

African Security Futures

Threats, Partnership, and International Engagement for the New U.S. Administration

BY MARTIN KINDL

Several months into the new Administration, attention throughout the corridors of Washington is understandably focused on the foreign policy priorities that will define the government's early legacy, from Syria and Iraq to the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea. Amid the urgency of these pressing national security issues, challenges on the African continent are unlikely to enjoy the same emphasis—throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, no candidate articulated an Africa policy, and the presidential transition team did not emphasize the region among its priorities. Despite this initial lack of focus, however, Africa's emerging geopolitical influence and increasingly transnational threats will demand significant attention. This article highlights three key aspects of the African security landscape that will become more dynamic and complex during the next four years and beyond and have far-reaching impacts on U.S. policy: the nature of near- and long-term security threats; the trajectory of African partners; and the diverse group of external actors poised to increase engagement. Throughout, I argue that a modestly-resourced but proactive and partnership-based approach would allow policymakers to temper the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that will be presented.

Africa's Rise

Africa's importance on the geopolitical stage and Washington's attention to the continent have both increased dramatically during the past two decades. This represents a marked shift from the years immediately following the end of the Cold War, when African security issues essentially

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disappeared from Washington’s radar. Political scientist Nicolas van de Walle argues that the 1990s “probably marked a low point in U.S.–Africa relations,” with the continent treated as “a national interest backwater.”¹ A 1995 U.S. Security Strategy for sub-Saharan Africa concluded that, “ultimately we see very little traditional strategic interest in Africa.”² By the close of the 20th century, the number of Peace Corps volunteers on the continent was about half the level of the late 1960s, while the U.S. State Department suffered from a growing number of unfilled positions and the closure of multiple consulates.³

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Long-held geostrategic calculations began to be reassessed soon thereafter, however, with an increased emphasis on Africa in parallel to its emerging role in global affairs. The continent is home to 1.2 billion people and accounts for more than a quarter of UN member states. It is located on key global trade routes, comprises more than one fifth of the world’s land, and is larger than Europe, China, India, and the United States combined. Africa is also economically vibrant—despite a recent downturn in global commodity prices, its economy has approximately doubled in size since 2000 and foreign direct investment has increased fivefold, surpassing

official development assistance. In 2000, The Economist dubbed Africa “The Hopeless Continent;” 13 years later, the same journal ran a special report on “Emerging Africa” with the headline, “A Hopeful Continent.”

During the past two administrations—Republican and Democratic—a consensus gradually emerged that Africa’s opportunities were worth seizing and its challenges worth addressing. This commitment is evidenced by Bush Administration initiatives such as the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the establishment of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM); followed by the Obama Administration’s leadership on the 2014 U.S.–Africa Leaders’ Summit, the Young African Leaders Initiative, and the Power Africa initiative. Consistent throughout has been support for multiple iterations of the Clinton-era African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Africa’s increased priority is also a result of the continent that it is projected to become. Home to the world’s most youthful population, some of its most dynamic economies, and vast untapped resources, Africa is poised to experience greater change than any other part of the world over the next generation. The continent’s population will nearly double in the next 30 years and its economy, more closely integrated into the global marketplace, is expected to quadruple in size over the same period. With more than 60 percent of the world’s total uncultivated arable land, Africa could increase its agricultural production threefold by 2050.⁴

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the past two decades of U.S. policy no longer hold. Power and influence—among both positive and negative actors—is more dispersed than at any time since the precolonial era, contributing to greater uncertainty about the region’s trajectory. Policymakers in the next four years will be forced to contend with a multi-threat, multipolar Africa, with significant dynamism and diversity in the nature of the threat, African partner capacity, and international engagement.

A Shifting Near-Term Threat Environment

The nature of African insecurity has undergone a fundamental shift, representing a marked departure from past conflict dynamics and challenging established policy mechanisms. The postcolonial period was typified by rebellions and uprisings, the post-Cold War years by a series of bloody proxy conflicts, and the 1998 embassy bombings ushered in a period of diffuse and persistent al-Qaeda threat. The arrival of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to Africa’s shores and the promotion of personal radicalization and foreign fighter flows via online forums present a more diffuse, irregular, and asymmetric threat than ever before and represent a new era for the African threat environment.

Immediately following independence, many new African states experienced difficulty consolidating control and were forced to contend with internal unrest, the primary security issue of the time. According to a British government report, 61 successful coups d’état took place from independence to 1990; more than 75 additional coup attempts were unsuccessful during this period.⁵ From 1960 to 2000, an African leader stood a three

in five chance of being killed in office or forced into exile.⁶ Meanwhile, breakaway regions in Nigeria, Congo, and elsewhere fought (albeit unsuccessfully) for secession.

