

HUMAN SECURITY AND GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN AFRICA:
BALANCING THE FUTURE NEEDS OF USAFRICOM



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The 2017 National Security Strategy, heavily focused on Great Power Competition, introduced the concept of 2 + 3 threats to the United States.² The two large powers in rivalry with the US, China, and Russia, have become the biggest concerns for most instruments of national power, but especially the military and economic functions of the DIME. Iran, North Korea, and Violent Extremist Organizations were prioritized lower on the scale of threats, and have taken a back seat to counter a revisionist Russia and a rising China. Yet, one of the largest growing populations, economic bases and resource-rich regions in the world—Africa—remains largely ignored. With the impending reduction of American military forces in West Africa and an international strategy of isolationism, it is time to ask the question: Is a withdrawal from the African continent timely and prudent, or is the United States making a pre-mature decision to abandon the progress it has made and the influence it has built without fully understanding what is at stake? The United States must balance what it sees as its largest existential threats with that of the largest risks to the world—the influence, and by extension, manipulation of—global powers that seek to undermine the United States and the international rules-based order to impose a new order with new rules of their own.

PART I: AN AFRICA PRIMER

For millennia, Africa has been a crossroads of cultures, trading, cooperation, and warring. “Tribe” and “identity” have played an important role in the history of the continent, both in how these constructs were formed and how they influence society, culture, security and power structures today.³ People existed in relative harmony—in control of their lands, resources, cultures, and futures. Africa's richest empires were built on gold, salt, and textile trade, pushing commerce boundaries across North Africa and Europe to the Atlantic Coast, and south to the Gulf of Guinea. A vast expansion in regional economies also influenced religious, artistic and

literary knowledge.⁴ Kingdoms in Africa rose and fell according to political, religious, and economic factors, leaving vast oral histories of powerful kingdoms like Ghana, Mali, Borno, Mankinka, Oyo, and Ashante.⁵ Slave labor, routinely used by African kingdoms to build wealth, became another commodity to trade with Europeans, as well as the United States. Africa was not only a source of resource wealth to the world but an exporter of the cheap labor necessary to build endogenous wealth.

Routine business with Africa drew the attention of European prospectors, keen to find a permanent means to extract wealth coming from the continent. Those who possessed the power to rule extracted tribute, taxes, and other monetary value from the everyday transactions occurring under their purview. These transactions often required middlemen, and once trade expanded into Europe, new middlemen were required to facilitate distant trade.⁶ Trade in natural resources gave rise to some of Africa's most powerful kingdoms and likewise created wealthy kings, chiefs and other leaders who helped organize societies into structured economic powerhouses. In turn, the great powers of the world-imposed identities onto the continent to fit a model of that would later be used to justify settlement by Europeans. To Africans, the concept of "tribe" was fluid, and did not fit the same traditional sense of the word "clan", "family" or "community" that was imposed by colonizing powers such as Great Britain and France.

A shift in governance happened rapidly and caused significant changes in African social dynamics. The 'Scramble for Africa' began with the use of government trading companies to establish permanent trading posts in places where valuable exports were concentrated. The East India Trading Company, an English-backed company, was one of the first to carve out "territory" in Borneo.⁷ Belgium, Germany, France and Spain realized the potential advantages of officially recognizing similar colonies in Africa, and began negotiating with African leaders for the right to

establish populations there.⁸ Under colonial rule, natural resources and the human labor that gave rise to the continent's most powerful kingdoms created centers for the net exportation of wealth and power.

Socio-economic and -political environments on the continent quickly changed. In 1870, over 80 percent of sub-Saharan Africa was ruled by indigenous people, but by 1910, nearly the entire continent was under the authority of distant European governments.⁹ Europeans drew political boundaries, installed local governments, and effectively created a class division that would ensure white Europeans would be the sole beneficiaries of Africa's wealth extraction. Similarly, colonization caused significant changes in the social roles Africans played; they would no longer climb to the level of a king or chief because the "European traditions of subordination exercised a very considerable influence" on their ability to do so.¹⁰ Later, these same "traditions" impacted African social structure, even as colonialism fell out of favor. Africans learned and adopted European traditions of governance, including those which were unethical, unfair, and further divided its people along class lines. Africans used European-invented traditions to justify beliefs of how things should be. Elders exerted control and justified it by tradition; men constrained the power of women and cited tradition as the basis of the right to do so.¹¹ These traditions, as well as the symbols and images representative of power and status, would be carried over in the post-colony and have a significant impact on the success and failure of post-colonial African states.

