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### **The U.S. POLICY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA DURING BARACK OBAMA PRESIDENCY**

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Until recently, Sub-Saharan Africa has remained on the periphery of U.S. foreign policy, especially after the end of the “cold war”, disintegration of the socialist camp and the collapse of the USSR. However, during Barack Obama presidency (January 2009-January 2017), the role of this region in America’s policy essentially increased.

From January 2009 to summer of 2016, President Obama made four visits to Sub-Saharan Africa. He visited Ghana in 2009, Senegal and Tanzania in 2013, Kenya and Ethiopia in 2015. In Ethiopia, he was the first American president to speak at the headquarters of the African Union. In 2012, B. Obama’s administration issued a strategy on Sub-Saharan Africa [11]. In August 2014, the first U.S. – Africa summit took place in Washington. It was participated by the leaders of 51 African states. During this summit, the first U.S. – Africa Business Forum was held. In August 2015, Gabon and the United States co-hosted another Forum on Trade and Economic Cooperation. The focus on Africa was one of the main differences of 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy from the previous documents. One of its chapters, entitled “Investing in the future of Africa”, underlined growing strategic importance of the continent for America [6, 26 – 27].

Increasing U.S. interest to the Sub-Saharan Africa was caused by three main reasons. First of all, the essential transformations at the continent since the beginning of the 21st century have led to dynamic economic growth of some Sub-Saharan African nations. Political analysts often used the term “emerging Africa”, acknowledging the significant changes, which created new economic opportunities

in Africa for the world. For example, in 2014, six of ten countries of the world with the fastest rates of growth were Sub-Saharan African ones. According to International Monetary Fund forecasts in 2015, during the next decade their economic growth (about 6 percent annually) would continue, and the average growth rates in the region would exceed others [10].

It was important that Africa's economic growth was accompanied by improving living standards of population, and by the increase in the number of the middle class as a potential consumer of American export, both goods and services. According to the African Development Bank report, the number of the middle class in Africa increased in 2000-2010 by 60 percent [4].

The most important moving forces of the Sub-Saharan African nations' economic development were foreign direct investments (FDI) into natural resources, especially energy. However, the economic growth of some African countries depended not only on the extraction of raw materials and high prices for them, but also on the development of other industries such as food processing, garment manufacturing, mobile communications, et cetera. Essential changes occurred in the governmental systems of many countries, resulting in improved conditions for doing business. Another important strategy to promote African nations' growth was regional integration that created larger markets, reduced costs for business operations, and attracted foreign investors.

The second reason of increased American interest to the Sub-Saharan Africa was other foreign nations' activity in the region and a renewal competition between them for economic opportunities and political influence at the continent. As a result, the term "a new scramble for Africa" appeared by analogy with the competition between great powers in Africa in the late 19 – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, though without imperialist component of that period.

Leadership in the development of economic relations with African nations belonged to China. Between 2002 and 2011, China's import from Africa increased by 700%. In 2009, it became the main trading partner of African nations, and took the lead over the United States. China signed much more bilateral agreements with

African countries on promoting investments than the U.S., and had much more commercial attaches in the countries [4]. Besides China, other important players in Africa were Brazil, India and Russia. Iran and Turkey were penetrating into the continent as well.

The U.S. recognized that economic relations with these powers provided African nations with better opportunities for trade, production and development of human resources, and contributed to their progress. At the same time, Washington was concerned about the powers' strengthening political influence on African nations, including the models of their development. The U.S. emphasized the importance of democracy as a system of governance as well as a struggle against corruption, and condemned investments in the states with heavy violations of human rights. It advocated necessity of "responsible investments" to protect labors' rights and the environment, including various forms of wild life. In this context, the U.S. criticized China's economic policy in Africa. Such kind of criticism sounded in the President Barack Obama's speech at the headquarters of the African Union in June 2015 [8].

Thirdly, the U.S. policy in Africa was greatly influenced by the foreign policy concepts, proposed by the first Barack Obama administration, including the emphasis on economic diplomacy, promotion of development and partnership with various countries of the world to jointly address transnational threats. According to the 2010 National Security Strategy of the United States, the rebuilding of the U.S. economy was closely linked to balancing of global demand and accelerating investments into development that could level inequality of global development and expand markets. Promotion of economic growth in developing countries could help them to make a greater contribution to the international economic system, and to create more customers, and simultaneously more opportunities for American businesses [5, 33 – 34].

