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In Sub-Saharan Africa, the movement of populations, proliferation of violent, nonstate actors, expansion of criminal networks, and continued weakness of governance indicators all present serious challenges in the short, medium, and long term. Reevaluating American partnerships on the continent and reinstating the principle of first doing no harm are critical if the United States is to achieve its objectives in the region and strengthen multilateral partnerships to advance our global security agenda.

Though often relegated to the back burner of American foreign policy deliberations, developments in Sub-Saharan Africa have garnered increased attention in recent years. The *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* identified four “strategic pillars” that American policy would strive toward on the continent: “the strengthening of democratic institutions, spurring economic growth, trade, and investment, advancing peace and security and promoting opportunity and development.”¹ The assumption underlying all of these objectives is that progress will be enabled by strong partnerships with countries and regional blocs across the continent.

The majority of these strategic priorities are economic; one could also argue that some of the most publicized American initiatives toward Sub-Saharan Africa are focused on catalyzing economic growth. Power Africa’s goal of bringing electricity to 60 million new people across Africa has been marketed as necessary for industrialization and development.² The African Growth and Opportunity Act, passed in 2000 and subsequently renewed, abides by the logic that expanding preferential trade policies to African countries will result in the sort of growth necessary for human development and peace-building.³

As the dependence on strategic partnerships and emphasis on economic goals suggest, Africa is a low priority for America’s national securi-

ty agenda, despite increased attention over recent decades. The threats to American security and prosperity emanating from the region are largely indirect, and the overarching American strategy toward Africa has been to maintain a minimal presence. Troubling developments in Sub-Saharan Africa have been overshadowed by events elsewhere. The creation of U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) in 2007, however, signaled the growing recognition that these indirect threats demand some sort of security-oriented response.

Unfortunately, certain aspects of American policy in the region have proved counterproductive to our efforts to stabilize the region and promote democratic state-building. “Strategic partners” is all too often a euphemism. American alliances and capacity-building initiatives have often endowed us with strange bedfellows, including governments that harass their own populations and sponsor rebel groups across borders. As Stephen Watts reflected, the “strategic implications of failed [Sub-Saharan Africa] policies extend beyond the direct and immediate consequences in the partner nation. Perhaps most obviously, the United States risks being ‘tarred by the brush’ of partner governments who act abusively toward their own populations.”⁴

Often, the nature of the aid extended by the United States to African counterparts is given more consideration than the host-nation system it enters. This generally reflects the lack of institutional expertise concerning Sub-Saharan African countries and their politics in the U.S. Government, but it is also a by-product of recipient countries’ manipulation of this bureaucratic blind spot. Just as it is unhelpful to conceive of spaces as being “ungoverned,” disregarding the agency of African counterparts undermines the pursuit of U.S. objectives. If these objectives are to be realized on the continent, more attention must be paid to the local contexts in which operations occur and to the characteristics of the institutions with which the United States partners. A light footprint cannot be synonymous with insubstantial local knowledge.

American policymakers must focus on cultivating effective partnerships to achieve the strategic objectives laid out by recent U.S. Presidents regarding the institutionalization of rule of law, democratization, and economic growth. Given current social, political, and economic patterns, the coming years herald dramatic change throughout Sub-Saharan Africa; if America is to maintain a light footprint on the continent, plans must be crafted and implemented today to help African partners ameliorate current problems and prepare for coming climatological, demographic, and ideological shifts. This will require a broader conceptualization of “security,” as a number of the challenges African countries face do not fall within the traditional security realm. A holistic approach to security will

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require interagency harmonization rather than merely an expansion of USAFRICOM's mandate. If handled properly, partnerships with African countries could enhance the prospects for peace and economic growth, as well as further American strategic and normative objectives globally. Cultivating partnerships with the 48 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa can also translate into more support for American positions in multilateral forums such as the United Nations (UN).

A Continent on the Move

Contradicting long-held tropes about the static nature of its cultures and societies, Africa is a continent in flux. Seasonal migration, often related to pastoralism and agricultural schedules, has long been a characteristic of communities in Africa. This migration often crosses borders, creating issues of cooperation for neighboring African states. Compounding these flows are the proliferation and movement of displaced populations across the continent. The adjustments made to accommodate transient, displaced, or seasonal populations have at times placed a measure of stress on host populations; this has resulted in low-intensity violence in a number of regions across the continent, as groups compete over land and other scarce resources.