European governors and administrators in Africa saw automatic and unquestionable authority and power that was legitimized and backed by the government which granted it. In the post-colony however, power and the privilege were not ensured by any separate governing body. Colonial rule involved a "regime of privileges and immunities"; the privilege to make rules, levy

taxes and fines, raise armies, etc., and immunity from trade exclusions or any other rule that the privileged thought might reduce their power or riches.¹² After generations of European domination, elected, appointed, and sometimes forcefully installed post-colonial African state leaders held many of the ideas of governance typified by colonial rule. Regimes of privilege became the philosophy for governance in the post-colony and shaped decisions made in the development of trade formerly controlled by Europeans.

Being the leader of a new, nationalist African state came with the need to manage one's responsibilities to the population; keeping them content and supportive of their new political leaders proved to be a difficult task. Development of cash crops such as coffee, cocoa, and cotton became sources of income, generating the need for middlemen in local trade relationships.¹³ The more rare or valuable a resource (cash crops or minerals), the more inequality existed in that area. African leaders exploited the socio-economic structures created by the inequalities, manipulating them to distribute wealth in ways they saw fit. The socio-economic structures enabled forms of revenue transfer from the state to private entities, from rich to poor, and "by partly or wholly replacing the market, the state became a vast machine creating and regulating inequalities."¹⁴ These perpetuated colonial fractures in African society, making it difficult to lead effectively.

The Scramble for Africa changed the world's image of Africa after years of European influence and left Africans struggling to establish their own identities. "Négritude", the intellectual philosophy and cultural movement intended to restore African identity, validate African culture, and establish a positive image of 'black' consciousness rallied African nationalism in the post-colonial world.¹⁵ The vision for this cultural movement as a relatively painless transition from colonialism to a free Africa and became the platforms on which Africa's

new leaders would build popular support.¹⁶ New *African* leaders would shape the future of post-colonial rule and would use both pre-colonial and European traditions of governance to legitimize power. The 1950s to the 1960s was an era of change in Africa. With the aid of the Soviet Union and Cuba, states across the continent were leaning left. Self-determination after colonialism, egalitarianism among the population, and nationalist movements spearheaded by educated Africans traveling to Europe, China and Syria became the norm across the Sahara and in the Horn.

Post-World War II, Soviet Russia's intentions for Communism on the continent of Africa had three main goals. In general, these were: to embarrass the European Colonial Powers whenever possible, usually by undermining stability of the nascent administrations in Africa; limiting the use of the continent as a base for military operations for the western powers, which included ports and airfields; and interfering with the export of strategic materials and other high-value resources such as uranium, chemical chromite, manganese, asbestos, and industrial-grade diamonds.¹⁷ In the 1950s, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency regarded most of Africa as agnostic to Communism. This discourse was a part of the larger post-Cold War policy that brought regime change and democratization to the forefront of humanitarian and development aid philosophy. Many African states were forced to redefine regime policies and needs as well as their relationship with civil society to obtain foreign investment and partnerships. Even before the Cold War ended, and the Soviet Union began thawing relations with the United States, a change in support to global allies of Communism caused a sharp decline in support, especially for the most expensive allies that were not easy to control.

Twenty years later, the view had drastically changed. “Urban society was the sub-proletariat”, which by the 1970s had been driven out of the countryside due to stagnation of

agricultural markets.¹⁸ Progressive students formed the main body of dissent, such as those in Ethiopia were the dominant class supporting the failed coup against the Emperor early in the 1970s. “Almost all across Western Europe and North and South America, students were in open revolt, questioning and challenging authority.”¹⁹ Those that had been educated and exposed to world events began to question the authority and legitimacy of post-colonial governance. Nationalized markets and socialism were an ideal that was espoused by a revolutionary citizenry, propagated through an international revolution.