According to 2012 U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa, the principal American interests in the region included: ensuring security of the United States, its citizens, allies and partners; assistance to democratic states to be economically

viable and strong partners of the U.S. on the world arena; expanding opportunities for American trade and investments; preventing conflicts and mass atrocities; and promoting sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. The strategy determined four key policy areas, crucial for Africa's future – strengthening democratic institutions, supporting economic growth and development of African nations through trade and investment, improving security, promoting opportunities and development [11, 1 – 2].

In 2009-2016, the U.S. offered developing countries, including African ones, numerous initiatives in the field of development, and the programs for their implementation. One of key components of a new concept of “development” was America's support of small businesses and development of local communities' opportunities in enterprising [13].

Many programs in the field of development were designed especially for Sub-Saharan Africa. The most important of them were: a large-scale program on providing electricity to the region (Power Africa), including the “green” energy [1]; the initiative of young African leaders' development (Young African Leaders Initiative) [7], and the program of growth and opportunities promotion in Africa (The African Growth and Opportunity Act, AGOA) [10]. The latter, launched in 2000 and prolonged in 2015 for 10 years, enabled duty-free and quota unlimited trade (almost 98% of African participating nations' total exports to the USA) that created a necessary framework for the development of bilateral trade and investment in the region.

In general, in the field of foreign aid the U.S. offered the Sub-Saharan African nations a new model to replace previous “donor-client” relationship with a more equal economic partnership between governments and private sectors of both sides. The new approaches included transition from aid to investments into local, national and sub-regional projects to stimulate internal resources of partner nations, and focus on sustainable long-term strategies (contrary to short-term plans). Among the most important directions of the U.S. “development diplomacy” was

strengthening of developing nations' governments' political will for reforms, transparency and good economic management.

The biggest challenge for the implementation of U.S. policy in Sub-Saharan Africa was heterogeneity of the vast region, which included 49 countries with population of more than 1 billion people. For the goals of American foreign policy it was divided into three sub-regions – Sahel, Great Lakes area and the rest of the continent with different policy priorities. It was very difficult to combine economic, security and humanitarian purposes in the sub-regions because of significant differences between them. It was only the third sub-region, which was the most stable and demonstrated economic progress, where the United States implemented economic diplomacy, and promoted democracy and good governance.

In the Sahel sub-region – from Mauritania to Sudan – the states with the weakest state-control and poorest economies were located. They posed a threat to the U.S. national security as “quiet havens” for terrorists. The radical Islamist group Boko Haram's activity in Nigeria not only undermined economic opportunities in this most populated country of Africa, but also spread to neighboring states. In this regard, the USA continued to consider the sub-region mainly in the context of security policy. During Barack Obama presidency, it expanded military cooperation with the Sahel states' governments and welcomed a revival of France's military and political role in the sub-region. Promotion of economic growth and democratic governance played a secondary role in U.S. policy there. However, economic development of some sub-regional nations and their neighboring states to the south was rather successful [12].

In the Great Lakes sub-region Washington implemented mainly humanitarian policy. The U.S. was unable to make an essential progress in putting an end to the armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and other countries, but they contributed the most to peace-keeping operations in the sub-region. The basic U.S. approach consisted in a support of African military personnel, serving in the peace-making forces of the African Union and the United Nations in Africa by training, funding and supplying ammunitions [2].

In general, the U.S. remained uncertain about the future path of Sub-Saharan African nations' development [3]. Though it seemed logical for the U.S. to limit oneself to collaboration with successful African nations, the National Security Strategy of the United States of 2015 recognized that ignoring of weak states would not be a successful policy because wars and prolonged crises might have a trans-boundary effect. The states with wars or acting terrorist organizations on their territories threaten both successful nations of the continent and the national security of the United States [6, 26 – 27].

While evaluating Barack Obama administrations' policy in Sub-Saharan Africa, both conservative and liberal U.S. researchers agree that they announced much more than they did, the U.S. program was not ambitious enough, and its implementation was too slow. Besides, they believed that there was an asymmetry between desirable goals and limited American interests in this region. They suggested that the next America's president, whoever he might be, would have to take much more decisions on Africa than Barack Obama [9; 12].

To sum, during Barack Obama presidency the United States noticeably increased its attention to sub-Saharan Africa that was caused by the rapid economic growth of vanguard regional nations, an increasing competition for economic opportunities in Africa and new U.S. foreign policy concepts. However, it recognized that situation in Sub-Saharan Africa was characterized not only with economic opportunities. On a larger part of the region, it continued to be complex because of existence of weak states, terrorist groups' activities, prolonged armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. Vast territories and population, and heterogeneity of the "black Africa" as well as uncertain paths of the regional nations' development determined different priorities of U.S. policy in various sub-regions of the continent and significantly complicated its implementation.

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