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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

1 JUL 1980

OAU: The Annual Summit Meeting

*About half of the 50 African heads of state are expected to attend the annual meeting of the Organization of African Unity, which will convene from 1 to 4 July in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The radical-moderate cleavage in the organization is likely to be re-opened by the possible entry of the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic as a member state. Other serious issues--the termination of white domination in South Africa, the independence of Namibia, and the restoration of peace in Chad--are less likely to cause contention.*

[redacted]

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Algeria has been lobbying heavily among OAU countries on behalf of its proteges in the Saharan Democratic Republic, which is now recognized by 23 African countries. A simple majority of 26 is normally needed for admission, but some of the 23 may not approve giving it OAU membership.

[redacted]

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Algeria and the Republic are playing up the decolonization aspects of the issue and asserting that enough time has been spent trying to find a solution. Morocco, on the other hand, has been pushing legalistic arguments. These include the definition of a state as an entity in effective control of its territory and past OAU actions that Morocco interprets as requiring a two-thirds majority.

[redacted]

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Morocco is threatening to pull out of the OAU if the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic is admitted. The Moroccans walked out of the summit last year after the OAU declared that Rabat had administrative control but not sovereignty over Western Sahara. The Republic cannot be recognized as a liberation movement because it already proclaimed its independence as a separate state in 1976.

[redacted]

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The Saharans have assured themselves a hearing by submitting a formal application to the Secretary General. Consideration of new members normally occurs early in the session, so there is a good chance that this summit will get off to an acrimonious start. [redacted]

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Most observers feel that no consensus will develop in favor of admission this year--the OAU almost never takes a vote. [redacted]

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[redacted] OAU summits are highly political and totally unexpected swings of opinion can occur. [redacted]

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Other Issues

The seating of the delegation from Liberia is also in question. Liberian head of state Doe was excluded from the special OAU economic summit, although Foreign Minister Matthews attended the presummit meeting of the Council of Ministers. A committee of West African presidents met with Doe last Friday in Monrovia and apparently will make the decision on Liberia just before the meeting in Freetown. [redacted]

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The termination of white domination in South Africa and the independence of Namibia have been given top billing on the agenda out of respect for the OAU's long-term commitment to African self-government. The African Liberation Committee--the OAU's agent in these matters--concedes that basic change in South Africa is not a realistic short-term goal, but the African leaders want to record their continuing concern. [redacted]

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An international oil embargo of South Africa will be proposed with provisions to care for African states that suffer in the process. Another proposal for a boycott of airlines serving South Africa has been referred back for further study. [redacted]

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The OAU almost certainly will reiterate its support of the South-West Africa People's Organization as the only authentic representative of the Namibian people. It also is likely to call for increased support for South African liberation movements. [redacted]

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The OAU may be ready to turn over to the UN the problem of restoring peace in Chad. The special OAU economic summit in April reportedly agreed that the OAU would try for another three months to find an African settlement for Chad--the intense fighting in Ndjamena since mid-March has aborted plans for an African peace-keeping force. [redacted]

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If necessary, the UN Security Council would be approached to organize and finance a contingent to separate the rival Chadian factions and enforce a cease-fire. The summit may reaffirm this approach; there appears to be no plan at present to try to arrange settlement talks. [redacted]

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There are no indications that the OAU plans any new effort to mediate the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia. There has been no progress on creating an African Defense Force, although the military committee has held several meetings and the agreement in principle to do this is still valid. [redacted]

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Middle East issues, which nearly dominated the summit in 1979, may be less controversial this year. OAU members have by now established a record of accepting Egypt's right to take its own positions and of endorsing the Palestinians' desire to have their own state. [redacted]

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A major initiative--the adoption of an African Charter of Human Rights--set in motion last year will not be ready for debate. A human rights committee which met in Banjul, The Gambia, earlier this month to review the draft adjourned without finishing its work. [redacted]

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The committee ran into heated ideological disputes over the proper balance between individual and "people's" rights and into delaying tactics by Libyan-led hardliners. A followup meeting is tentatively set for after the summit. [redacted]

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Leadership

Given the lack of amenities in Freetown, attendance by 25 or so heads of state would represent a good turnout. Acting chairman Leopold Senghor of Senegal, filling in for the late Liberian President Tolbert, will preside at the opening of the summit and then turn the chairmanship over to the host president, Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone, who will hold office for the next year. [redacted]

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Stevens is old and cautious and is not likely to be an aggressive leader. He has already introduced a new proposal, however, which is creating considerable interest. It calls for creating a political security council--modeled on the UN Security Council--to serve as a permanent body available on short notice to handle African crises. [redacted]

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