Today, leaders continue to struggle with control of their populations in the face of inequality and use an important symbol of power—wealth—to remind their citizens of their rule. Control of a state's production allows leaders to "siphon off" wealth to purchase status symbols such as private jets, extravagant cars, and luxuries meant to convey and affirm power over others, despite state budgets that do not support such acquisitions.^{20,21} In some cases, the accumulation of wealth goes beyond the desire to convey authority and power—the control of state production is also used to fulfill greed. In the cases in which those in power not only gain from the State's economy but also control it, it is "within these sorts of contexts social struggle is a zero-sum game where the only prize is the accumulation of power."²² Wealth-siphoning through control of production is unsustainable; the accumulation of public wealth by private citizens leads to the incurrence of debt and the need to find new ways to stimulate development to pay off that debt.

Globalization has reached the resource-rich continent of Africa. Its people are free to profit in a global market that highly values what is extracted from the world's second-largest landmass in the world. Yet, even after freeing itself from European control, Africa faces new problems from outside influences: a 'New Scramble for Africa'. China seeks to use Africa to

gain political and economic power in what may be the next Cold War with the United States. China's development goals will be put into context, revealing how Beijing may be repeating the mistakes of past colonialists and using Africa as a pawn in a quest to upset the global order. Finally, this paper will offer caution for the future of Africa in light of the 'New Scramble'.

Part II: THE NEW SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

Africa has an abundance of oil and natural resources from which wealth can be extracted. One estimate posits that Africa contains 30 percent of the world's remaining natural resources, making it one of the most important continents on Earth concerning future production in raw materials.²³ As the world population grows, the need for these natural resources also grows, and their value can be used to secure loans, investments, development and as a source of pure wealth. One way in which the wealth offered by resource extraction has been used by African leaders is to maintain their status, and project power in the symbolism that wealth offers.

In postcolonial Africa, some leaders have chosen to keep resource production under state control, opting not to enter the commercialized privatization of wealth extraction. This has sometimes been to the detriment of the citizens when those leaders do not act on behalf of the citizens they represent; one recent article offers, "Botswana got diamonds but never had the will to diversify, and [Democratic Republic of Congo] got every mineral in the periodic table but never had a leader who did not plunder and pillage his people without mercy."²⁴ It is without question that when the people who toil day after day in the production of state wealth see it go directly into the pockets of corrupt leaders, they will suffer. The state itself also suffers, being denied the better use of those resources—in development and infrastructure projects meant to secure a better future for those workers that need it most. The unethical hoarding of state-produced wealth by leaders is not new to Africa (or any other part of the world at some point or

another), but it illuminates another issue facing developing African states in the post-colony—the use of natural resource production to secure loans.

African states seeking to invest natural resource wealth in domestic development projects often seek out investment from more financially and economically sound countries. In a recent interview, the Vice President of Zimbabwe, Kembo Mohadi remarked, “We would want [Zimbabwe’s banking relationship with China] to focus on the industrialization of Zimbabwe and economic development in all spheres. We want to enhance trade transactions between the two countries.”²⁵ African leaders like Mohadi seek out wealthier, economically stable countries like China because of the “huge market...and [China’s] industrial expertise.”²⁶ By securing loans and investment projects backed by wealthy foreign countries, post-colonial leaders gain the opportunity to develop—an opportunity that likely could not have materialized without decolonization. Zimbabwe is not the only state in the post-colony that has sought investment from foreign investors to spur development.

Many states in Africa bring in investors to boost development and inspire trade growth. Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa have the largest influx of foreign investments.²⁷ The diversity of investors is notable: the US, France, UK, and China lead in the number of total projects started in Africa, respectively.²⁸ Eerily reminiscent of pre-colonial times when Europeans saw Africa as a source of income, the number of countries investing in African development and loans to develop African states has steadily climbed. The similarity is uncanny.

Rapid foreign investment in African markets and development projects today is akin to the pre-colonial Scramble for Africa. Incredibly, the same countries that clambered for Africa in the era of slavery are the same countries vying for a share in the wealth of natural resources that

remain.²⁹ This new scramble, however, is not conceived as a means to plunge Africa back into an era of European colonial rule or to reinstitute the atrocity of slavery. It is a “geo-economic competition between different world economic powers to open up resource access for ‘their’ companies, in addition to subsidiary motives such as getting access to African markets and seeking diplomatic support in the United Nations.”³⁰ Like the first Scramble, the New Scramble is structured to export the natural resource wealth of Africa elsewhere.