In the 1990s, cast adrift from Cold War superpower patronage, the continent experienced its bloodiest decade in modern history. A series of state-on-state, civil, and proxy wars engulfed the region, including a multi-nation central African conflict that resulted in the deaths of several million, and the 1998–2000 Ethiopia–Eritrea border war in which more than 100,000 were likely killed.⁷ In 1993–94, some 40 percent of African states were involved in serious conflict.⁸ While notable for the belligerents’ degree of predation and brutality, these hostilities generally followed the conventional outline of one armed faction pitched against another, often with control of the government at stake.

The August 1998 terrorist attacks in Kenya and Tanzania brought al-Qaeda to the attention of the American public for the first time and underscored a shift toward an asymmetric, complex, and more globalized threat. This threat was led by al-Qaeda and its affiliates, but overlapped with other illicit transnational networks already profiting from the safehaven afforded by weak institutions throughout the continent. In a departure from past eras of African conflict that were largely directed at securing or retaining the levers of governmental power, the aims of instability broadened to include the ideological and economic, rendering indigenous security responses inadequate. With large swaths of the continent effectively un- or under-governed and vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups, Africa emerged as a key front in U.S. efforts to combat violent extremism. This new generation of African

conflict is simultaneously localized and globalized and, because it leverages international networks and occurs in an ever more interconnected world, has a greater potential impact on U.S. security (and U.S. security strategy) than bloodier but isolated conflicts of the past.

Nearly two decades after the embassy bombings, the al-Qaeda threat on the continent persists. In 2015, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its affiliates laid siege to a hotel in Bamako, Mali; the next year, the group mounted similar attacks against targets in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. Across the continent in the Horn of Africa, al-Shabaab remains a potent threat to Somali security and continues to plot and campaign against regional contributors to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Three years ago, however, al-Qaeda lost its monopoly on transnational terror in Africa, with ISIL establishing provinces in Libya and Algeria; one year later, a faction of the Nigeria-based Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the group. ISIL's arrival on the continent coincides with an overall diffusion of the violent extremist organization environment in Africa and across the globe, and constitutes a new chapter in African security threats. While al-Qaeda and ISIL will continue to vie for influence and adherents, both organizations are likely to become more decentralized. They will also become progressively more closely intertwined—or “marbled”—with indigenous grievances and groups, making it increasingly difficult to disaggregate localized concerns from the more far-reaching ambitions of these transnational terrorist organizations. AQIM, al-Shabaab, the ISIL affiliates on the continent,

and organizations like Boko Haram to varying degrees, all fuse local secular grievances with global terrorist ideology and prey on marginalized individuals and subgroups in their recruitment.

In Africa, as in other parts of the world, terrorist and other illicit organizations are conducting much of this outreach by expanding their presence in the cyber domain. Faced with challenges to its territorial control in Libya and in the Middle East, ISIL has opened another front amidst the safe haven of the “virtual caliphate.” While remaining committed to holding physical ground, its online presence allows the group to maintain legitimacy, gain support, and coordinate actions globally. ISIL and al-Qaeda affiliates have used this virtual presence to foster their narratives and provide a sense of membership to aspirants across the world; increasingly, the cyber domain has also allowed groups to utilize propaganda in the pursuit of a more tangible aims. ISIL leveraged online forums to encourage African foreign fighters to travel to the Middle East and, later, to Libya. In November of last year, issues of both al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's *Inspire* and ISIL's *Rumiyah*—both English-language propaganda magazines—called for lone wolf-style attacks against Western targets. The *Rumiyah* article provided specific guidance on vehicular attacks modeled after the July event in France, and likely informed the Christmas market attack in Berlin, Germany. African nations' limited cyber and information operations capability, coupled with rapidly increasing rates of internet access and a vulnerable population, make this a particularly potent threat for the continent.

Underlying and intermingled with these transnational threats, internal instability in

many African states fuels what Africa analyst Andre Le Sage refers to as “a vicious cycle: Africa’s irregular threat dynamics sustain black markets directly linked to state corruption, divert attention from democratization efforts, generate or fuel civil wars, drive state collapse, and create safehavens that allow terrorists and more criminals to operate.”⁹ African nations account for 27 of the 38 most vulnerable countries in The Fund for Peace’s 2016 *Fragile States Index*, and destabilizing events often occur suddenly and unexpectedly, provoking an international response that can take years to address. Recent political violence in Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and elsewhere raised fears of mass atrocities. Elections, often a flashpoint for instability, are scheduled to take place this year in Angola, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, and possibly the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The Challenge of Long-Term Megatrends

Drivers of the aforementioned security challenges, such as weak governance, limited economic opportunities, and a more connected populace, will be magnified in the coming decades as near-term challenges intersect with long-term megatrends. Three related dynamics in particular—demographics, urbanization, and resource competition—will begin to reach a tipping point. By the end of this decade, these issues will cease to be abstract challenges of the future; instead, they will have a tangible, daily impact on Africa’s physical and economic security.