There are two emerging patterns of migration in Africa that have significant consequences for the stability and security of the continent: climate change–related displacement and urbanization. Both of these phenomena strain legal, agricultural, and social systems across the sub-continent and show signs of increasing in size and speed in coming years.

Climate change will radically alter the productive capacity of a number of agricultural regions across Africa, primarily through shifting precipitation patterns. Considering that an estimated 70 percent of Africans are employed by rain-fed agriculture (which constitutes an estimated 30 percent of the continent-wide gross domestic product), the effects of even a small change in rainfall patterns could be enormous. There is a looming possibility of a food crisis as agricultural productivity is depressed amid booming African demographics. The result of these patterns, according to Calestous Juma, is that Africans “already see climate change and security through the same lens.”⁵ The U.S. analytical framework must catch up to that of our regional counterparts. Numerous studies have suggested a link between food prices and civil unrest; given the profound disconnect between many African heads of state and their young populations (to be discussed later in this chapter), a rise in food prices could kick off the sort of ill-fated political revolutions that characterized the Arab Spring.

The conflict in Darfur illustrates the potential scale of instability related to climate change. The conflict, which claimed an estimated 400,000 lives and displaced millions, has been described as the first “modern climate-change conflict” by Jeffrey Mazo, due to the role that prolonged drought played in fomenting violence.⁶ Just as the tragedy in Darfur foreshadows the coming conflicts from climate change, it illustrates the shortcomings of the existing mechanisms to respond to such violence.⁷ Though then-President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice both traveled to the region and described the conflict as genocide, the United States failed to “put any real pressure on the Sudanese regime.”⁸ The result was not only a humanitarian disaster but also a geopolitical crisis for neighboring countries attempting to absorb refugees.

Along with climate change, urbanization poses a particular and daunting set of challenges to policymakers. The rapidity and lethality with which Ebola spread through West Africa in 2014–2015 were, in part, due to the disease entering urban areas for the first time.⁹ The lack of state capacity to engage in proactive urban planning exacerbates the complications inherent to urbanization, as nearly all of the growth in urban populations is more accurately described as an increase in slum-dwelling populations. With less access to state services, less security, and fewer resources, slums act as incubators for violence and criminality.

One of the most obvious weaknesses of African states has been their inability to secure a monopoly of the legitimate use of force within their borders. The number and influence of armed groups in the region can be attributed both to the weak institutions of the state as well as to a huge surplus of small arms and light weapons circulating throughout the continent. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) notes, “Given the number of weapons still circulating from past conflicts in the region, there is very little need to import large numbers of weapons into West Africa.”¹⁰ Urbanization will entail not only increased population concentration but also a concentration of the small arms and light weapons that they bring with them. If improperly managed, urbanization in African may give rise to new waves of violent instability.

The Rise of Islamist Terrorism and Militia Groups

Perhaps the most obvious militia-related development in Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years—and the one that most directly affects American security interests—has been the rise of Islamic terrorism. While Islam has long been a critical part of African societies and political economies, violent mobilization around Salafist jihadism is relatively new. Prior to 2001, there were no designated foreign terrorist organizations in Sub-Sa-

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haran Africa.¹¹ Today Nigeria (and the broader Lake Chad region) is struggling with Boko Haram, Kenya and Somalia are still grappling with al Shabaab, and the Sahel is afflicted by al Qaeda in the Maghreb and Ansar al Dine. Though these groups have sworn allegiance to global jihadist movements, they all arose out of specific socioeconomic contexts and political systems; they evolved from campaigning on local grievances to broader issues. Countering Islamist terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa will require not only identifying the international ties of these groups but also recognizing the domestic roots of their discontent.¹² These armed groups have taken advantage of not only the weakness of African states but also the rising criminality across the continent (addressed below) and the popular discontent of much of the population.¹³ With such low trust in the state's security sector and political orientation, it is no surprise that antigovernment movements have generated significant support. Civilian support for antigovernment groups has made it difficult to counter them. Furthermore, given porous borders, transnational kinship networks, and displacement patterns that characterize the region, domestic armed groups frequently have regional consequences.

