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Validity Study of NIE-83:

Conditions and Trends in Tropical Africa,

published 30 December 1953

1. We believe that developments in Tropical Africa have generally supported the estimates set forth in NIE-83, which was the first National Intelligence Estimate on the area. There was a tendency to underestimate the speed with which political consciousness would develop and nationalist movements would gain momentum in some territories. Thus, the predictions concerning the ability of the colonial powers to maintain control over their Tropical African dependencies, while correctly identifying the forces at work and valid for the period between NIE-83 and the present, now require some restatement and modification. Similar miscalculations of the rate of growth of African discontent and aspirations also affected the short-term validity of the regional estimates on French West Africa, the French Cameroons, and Uganda. However, the regional estimates in general had a high degree of validity.

2. Two aspects of the estimate were not developed in sufficient detail. While we noted that Western colonial policies in Africa might become a touchstone of relations between the Arab-Asian states and the West, we failed to forecast the role which the Arab-Asian states have rapidly come to play in African affairs. In addition, certain estimates were made concerning the foreign policies which would be pursued by African colonial territories once they had become independent, but we did not call attention to the incentives to irredentism and expansionism which are likely to influence future relations among the African states themselves.

3. With the exceptions noted above, we believe that our estimates were an accurate forecast of trends in the area. Despite the modifications of detail which are inevitable after a lapse of three years, the analysis of political, racial, economic, and social problems remains fundamentally correct. Moreover, although we did not forecast a more active Soviet policy, we did point out the opportunities which the area presented to the USSR.

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