The continent is in the midst of a demographic explosion. Sixty percent of Africans are younger than 25; the median age of the continent is in the teens. Africa’s population is expected to nearly double in

the next three decades and, by 2045, a quarter of the global population and an even higher proportion of the world’s working-age population will be African. While this boom could result in a “demographic dividend”—the size of the African workforce will exceed that of China by 2030 and India by 2035—it will also stress governments’ ability to provide basic services and it will be difficult for even the most vibrant economies to keep pace.¹⁰ Africa’s middle class will undoubtedly grow and poverty rates will fall, but the overall number of individuals living in extreme poverty is likely to increase. The highest rates of population growth will likely occur in East Africa, the Great Lakes region, and the Sahel,

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some of Africa’s poorest and most densely populated regions and areas that are already experiencing significant security issues.

Countries with more than 60 percent of the population under 30 are four times as likely to experience conflict; Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and many other African countries are among those nations facing such a youth bulge.¹¹ At present, two of three Africans lack access to reliable power and an estimated nine out of ten workers are in the informal economy—rapid population growth will strain systems that are already stressed and could drive marginalized populations toward illicit and terrorist activity. Nigeria, the fifth-most



Soweto Housing in Johannesburg, South Africa. (Wikipedia)

populous Christian country and the fifth-most populous Muslim country in the world, has a population approaching 200 million. It is expected to pass the United States as the third most populous country in the world before 2050 though, at the market exchange rate, Nigeria's 2017 budget amounts to \$15 billion, about the same as the U.S. state of Utah (population: 3 million).

Population growth without commensurate economic opportunities is also a driver of mass migration, an emerging transnational challenge that is likely to increase amid mounting demographic stresses in Africa. While the debarkation points on Libya's Mediterranean coast get the most attention, trafficking networks and points of origin

further upstream in the pipeline are all exploited by criminal groups and corrupt government officials. More than 180,000 migrants crossed the Mediterranean into Italy last year; the top nine countries of origin are all east or west African and together account for more than 134,000 migrants.¹² Estimates of the illicit cash flow related to this movement vary widely, but it likely accounts for an estimated three to six billion dollars per year.¹³ The German Economic Minister recently warned that "if the youth of Africa can't find work or a future in their own countries, it won't be hundreds of thousands, but millions that will make their way to Europe."¹⁴

Concurrent with this demographic growth is the continent's increasing urbanization. While Africa currently has the lowest percentage of city dwellers, it is by some measures the world's fastest urbanizing continent. The number of Africans living in towns and cities is expected to increase from under 500 million today to more than 1.2 billion in the next 30 years. By 2050, 55 percent of Africans will live in urban areas; twice the proportion in 1990. In the next two decades, at least six megacities—Cairo, Dar es Salaam, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos, and Luanda—will have a population exceeding ten million and an additional dozen cities will have between five and ten million residents.

Like demographic growth, African urbanization offers both promise and pitfalls. Historically, movement to cities facilitates a transition toward a more innovative manufacturing- and service-based economy; cosmopolitan urban centers can also foster a shift away from divisive regional and ethnic-based politics. At the same time, this movement places extraordinary demands on city- and national-level policymakers, many of whom lack urban planning expertise or resources. Nearly two-thirds of African city dwellers are estimated to live in slums without access to basic services, and it is doubtful that infrastructure development will be able to keep up with cities' rapid population growth.¹⁵

Coupled with increased access to global press outlets, the internet, and social media, this urbanization is also likely to drive increased engagement from the "African street." The continent's public is demonstrating and engaging in unprecedented numbers to demand better government accountability and responsiveness, and elites unwilling to cede or share power are less likely to be

tolerated by a population that is both better-informed and more capable of mobilization. Capitals from Burkina Faso to South Africa to Ethiopia experienced mass protests last year, and the pattern is unlikely to abate. This mobilization will be facilitated by better and more available communications technology—mobile phone ownership has increased from 15 million in 2000 to 760 million in 2014, and Africa will likely have the highest mobile data growth rate in the world during the next several years.¹⁶

Finally, there is likely to be a shift in the nature of resource competition. The exploitation of Africa's resource base for illicit profit has been much-publicized—"blood diamonds," "blood minerals," "blood oil," and the like have all entered the popular lexicon. The African continent is estimated to hold 37 percent of key global natural resources, and easier access to markets will likely increase competition and could fuel instability.¹⁷ Future resource-based conflict, however, will likely shift toward a struggle for basic necessities and will be magnified by pre-existing grievances such as political exclusion and economic marginalization. More than 200 million Africans already suffer from water stress, and projected increases to rainfall variability and sea levels will strain both agricultural and urban communities. Ongoing conflicts in the Sahel and Darfur have each been granted the ignominious title of "First Climate Change War," and the already unstable swath of Africa between 10°N and 20°N will likely bear the brunt of the climactic changes to come.