African states do not have the native capability required to harvest, extract and process natural resources, leading to ‘capital flight’—the privatization of exported wealth that does not go towards paying publicly held loans of African state governments.³¹ African states that cannot repay their debts to foreign countries may find themselves with a difficult decision: renegotiate the terms of the debt or default on their loan. The renegotiation of debt can lead to higher interest rates than the original agreement, and defaulting can lead to seizure of assets; both outcomes are part of what has been linked to what is referred to as ‘debt-trap diplomacy’.³² When the gross domestic product (GDP) of a state is privatized, and that state cannot afford to pay its development and infrastructure loan debts, it often must rely on alternate means of payment to resolve its liabilities. For example, in December of 2017, Sri Lanka, heavily in debt to China over the building of the port of Hambantota was forced to sign over control of the port to obtain debt relief.³³ China has expanded its control of infrastructure projects through these bullying tactics, but there is a broader explanation for Chinese expansion of debt and holdings in Africa.

China is the largest foreign investor in Africa. While the US currently holds the most open investments in Africa by number, China has invested twice as much money in projects when compared to the United States.³⁴ China’s interest in these investments stems from President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is China's grand strategy for the future,

expanding trade and development opportunities abroad to build its economic base and to “share its development experience and foreign philosophies with all countries, realizing the China dream and recalling the fine civilizations of other countries in the world; helping...African civilization and all other civilizations to rejuvenate or retain their splendor”.³⁵ Stated goals for the BRI aside, China’s largesse meant to lift many of the struggling economies of Africa may be part of a grand strategy meant to upset the global order. A rising China, determined to become a global hegemon, is doing so on the backs of Africa’s labor force.³⁶ China is using Africa to expand its global influence, joining in the New Scramble for Africa, and part of a new Cold War with the United States.

Goals for the Belt and Road Initiative, connected to projects in 65 countries worldwide, have national security implications for the United States. China aims to “accrue economic benefits for itself, and also become a regional leader which can introduce modernity into regions that the world has ‘forgotten’.”³⁷ By integrating its foreign, economic, and security policies via the [BRI] in Africa, China is fashioning a hegemonic sphere of aid, trade, investment, and security links.³⁸ To become a global power on par with or superior to the United States, China has seemingly entered into a new Cold War competition, funded and enabled by the investment in and development of resource-rich African states.

Is China the predatory lender some claim it to be? Is BRI intended as a tool for revisionist goals of becoming the next global superpower? Perhaps China is investing in Africa’s future with the generous intent of sharing prosperity and aiding development. Natural resource extraction in Africa invites non-African states to invest for profit, which in turn leads to the siphoning-off of wealth meant to bring better standards of living to African workers. The problem is that it is nearly impossible to tell which era—colonial or post-colonial—that

statement belongs to. It is the responsibility of world leaders such as the United States, China, and the other primary investors in Africa to ensure that the mistakes made during colonization of Africa by non-Africans, mistakes made by African leaders in the post-colony, and mistakes made in the New Scramble for Africa are not repeated. Africa is now part of the global economy, but Africa is also what built the global economy. Forgetting that fact is what may doom Africans to be net exporters of wealth instead of enjoying the domestic benefits of natural resource development so long overdue them.

Compared to China, Russia has increased its foreign investment in Africa over the last two decades by 185%.³⁹ This "reawakening" of Russian influence in Africa has several goals, including projecting power on the global stage, access to raw materials and natural resources, and arms sales and security. Russia is the number one arms exporter to the continent (followed by China) and has signed over 20 bilateral military cooperation agreements with African states in the last five years. As a "low cost, high profile way of elevating Russia", Moscow has taken steps to get reacquainted with former Soviet allies and other African regimes that wish to defy Western pressure.⁴⁰ Ironically, the US strategy to counter Great Power competition with China and Russia has left an influence vacuum for those very countries to fill.

