of measures to counter the threat, including public education, improving the economy and diplomatic measures. He was silent on the use of military force. Also, the ancient Chinese strategist Sun Tzu ([1963]:77–78) wrote that 'to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill ... Next best is to disrupt his alliances ... Next best is to attack his army.'

- 2 See for example article 7 of the Angolan Constitution: 'Economic, social and cultural solidarity between all regions of the Republic of Angola shall be promoted and intensified, with a view to the common development of the Angolan nation as a whole'; chapter 6, section 5, of the Ghanaian Constitution: 'The State shall actively promote the integration of the peoples of Ghana and prohibit discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of place of origin, circumstances of birth, ethnic origin, gender or religion, creed or other beliefs'; and the preamble to the South African Constitution: 'We, the people of South Africa ... Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.'
- 3 See for example article 6, section 1, of the Eritrean Constitution: 'As the people and government struggle to establish a united and developed Eritrea, they shall be guided by the principle of unity in diversity'; and the preamble to the Senegalese Constitution: 'The sovereign people of Senegal ... proclaim ... the inviolable principle of national territorial integrity and national unity with due respect for the cultural specificity of all the components of the nation.'
- 4 (1) Persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community –
 - (a) to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language; and
 - (b) to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society.
 (2) The rights in subsection (1) may not be exercised in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights.'
- 5 Two thirds of Africa is desert or drylands subject to desertification. Approximately three fourths of African agricultural drylands are already degraded to some degree (UN 2003).
- 6 'The Bush Administration is committed to advancing the global fight against HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, malaria and other major infectious diseases. The Administration's goal is to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/Aids, the scourge of malaria and other major diseases that afflict humanity' (US Agency for International Development 2003).
- 7 On 13 July 2004 President Bush stated 'In just four years, the African Growth and Opportunity Act has shown the power of free markets to improve the lives of people in both the United States and Africa. By reducing barriers to trade, this law has increased export, created jobs, and expanded opportunity for Africans and Americans alike. It has given American businesses greater confidence to invest in Africa, and encouraged African nations to reform their economies and governments to take advantage of the opportunities that AGOA provides. So today I'm pleased to build on that success and extend the law's benefits long into the future by signing the AGOA Acceleration Act of 2004' (US Office of the Press Secretary 2004).
- 8 In the American military context the analysis and application of this power is referred to as information operations and it has been formally embodied in doctrine (see for example US Joint Chiefs of Staff 1998). Within the US intelligence community the term 'information warfare' refers to the use of information and information technologies to influence the outcomes of conflicts (Jordan, Taylor & Mazarr 1999:168). For a more general discussion see Lamb 2004.

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