Evolving Partnerships

At the same time that threat dynamics on the continent are becoming more complex and

diverse, so too is engagement with African partners—a new dispersion of power constitutes the second great challenge facing today’s policymaker. In recent years, an internal African multipolarism has emerged, with power and influence increasingly dispersed away from a handful of key “anchor states” and toward a collection of smaller regional influencers. Meanwhile, the very notion of bilateral, state-to-state engagement has also been diluted, with multinational and sub-national organizations playing a greater role on the African stage. While the complexity of this new, more multipolar reality requires more varied and advanced engagement

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mechanisms, a more flexible and inclusive outreach effort could also allow Washington to weather isolated and often unpredictable events

Entering into the 21st century, Africa’s traditional anchor states—Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa—stood as continent-wide hegemonies and monopolized international engagement. With strong economies, capable militaries, and a level of internal stability, these nations were able to serve as key intermediaries and leaders in

times of crisis. Nigeria’s significant financial and personnel investment in the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group, for example, facilitated an African-led response to conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. South Africa continued to make democratic strides as the presidency of the post-apartheid government peacefully transferred from Nelson Mandela to Thabo Mbeki. In East Africa, the Ethiopian and Kenyan economies were in the midst of an unprecedented boom, with each country’s GDP increasing nearly four-fold in less than a decade.

Today, the anchors’ regional influence is fading as domestic demands mount. Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria are ranked among the 25 most fragile countries in the world, according to The Fund for Peace,¹⁸ and their stagnation or decline will have dramatic impacts on the security landscape. Beset by unprecedented internal protests last year, Ethiopia declared a state of emergency and recalled some of its forces deployed in Somalia. Its neighbor to the south, Kenya, is focused on President Kenyatta’s 2017 reelection campaign and security commitments in Somalia. Nigeria and South Africa, which together account for more than half of sub-Saharan Africa’s GDP, have seen their economies slow due to declining petroleum and commodity prices. Dependent upon crude oil sales for 70 percent of government income, Nigeria—home to one in six Africans—saw its economy contract by 1.7 percent in 2016, and is only expected to grow by 0.6 percent in 2017.¹⁹ Abuja is also consumed by internal security challenges, including ISIL–West Africa/Boko Haram in the north, inter-ethnic violence in the Middle Belt, and instability in the oil-rich Niger



U.S. forces transport Rwandan soldiers and their equipment on a C-17 into the CAR in 2014 to aid French and African Union operations against militants. (Ryan Crane/U.S. Air Force)

Delta. In January 2001, Nigeria was the leading contributor to UN peacekeeping operations in the world; today it is 14th, below countries like Burkina Faso and Indonesia, and has been tarred by allegations of misconduct.

South Africa, the largest economy on the continent until it was overtaken by Nigeria in 2014, faces mounting political unrest that will likely increase as President Zuma approaches the end of his tenure as President of the African National Congress (ANC) in December 2017. Zuma is beset by corruption allegations, a revolt within the governing ANC, and declining popular support. The South African military, long a regional and continental power, has also experienced a steady decline. In 2013, 13 South African soldiers were killed by rebels in the CAR—it was Pretoria's most significant military loss since apartheid, and reports indicate that the

force lacked adequate supplies, armor, air support, and intelligence.

The vacuum left by these fading hegemons has to a large extent been filled by a more diverse group of medium-sized countries, with medium-sized economies, populations, and militaries. Nearly three quarters of all African peacekeepers originate from these non-anchor states; as do five of the six nations that Washington selected for African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership support.²⁰ In North Africa, Tunisia has emerged from its own internal, post-Arab Spring challenges to become a key security partner and important intermediary on Libya. In the east, Uganda and Tanzania serve as important peacekeeping contributors—the former is the largest participant in AMISOM, the latter is now the 13th largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, with more than 2,000 personnel deployed to six UN

missions. In central and southern Africa, Rwanda has a strong economy and well-regarded military, while countries like Namibia and Zambia are experiencing some of the strongest economic growth in the world.