PART III: HUMAN SECURITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Just as the New Scramble for African resources has begun, other symptoms of globalization are leaving sub-Saharan Africa behind. Globalization based on the free movement of goods and people across continents is not evident: strong states, such as those in Europe, are consolidating relationships and strengthening the conditions for access to their borders by the weak. Draconian access procedures proposed by the rich have forced immigrants to practice illegal immigration to find a better economic life and to compensate for marginalization. From

the 1930s, through World War II, and until the mid-70s, the labor needs of industrialized countries were accompanied by liberal policies encouraging immigration. In the mid-1970s, these pro-immigration policies were abandoned, and border controls tightened. Up to this period, it was customary to distinguish only between final and temporary migration. It was not until the 1980s that the "clandestine migrant" was acknowledged, with increasingly strict border control, the internal opening of borders with⁴¹and the closure of external borders of that area. According to the Association of Families of Clandestine Immigration Victims, from 2001 to 2006, more than 4,000 migrants have lost their lives in the Strait of Gibraltar, smuggled across the sea to reach Europe in Pateras. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) also reported: "from an estimated 266,590 people in 2018 to more than 540,000 in 2019."⁴² This alarming human security issue is due to two main causes: a lack of hope for immigration candidates and bad governance in the originating countries.

Sub-Saharan Africans risk their lives daily due not to scarcity of resources, but access to those resources. Despite being the second most populous continent with 1,308,064,195 in 2019⁴³, Africa remains the poorest in the world, mainly due to the slow speed of development and the inability to cope with unemployment has stagnated growth. This increase in population has two negative effects: the scarcity of assets and the explosion of a young population. Additionally, the majority of Africa is still deeply rural, and farmers face water scarcity and drought, causing the inability to feed a labor force with limited foodstuffs and low productivity. Droughts have occurred since the 1960s for instance in almost all Sahelian countries: Mali, Niger, and Chad have been plagued by lack of water for the last three decades. Moreover, the advance of the desert and the invasion of fields by locusts have caused serious agricultural crises. Sub-Saharan Africa's underdevelopment is the primary basis for poverty.

The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on poor countries since the early 2000s has exacerbated a lack of development because the debt burden is one of the major obstacles to the eradication of poverty. It should be remembered that in Africa, the population must survive on less than \$1.00 a day. Debt repayment has deprived the government of allocating financial resources to public investments in social programs and infrastructure. Meeting basic needs has been found as a driving force for young sub-Saharanans to leave their countries in search of jobs and a decent life in Europe. The unemployment rate continues to grow, from 7.2% (29.1 million) in 2017 to 7.3% (30.3 million) in 2019, and varies across the region by gender and age.⁴⁴ While most of the labor force is employed in the agriculture sector, this work only provides temporary seasonal employment and rarely provides income security.

Internal conflict resulting from bad governance has forced Africans to seek hope in Europe. Half of the world's conflicts at the end of the 20th to 21st century took place in sub-Saharan Africa. Three-fourths of African countries are victims of conflict or threatened with political and economic instability. Most migrants come from West and Central Africa, particularly the Great Lakes region, as this is the region most affected by war. During colonization, the people were divided according to the European sense of "tribe". Today, one of the main causes of conflict are the ethnic divides posed by artificial borders still in place since colonization. For example, Biafra, Nigeria constitutes 14 million inhabitants, and in 1968 wanted to form a separate state but it was crushed in blood by the Nigerian federation. These people should have every right to self-determination, but they have been prevented from doing so by the principle of intangibility of the borders inherited from colonization.

Besides, dictatorial powers have managed most African states since their independence. Corrupted leaders deprived people of their fundamental rights to manipulate the masses and control information. Instability from lack of trust caused coups and revolutions. Cameroon and Guinea are both examples in which the presidents have changed the constitution to stay in power. The lack of conciliation mechanisms, the lack of respect for human rights and civil liberties, and the use of force by governments whose policies or legitimacy are challenged lead to open conflicts. In addition, these conflicts destroy years of development efforts and economies and cause high numbers of refugees and displaced persons.

