

Africa and the World

Scribed by Erin Eckerd

The April 28 meeting of the Foreign Policy Association (FPA) of Harrisburg featured a panel of three speakers addressing the broad topic of Africa and the World. Two of the speakers, Lt. Col. Reda Chaib of Morocco and Col. Charles Dalo Nengite of Nigeria currently are studying at the United States Army War College in Carlisle as part of the prestigious International Fellows Program. The third panelist was Dr. Clem Gilpin, immediate past president of the FPA. Gilpin is a retired member of the faculty at Penn State Harrisburg, who taught among other subjects contemporary Africa and geography of international affairs. He also served in the U.S. Peace Corps in Nigeria. Gilpin was both panel moderator and speaker, facilitating an engaging discussion about Africa's growing role on the world stage.

In his presentation, Lt. Col. Chaib noted that Africa was home to one billion people, that it was rich in natural resources and contained some of the world's fastest economically developing countries. However, Africa still faces problems with its colonial past. Border disputes are common as people place more allegiance to their tribe than to their country. In addition to the post-colonial struggles, Chaib cited issues stemming from separation and terrorism which he said can be traced to the Cold War in which external governments sought African allies by offering money, weapons and diplomatic recognition. Governing of African nations also is made difficult through large numbers of political parties, the need for an updated infrastructure, and excessive military influence. Chaib concluded by commenting on the foreign interests and their roles to play on the African continent, as Europe, China, Russia, and the United States all vie to improve their own positions and economics through Africa.

Dr. Gilpin addressed the inter-relationship between China and Africa. He discussed Africa's growing economic development in various industries, including oil, agriculture, precious stones and metals. China has taken maximum advantage of African growth by securing contracts for construction projects across the continent, starting initiatives such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and funding the building of a new headquarters for the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In addition, more than one million Chinese migrants have settled in Africa during the past decade. Gilpin said this migration momentum shows no signs of letting up, as Chinese companies continue to secure contracts for projects across the continent, making Sino-African relations stronger than ever.

Finally, Col. Dalo Nengite spoke on Boko Haram and sought to dispel what he called three myths surrounding the Islamic terrorist organization. First, he said the group did not grow out of poverty but rather religious intolerance. Secondly, he said that contrary to the belief of many, it is unlikely the schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram will be freed. Instead, many of the girls have been murdered, forced into slavery, or married off to terrorist commanders and moved out of Nigeria. The third myth, he said, was that military action alone can defeat Boko Haram. While the military is important, Dalo Nengite stressed the importance of culture and the need to work with religious leaders.

2015-2016 Program Topics / Schedule

May 10 Embassy Trip - China (Sold Out)

May 19 The North Korea Challenge:
No Good Options?

2015-2016 FPA Officers

President: Dr. Michele Sellitto 717-968-1995
msellitto@comcast.net

Vice Pres: Howard Davison 717-756-0223
hcdavison@verizon.net

Secretary: Fay Geegee 717-737-4639
2geegee@msn.com

Treasurer: Frank Matunis 717-526-4747
frankx912@verizon.net

Membership: Ann Glasscock 717-695-2738
hglasscock07@comcast.net

Newsletter: John L. Taylor 717-545-5027
jolata@pa.net

Web Editor: Lou Thieblemont 717-763-0522
lou.lynn@comcast.net