In West Africa, the trend toward multipolarity is most apparent. Faced with the transnational threat emanating from their far wealthier neighbor (Nigeria's GDP is nearly ten times larger than the combined GDP of the countries that it borders), Lake Chad Basin countries Cameroon, Chad, and Niger have mustered limited resources to contain

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Boko Haram. Peacekeeping stalwarts Ghana and Senegal maintain strong contributions to the UN, with more than 6,500 currently deployed to a dozen missions. Meanwhile, countries like Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire continue a tenuous recovery from recent political uncertainties, bolstered by strong 2016 economic growth rates of 5.2 and 8 percent, respectively.

Given the globalized nature of the current African threat environment, the overall importance of state-to-state

engagement—whether with anchor states or otherwise—is likely to continue its downward trajectory. The cross-border nature of terrorist, trafficking, and other threats and the desire for efficiencies highlights the potential for an internationalist approach on the continent that stresses engagement with alliances such as the African Union (AU) and regional groupings like the Economic Community of West African States, Southern African Development Community, and others. The 2014 U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review observes that “multilateral peace operations under the aegis of the United Nations, African Union, and sub-regional organizations are playing an increasingly prominent role in maintaining and restoring international security, including through prevention and mitigation of mass atrocities in threat environments that previously would have deterred multilateral action.”²¹ A host of peacekeeping training centers has been established on the continent and the AU has deployed forces to Burundi (2003), Darfur (2007–), and Somalia (2007–); while such missions have been far from ideal, they nonetheless represent a potential multinational African solution to the continent's problems. Similarly, support to planned regional AU standby brigades could improve response time, lessen the peacekeeping burden of non-African nations, and increase interaction between the continent's forces. Regional civilian cooperation, such as that provided at Botswana's International Law Enforcement Academy also promises to improve multinational security efforts.

While multinational responses and partnerships have made steady gains in recent years, there is also an emerging trend toward engagement at the sub-national level. As Europeans engage with the governments of

Scotland and Catalonia, and Americans turn to their state capitol before Washington, so too do many Africans look to the closer and more familiar center of power. This course of action has been practiced most notably in Somalia, where the semiautonomous administrations of Somaliland and Puntland exert greater control of their regions than the Mogadishu-based Federal Government. In Libya, international actors have balanced engagement with the UN-brokered, Tripoli-based Government of National Accord and the militarily-stronger eastern-based House of Representatives. Below the regional level, as anchors weaken, their economic capitals—Lagos, Addis Ababa, Johannesburg, and Nairobi—are expected to see steady economic growth and infrastructure improvements. These and other African “city-states” are likely to become more autonomous in their interactions with foreign governments and the private sector, standing as cosmopolitan development models even as the country around them remains undergoverned and underresourced.

Broadening External Engagement

The increasing dynamism and complexity of the threat environment and partner engagement in Africa is paralleled by the third challenge facing the Africa policy community—the growing number of international actors that have prioritized the continent in their diplomatic, economic, and military outreach. A decade of remarkable economic growth and relative peace, coupled with the continent’s prime geostrategic location, has drawn interest from emerging powers outside of Europe searching for resources, markets, and allies. This has reduced the leverage of any one state, including the United States,

and has in many circumstances shifted international engagement from a seller’s to a buyer’s market, fostering a more self-confident Africa with leaders diversifying their outreach portfolios beyond established partners.

The legacy of the past two centuries has meant that the former colonial powers and the United States were the primary external influencers in the region. These ties differ from nation to nation but generally remain strong, with 28 African nations represented in the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, 18 in The Commonwealth, and six in the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. Nonetheless, the

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Euro–American monopoly on influence has dissipated during the past decade, and will likely continue to do so in the coming years.

China was among the first new powers to recognize Africa’s potential and, while much has already been written about Sino–African relations, the relationship continues to evolve. China overtook the United States as Africa’s leading trading partner in 2009, and its trade with the continent topped \$200 billion in 2013. While initially focused on access to raw materials, Beijing’s economic

engagement has matured in recent years—today, more than half of China’s foreign direct investment is outside of commodities; including services, banking, construction, and manufacturing.²² Beijing’s security interests on the continent have also shifted. While it remains a key no-strings-attached arms supplier to Africa, Beijing has also taken a more hands-on approach to defense engagement. More than 2,200 of China’s 2,600 personnel on UN peacekeeping missions are stationed on the continent, including its first-ever peacekeeping infantry battalion in South Sudan. In 2008, China deployed its first warships to antipiracy patrols off the Horn of Africa. Beijing is also building its first overseas military outpost in Djibouti, approximately eight miles from Camp Lemonnier, the only permanent U.S. military base in Africa. While the Sino–African relationship continues to evolve, it is not without its challenges. Critics have highlighted Beijing’s focus on elite-to-elite engagement, its lack of commitment to building vocational skills among African employees, and the poor quality of the goods that it imports—in the DRC, Lingala speakers coined the adjective *nguanzu*, derived from the Chinese city of Guangzhou, to mean “unreliable” or “flimsy.”²³