As they move, migrants encounter harsh conditions in the desert and as they move North into the coastal urban areas of Morocco, Algeria or Libya. They are harassed by both border police and smugglers. Humiliation and exploitation have become customary. They walk kilometers without clean water or food. Women are forced to give birth without any health assistance, and many of them are also victims of the prostitution market. "Between January and October 2019, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) provided more than 30,400 general consultations, 713 mental health consultations (for people diagnosed with anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder), and 2,317 antenatal consultations. We also assisted in delivering 362 babies."⁴⁵ MSF also provides psychosocial support, lifesaving medical evacuations, and search and rescue operations for migrants lost or abandoned in the desert. Doctors Without Borders collected testimony that can illustrate the difficulties on a trip to Europe for African

Mary*, from Nigeria, was offered the chance to go to Italy to work as a hairdresser. She had experience and "things were hard at home," so she accepted. But the smuggler who was supposed to get her there never fulfilled his promise. Instead, he held her and other women in Libya against their will and forced them to engage in

sex work. “The house they kept us in was like a cage,” she said. “We would barely go outside. When we were going to Libya, he was nice. But when we got there, things changed.”⁴⁶

Rose* was also brought to Libya and exploited while believing she was going somewhere else. She says she was kept in a building with about 30 other girls, some of them “very, very young.” All of them were reportedly subjected to abuse and exploitation by human traffickers. “I went to hell inside that house. If I didn’t have sex, they would beat me to death. One day he beat me so hard, my hand was swollen and broken. I would just sit on my own, crying.” Hygiene conditions inside the house were very poor. If someone was sick, Rose said, they would have to pay 80 dinars (about \$56) for health care.

Sub-Saharan and transit countries are facing a human security crisis. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been created to assist immigrants and denounce the indifference African state leaders and the international community have towards addressing these issues. Moreover, they acknowledge that the security reasons supported by transit countries (Morocco, Algeria, and Libya) are valid but challenge the conditions of repression, and which constitute a serious violation of human rights.

To illustrate immigration issues in sub-Saharan Africa, some examples such as the Abidjan-based Action for the Protection of Human Rights (APDH) remind leaders to respect Morocco's commitments to the international convention on the protection of migrants and their families. It notes that the convention makes no difference between regular and irregular migrants in terms of protection. It considers those that opt for irregular immigration are not to blame even

if they are not in good standing. However, the APDH holds countries of origin and host countries accountable. Origin countries have taken no economic or social measures to keep their youth there and make no provisions for those who want to get out.

Host countries have some responsibility for the emergence of the phenomenon of irregular immigration. These countries accept the transfer of capital from the south to the north but are building walls when it comes to the transfer of labor. The APDH finds this unfair. The Dakar-based African Meeting for the Defense of Human Rights (RADDHO) was furious by the muted attitude of the countries of origin., as there was no official reaction from Bamako, Dakar, Conakry, or Yaoundé to denounce the migration or propose solutions. In July 2017 John Dalhuisen, Europe's director of Amnesty International stated: "If the second half of 2017 is like the first and no emergency provision is made, 2017 is fast becoming the deadliest year for the world's deadliest migration route." At the national level, much effort is taken mostly, but it is repressive and criminalizing. As Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, former Chair of the African Union Commission said: "if we focus on training our people, invest in them...they will not have to come via Lampedusa, they will come by plane and be welcomed." Knowing that the increase of clandestine immigration is the failure of international solidarity, both host and origin countries must take their responsibility facing this problem. Instead of investing in repressive policies, host countries should aid origin countries in changing the standard of living. Origin states must create and implement a collective national policy to raise awareness among migrants about this hazardous trip, support the development of African states, and encourage the diaspora to return, invest in the country and create jobs for young Africans in the informal economic sector.

PART IV: COUNTERING VEOS: A HUNGRY BELLY HAS NO EARS

Great Power competition and the race for hegemony has narrowed the scope of American security policy in the last five years, yet insecurity linked to the proliferation of VEOs continues to spread. September 11th, a turning point for a war of modern times, brought America's theory of invincibility to a halt. Now, no one is immune. Any part of the globe can be directly or indirectly struck by terrorist attacks, at any time. In West Africa and the Sahel, VEOs are in continuous expansion. If stronger measures are not taken by global governance, with time and resilience, VEOs will reach the Atlantic coast and the worldwide fight against terrorism will have to be refocused. Indeed, because of the plethora of VEOs and the instability that they have created, a sustained effort from the entire international community is due. To address VEOs in the Sahel, first, we must take stock of the real situation, second, we must define the real needs of the countries concerned and finally, we must make available all means mobilized on an international scale to the sub-regional organizations.