Following in China’s footsteps—and learning from its missteps—India and Brazil continue to deepen their engagement. India has dramatically increased its trade ties with the continent, from \$1 billion in 1995 to \$75 billion two decades later.²⁴ New Delhi’s investment in the India–Africa Forum Summit, held for the first time in 2008 and again in 2011 and 2015, underscores India’s commitment to enhancing business ties with the continent and was reinforced by Prime

Minister Modi’s visit last year to East Africa—his first to the African mainland. While maintaining an interest in oil and gas concerns, India has also pursued a softer power approach—the so-called “pro-people model”—that prioritizes education, health-care, and smaller-scale economic development projects. Leveraging large ethnic Indian communities in East and Southern Africa, Indo–African economic interaction has largely been driven by the private sector. In the security realm, India has focused its defense ties on the same regions, prioritizing Indian Ocean security and UN peacekeeping support.

Home to the largest African population outside of the continent, Brazil has taken advantage of its proximity to West Africa and ties to Lusophone African nations to expand its outreach. With economic engagement focused on mining, oil, gas, and infrastructure projects, trade has increased from \$4 billion in 2000 to \$28.5 billion in 2013.²⁵ Like India, Brazil has prioritized vocational development and knowledge sharing and the more than 500 Brazilian companies that have set up a presence in various African countries seek to utilize local workers. This partner-focused engagement, coupled with the influence of Brazilian media in Portuguese-speaking Africa, has earned Brasilia considerable goodwill—it now has 37 embassies on the continent, and 33 African nations have embassies in Brazil.

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A young boy receives a box of food from a UAE Red Crescent employee at a distribution center in Somalia in August 2013. The UAE Red Crescent gave out food to more than 5,000 internally displaced persons aided in part by AMISOM forces. (Tobin Jones/AMISOM)

focused on resource extraction; instead, they have prioritized the development of markets, security assistance, and diplomatic engagement.

Turkey has considerably increased its diplomatic, economic, and security engagements on the continent, and has more than doubled its number of embassies in Africa. Ankara provides extensive assistance to Somalia in particular; it has donated hundreds of millions of dollars, signed a military training agreement with the Somali government in 2012, and in July of last year opened its largest embassy in the world in Mogadishu. Turkey has maintained a longstanding commitment to antipiracy patrols off the coast of Somalia and, in May 2009, a Turkish

admiral became the first non-American to command the multinational Combined Task Force-151 in the Gulf of Aden.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have also focused on East Africa, primarily as a springboard for counter-Houthi operations in Yemen. Since 2015, they have based thousands of troops, with aircraft and naval vessels, at the Eritrean port of Assab, upgrading the facility to a modern expeditionary airbase, deep-water port, and training installation supporting coalition operations in Yemen. Emirati forces have also trained Somali troops, and the UAE has made significant commercial investments in East Africa and the Indian Ocean island states. Dubai Ports World operates facilities in five

African countries and, in May of last year, won a 30-year contract to manage the port of Berbera, Somaliland and expand it into a regional logistics hub with a possible UAE naval presence. Meanwhile, Riyadh is working to secure basing access in Djibouti and has taken a leadership role in Yemen operations.

Gulf State engagement will continue to shape events in North Africa as well. Emirati security engagement in Libya has steadily increased since the fall of Qadhafi, with Abu Dhabi focusing its military assistance—to include advisory support, light attack aircraft and UAVs—on the eastern-based House of Representatives government and its Libyan National Army.²⁶ The Emirates' Gulf rivals, the Qataris, have focused their support on western Libya; the Qataris have also increased their influence continent-wide via the Doha-based al-Jazeera.

A final external actor, and one that is poised to become an ever-more significant external actor for Africa, is the diaspora. More than 15 million African migrants currently live in Europe, North America, and Asia. These individuals annually send home \$65 billion in officially-recorded remittances (and likely much more informally)—the largest source of external capital flows into Africa. Leveraging their economic influence and improved communications links to home nations, these individuals will likely play a greater role in lobbying their host governments, supporting political movements on the continent, and investing in economic growth in their countries of origin.

Novel Approaches for a Complex Environment

A new threat landscape, new partnership paradigms, and new international players in

Africa demand innovative policy approaches that can translate modest investment into lasting positive effects. A proactive effort that leverages all instruments of national power—from military engagement and diplomatic outreach to NGO support and private sector investment—and shares the burden with international partners is necessary to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges posed by today's Africa. This comprehensive "whole-of-nation" approach calls for new efforts at the individual level, within the U.S. national security apparatus, and beyond.

Use Expertise as a Force Multiplier

At the individual level, this entails fostering greater Africa expertise in the civil service, military, and private/non-governmental sector. Africa is likely to remain the quintessential "economy of force" mission but, as one scholar notes, "a light footprint cannot be synonymous with insufficient local knowledge."²⁷ The number of African Studies programs at U.S. universities falls well behind those that concentrate on the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Focused hiring from these departments and, ideally, an expansion in the number of these programs would promote greater depth of experience and cultural understanding. In the U.S. military, while the standup of AFRICOM represents a strong commitment to Africa, an increase in the number of Foreign Area Officers—particularly outside of the Army, which has already invested considerably in developing Africanists—would provide greater continuity and understanding of the human terrain. An "Africa Hands" program, modeled after similar U.S. military efforts to enhance cultural expertise in Afghanistan–Pakistan and the Asia–Pacific region, could

support this endeavor. Throughout the government, official encouragement of French, Arabic, Somali, Swahili, and other basic language skills would facilitate the cultural expertise necessary for positive engagement. On the ground, leaders should encourage longer tour lengths and repeat deployments to build skills and relationships; avoiding a dynamic in which frequent turnover ensures a loss of institutional and cultural knowledge.

Understand that Security Solutions are not Always Military Solutions

As the shifting nature of the African threat environment demands a holistic U.S. Government response, so too does it demand an approach that takes into account the full range of African security services. Currently, U.S. security assistance is heavily weighted toward the continent’s military forces. Addressing a new era of challenges, however, “means balancing emphasis on professionalizing Africa’s military forces with an equally serious long-term commitment to modernizing law enforcement, civilian intelligence, and border security agencies.”²⁸ The continent presently has the lowest per capita ratio of police officers (only 180 per 100,000 citizens) and judges of any region in the world, and these professions are often direly under-resourced and vulnerable to corruption—according to Transparency International, the police are perceived as the single most corrupt institution in Africa and are the most often bribed, followed by the judiciary.²⁹ The Security Governance Initiative, a joint endeavor between several U.S. government departments and six African partner nations, offers a promising template for such engagement—SGI programs focus on building the

institutional capacity of both civilian and military institutions, increasing security and rule of law.³⁰

Recognize That “One Pole Cannot Support a House”

Looking more broadly, the increased complexity of African security issues demands an approach that pays heed to the Swahili proverb *kijiti kimoja hakisimamishi jingo*, or “one pole cannot support a house.” Within the government and beyond, interagency leaders must synchronize and more clearly delineate U.S. priorities and realistic long-term objectives on the continent, aligning ends with limited means and ensuring that the many “poles” at their disposal—to include government agencies, the private sector, and international partners—are leveraged to their greatest effect. U.S. security engagement with Africa remains, according to Ambassador William Bellamy, “a fragmented mosaic of loosely connected initiatives covering many countries and addressing many diverse issues in a generally superficial fashion.”³¹ The current emphasis on year-to-year funding with a country-by-country focus does not reflect the complexity on the ground; multiyear funding with a regional focus is required for more coordinated and strategic solutions. Additionally, allied partners need to be brought more closely into the policymaking process—as another former ambassador, Princeton Lyman, argues, “Given the scope of Africa’s problems, mobilizing the maximum amount of cooperation from all external actors would be in the U.S. interest.”³²

Conclusion

Nearly two and a half millennia ago, Aristotle observed that “there is always something new

coming out of Africa.” These words remain resonant today, with new and more diverse threats, partners, and external actors all adding to the complexity of the African security environment and complicating U.S. policy responses. By building a base of expertise on the region, diversifying security engagement, and leveraging all of the foreign policy tools at its disposal, Washington will be postured to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by a dynamic Africa, in this Administration and beyond.

PRISM

Notes

¹ Nicholas van de Walle, “U.S. Policy Towards Africa: The Bush Legacy and the Obama Administration,” *African Affairs* 109, no. 434 (2010), 1-2.

² DOD Office of Security Affairs, *United States Security Strategy for sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, August 1995), 3.

³ Van de Walle, “U.S. Policy Towards Africa,” 5. By 2008, the State Department’s vacancy rate in Africa posts was approximately 30 percent.

⁴ McKinsey Global Institute, *Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies* (MGI: 2010), 22.

⁵ Monty G. Marshall, *Conflict Trends in Africa, 1946-2004: A Macro-Comparative Perspective*, (London, UK: DfID, 2005), Annex 2b, 1-7.

⁶ Patrick McGowan, “Africa’s Military Coups d’état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends, and Distribution,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, No. 3 (2003), 355.