Terrorist activity in the Sahel region has reached worrying proportions and compromises the development efforts made by local governments. The International Center for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) is particularly concerned with terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, ISIS and their affiliate groups that are spreading and threatening the region.⁴⁷ A 2019 report from Radio France International (RFI) states that several terrorist groups responsible for the recent attacks in Mali and Burkina Faso are being reorganized for better collaboration in the Sahel region. "The terrorists also have their G5-Sahel. Ansar Dine, Front of Macina, al-Mourabitoune, AQIM, Ansarul Islam, and Islamic State in the Great Sahara: that makes a G5 ". RFI also reported that, according to a former rebel in northeast Mali, recent defeats in eastern Mali have caused the jihadists to withdraw to Burkina Faso to recompose.

With the number of deaths and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) growing exponentially, an unprecedented humanitarian crisis risks bringing the entire region into chaos. On January 22, 2020, the UN released via the Guardian, "The Sahel is facing an unprecedented wave of violence, with more than 4,000 deaths reported last year, and a bloody start to 2020. The number of attacks has increased fivefold in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger since 2016."⁴⁸ Why has there been such a large increase in violence, and why is the situation not improving? To understand the problem, both endogenous and exogenous reasons must be studied.

As with general human security and the migration issues seen above, it should be noted that most of the problem is linked to the extreme poverty of the populations and the bad distribution of wealth in the regions concerned—poor governance. These are the endogenous causes: inter-community issues with land tenure, unbalanced development, lack of infrastructure, education, healthcare, and youth unemployment. With such frustrations and growing poverty, it is a matter of survival, and young people when they do not attempt immigration, indulge in fraud, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities.

Those fighting for survival are not afraid of death and are ready to face risk. Vulnerable, this population becomes easy prey for recruitment by jihadist groups. VEOs are known to use the frustration of the people and instrumentalize against the state. The objective is to traumatize and expel the public administration to exercise authority and conduct illicit activities with impunity. It is the failure of the state that gives rise to opportunism. The exogenous causes are more often economic than religious. Most recruits adhere without religious conviction. It is important to note that beyond the religious slogans brandished to justify the myriad of Jihadist groups in West Africa, which advocate the expansion of Islam, there are in reality enormous economic interests. It should be known that some preachers use religion to the detriment of needy populations, to

cover for economic interests. The Sahel region, known for its rich natural resources, has always been a crossroads for smuggling and drug trafficking.

Counter-terrorism actions have been active across the Sahel in the last ten years. According to ICCT, “Countering extremism in countries such as Nigeria and developing means to bring peace and stability have also been central issues in the research and activities that ICCT has undertaken in West Africa. Another focus has been the instability in Mali and the implications the conflict has on the wider region. Here, the topics vary from the international stabilization efforts to the combat against local narco-terrorism.”⁴⁹ Despite years of U.S. and international efforts including special operations and drone strikes to fight terrorism in this area, extremist groups are gaining ground.⁵⁰ Despite the enormous efforts made to contribute to the fight against terrorism in West Africa, USAFRICOM has found that the threat is stagnant, and the US strategy of containment is not improving the situation. In the Sahel region, insecurity has become daily life, when the people are not forced to abandon their lands, facilities and their goods. Sahel states are on the brink of crisis because economies have dramatically deteriorated, jeopardizing state development, increasing instability. If the appropriate measures are not taken, these states risk collapsing despite the international community efforts.

The international community, aware of its responsibility to protect is making enormous efforts to combat insecurity. As seen above, ICCT and USAFRICOM are doing well to help to overcome this threat. The European Union (EU) is conscious that a response to this crisis should not only be militarily, and are undertaking actions on Diplomatic, Informational, Institutional, and Economic levels. In an ICCT publication in October 2018, E J Hogendoorn stated the EU should make good governance and accountability a condition to do more and help Nigeria to defeat Boko Haram. "Although Boko Haram has links to the Islamic State and other extremist

groups in Africa, the main drivers of its insurgency are internal and should be addressed by the country's federal and state-level governments. These drivers include governance failures in the North East in particular, and Nigeria in general; a poorly coordinated, mainly military, response; multiple security challenges that stretch the army to the breaking point; and elite unwillingness to address the unsustainable status quo."⁵¹ Addressing the endogenous causes of the problem before instituting international community recommendations in Nigeria could work.