⁷ Robert Muggah, *Armed Violence in Africa: Reflections on the Costs of Crime and Conflict* (Geneva: United Nations Development Programme, 2007). Casualty rates are difficult to ascertain with any certainty; particularly with regard to Central Africa. Many scholars consider the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which an estimated 800,000 were killed, as part of the central African war, and its toll is included in casualty estimates.

⁸ Chester A. Crocker, “Conclusion,” in Cooke and Morrison, eds. *U.S. Africa Policy Beyond the Bush Years*, (Washington, DC: The CSIS Press, 2009), 205.

⁹ Andre Le Sage, “Africa’s Irregular Security Threats: Challenges for U.S. Engagement,” *NDU/INSS Strategic Forum*, No. 255 (May 2010), 1.

¹⁰ Jakkie Cilliers, Barry Hughes, and Jonathan Moyer, *African Futures 2050* (Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2011), 15.

¹¹ Elizabeth Leahy, et al., *The Shape of Things to Come: Why Age Structure Matters to a Safer, More Equitable World* (Washington, DC: Population Action International, 2007), 24.

¹² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Bureau for Europe Weekly Report,” 6 January 2017, available at <<http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>>. The countries are Nigeria (21%), Eritrea (11%), Guinea (7%), Côte d’Ivoire (7%), Gambia (7%), Senegal (6%), Mali (6%), Sudan (5%), and Somalia (4%).

¹³ EUROPOL, *Migrant Smuggling in the EU* (The Hague: Europol, 2016), 2.

¹⁴ Reuters, “Germany says time for African ‘Marshall Plan,’” Reuters, 11 November 2016.

¹⁵ Jérôme Chenal, “Habitat III: What is the Agenda for African Cities?” in Sy, ed. *Foresight Africa: Top*

Priorities for the Continent in 2016 (Washington, DC: Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings, 2016), 64.

¹⁶ United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Regional Survey: Africa out to 2045* (London: MOD Strategic Trends Programme, 2016), 63; David Smith, “Internet Use on Mobile Phones in Africa Predicted to Increase 20-fold,” *The Guardian*, 5 June 2014.

¹⁷ Tom Cargill, *Our Common Strategic Interests: Africa’s Role in the Post-G8 World* (London, UK: Chatham House, 2010), 21.

¹⁸ The Fund for Peace, “Fragile States Index 2016,” available at <<http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/rankings-2016>>, accessed 14 January 2016.

¹⁹ International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook, October 2016; Subdued Demand: Symptoms and Remedies* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2016), 2.

²⁰ Senegal, Ghana, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. Ethiopia is the sole “anchor state” represented among APRRP partner nations.

²¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2014), 5.

²² Makhtar Diop, et al., “Africa Still Poised to Become the Next Great Investment Destination,” The World Bank, 30 June 2015.

²³ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, (New York, NY: Ecco, 2014).

²⁴ UN Economic Commission for Africa, *Africa-India: Facts and Figures 2015* (Addis Ababa: UNECA, 2015), iii.

²⁵ Robert Muggah and Nathan Thompson, “What is Brazil Really Doing in Africa?” *The Huffington Post*, 6 March 2015.

²⁶ Jeremy Binnie, “UAE’s Forward Operating Base in Libya Revealed,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 28 October 2016.

²⁷ Hilary Matfess, “Africa,” in *Charting a Course: Strategic Choices for a New Administration* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2016), 298.

²⁸ Le Sage, “Africa’s Irregular Security Threats,” 1.

²⁹ William Bellamy, “Making Better Sense of U.S. Security Engagement in Africa,” in Cooke and Morrison, eds. *U.S. Africa Policy Beyond the Bush Years* (Washington, DC: The CSIS Press, 2009), 19; Transparency International and Afrobarometer *People and Corruption: Africa Survey 2015* (Berlin: Transparency International, 2015), 3.

³⁰ The White House, “Factsheet: Security Governance Initiative,” available at <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/06/fact-sheet-security-governance-initiative>>, accessed 20 January 2017. Participating U.S. government entities include the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, and Homeland

Security; along with the U.S. Agency for International Development. The African partner nations are Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia.

³¹ Bellamy, “Making Better Sense of U.S. Security Engagement in Africa,” 26.

³² Princeton N. Lyman, “Africa in U.S. Foreign Policy,” in Richmond M. Lloyd, ed., *American Foreign Policy: Regional Perspectives 2009* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2009), 256–7.



A Burundi soldier posts security at the Bangui Airport, Central African Republic (CAR) in late 2013. In coordination with the French military and African Union, the U.S. military provided airlift support to help enable African forces to deploy promptly to prevent further spread of sectarian violence and restore security in CAR. (Erik Cardenas/U.S. Air Force)