In a liberal based world order, the international community plays its part when it comes to its duty of protection towards other democracies. Among other commitments alongside the Sahel, France from Operation Serval to Operation Barkhane, the UN with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the USA with USAFRICOM, and the European Union. G5 Sahel and ECOWAS Forces have the will and have the human resources necessary to meet the challenge of VEOs. Because of other global commitments, in Afghanistan, Iraqi, Libya and Syria, African countries cannot solely rely on the international community. On September 14, 2019, at a summit in Burkina Faso, "West African leaders announced a billion-dollar plan to fight the rising problem of jihadist violence in the region. The plan, to be funded from 2020 to 2024, was announced at end of the Economic Community Summit of West African States in Ouagadougou, where the ECOWAS nations were joined by Mauritania and Chad."⁵²

The USAFRICOM Security Posture emphasizes these types of "African solutions for African problems" and maintains committed to providing aid through training and equipping. The US focus on the race for hegemony against its rivals China and Russia, instead of continuing its support to France in the Sahel has shifted strategy from degrading to containing West Africa insurgents.⁵³ In early February 2020, a delegation from the United States Department of State,

accompanied by United States peacekeeping officers, was sent to Mali to audit MINUSMA.⁵⁴ The audit of MINUSMA revealed some ineffectiveness and a need for revision of its mandate. There are currently approximately 6,000 U.S. military personnel deployed across Africa, including around 3,000 in Djibouti, around 800 in West Africa and 500 special operations forces in Somalia. The mission of the 800 U.S military personnel deployed to West Africa is mostly for intelligence purposes, and not engagement with VEOs. West African's sub-regional Forces are calling for the US and International community to continue to help train, advise, and equip African Forces and fill the intelligence gap. It is not a secret that the fight against terrorism is foremost an intelligence one.

African nations like Nigeria are calling for direct collaboration to benefit in real-time from the same intelligence tips shared by historic allies similar to the intervention of NATO in 2011 in Libya, as well as Operations Serval and Barkhane in Mali. French President Emmanuel Macron voiced his concerns about US intentions to cut support for French forces in Africa: "The White House may stop helping France fight African jihadists with drones and refueling planes. Experts say that could open the door to more terrorism".⁵⁵ The US has spent millions of dollars without being able to turn the tide. Yet what puzzles West African partners is the announcement of the US withdrawal from the Sahel and as experts have pointed out, the solution of withdrawal could be counterproductive and worse yet have catastrophic political consequences. In February 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo carried out an African Diplomatic Tour (The very first of authority of such a level in the Trump administration) to clarify to his hosts: "The priority of the United States is to counter China and Russia." China's massive presence in three countries—Senegal, Angola, and Ethiopia—has been realized across the US government, however,

withdrawal of American forces from the Sahel will be done in a way that would be satisfactory for all.⁵⁶

PART V: RECOMMENDATIONS

Both the humanitarian crisis stemming from human security issues and the fight against terrorism in the Sahel is not incompatible with the will of the United States to face competition with its challengers China and Russia. On the contrary, strengthening partnerships and allocating resources in the Sahel would contain the expansionist tendencies of revisionist powers. To restore a climate of confidence between the US and their West African partners, America and Europe cannot leave Africa behind. As the US continues to shift its strategy, the realization that Great Power competition has increased on the continent should also shift policy goals.

Direct investment, namely to local organizations (G5 Sahel, ECOWAS, and African Union (AU)) who need fewer resources would allow states to begin debt repayment. Additionally, the MINUSMA mandate should be revised, as it costs more than a billion dollars a year, while the G5 Sahel has developed a five-year plan that would allow it to defeat terrorism in the Sahel. Why not try? It is up to the international community to set up the mechanisms to supervise and control the management of these resources.

The resources made available should be redirected to regional organizations, even if it means establishing reliable international management and control mechanisms to ensure the judicious use of these resources. It is obvious global governance has faced with security challenges, economic and geostrategic stakes at the same time. But because of the speed with which international coalitions are set up elsewhere such as in the Middle East and Libya, there is an urgent need for a rebalancing of international solidarity. Beyond the interests of the great

powers, concern for fairness towards all regions should be a top priority when it comes to the duty of protection which falls to the entire international community.



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