Though these groups are motivated by domestic grievances, they often have foreign sponsors. The foreign dimension of domestic rebel groups threatens regional stability, as governments often engage in tit-for-tat sponsorship of antigovernment militias.¹⁴ The states sponsoring these militias typically benefit (politically and/or financially) from the development of a "war economy" in their neighboring states; the incentives are thus perverted for regional peace efforts, as some of the actors at the table may not be earnestly interested in brokering peace. The vested interest of some countries in fomenting instability limits the capacity of the United States to cultivate effective partnerships on the continent; this is compounded in instances where the U.S. Government lacks subject matter expertise regarding intracontinental geopolitics.

The proliferation of vigilante and pro-government militia groups highlights the weak position and lack of capacity of African states; security has been decentralized to unofficial community levels. This "democratization," however, is not accompanied by the development of accountability mechanisms, creating the conditions for impunity.¹⁵ Some recent troubling research has suggested that "informal ties to militias [are] a deliberate government strategy to avoid accountability" and has correlated weak democracy and foreign aid to such ties.¹⁶ Even following the cessation of conflict, the existence of such groups complicates the peace-building process. These groups at times "feel a sense of entitlement for some reward or recognition for their contribution to the government's 'victory.'"¹⁷

Transnational Criminal Groups

Civil governance in Sub-Saharan Africa is also challenged by highly organized and often transnational criminal groups. Criminal actors have made use of the improved infrastructure and economic profile of a number of African communities, while exploiting the gaps in governance and capacity to operate criminally.¹⁸ Development projects in Africa overseeing the expansion and legitimization of state authority have unwittingly empowered criminal actors.

Criminal networks have become a central feature of a number of African economies, and the region is rising in importance to global criminal networks. Andre Le Sage has described Africa as a “‘duty free’ port for organized crime.”¹⁹ The World Bank estimated in 2009 that organized crime in Sub-Saharan Africa brought \$1.3 trillion to the region, and UN-ODC research suggests that 7 to 10 percent of illicit global trade is linked in some way to Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁰ Since transnational criminal flows often manifest in distinctly domestic crime (such as robbery, murder, and extortion), there has been insufficient regional attention paid to the effects of criminality in favor of treating the domestic symptoms.²¹

The scope of criminal activity in Sub-Saharan Africa is nearly as astounding as its scale. The drug trade, human trafficking, arms and wildlife trafficking, and cyber crime are all major criminal activities that show signs of expanding and entrenching their networks. The convergence and mutually reinforcing relationship between criminal syndicates and other destabilizing forces pose a daunting challenge to African governments.

For example, both coasts on the continent are critical transit points in the international drug trade: cocaine in West Africa and heroin in East Africa. These narcotics flows appear to be on the rise. It is estimated that two-thirds of the cocaine consumed in Europe has passed through West Africa; the UN estimates that the region is a corridor for \$1.25 billion worth of cocaine every year.²² Human trafficking also afflicts the continent; in East Africa, many people are trafficked to the Middle East, while many from West Africa and the Sahel cross the Sahara desert to reach Europe. In Western and Central Africa, women and children have been especially susceptible to trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labor in Europe and other places.²³

As mentioned, a significant number of arms circulates throughout the continent, frequently through criminal networks. Wildlife trafficking has gained international attention in recent years, as emerging markets’ taste for luxury goods like ivory has driven a rise in elephant poaching. Internationally, illegal wildlife trade is valued at \$7 billion to \$23 billion annually.²⁴ This places it as the fourth most profitable illicit sector, behind drug trafficking, human trafficking, and counterfeiting. African

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wilderness areas, prized for their exoticism, are particularly affected by the rise in this trade.²⁵

Counterfeit goods, including electronics, apparel, and medicine, populate markets across the continent. It has been estimated that counterfeit anti-malarial pills generate over \$400 million annually in revenue. Such a trade not only empowers criminal networks but also undermines public health initiatives and exacts a tragic human toll.²⁶

Africa is also the fastest growing region in the world for cyber crime. Experts estimate that 8 in 10 personal computers on the continent are infected.²⁷ While that threat may seem like merely a drag on African growth and development, the rise and spread of cyber crime in Sub-Saharan Africa represents one of the most tangible threats to American national security. Infected computers can be manipulated, from a central hub and without owners' knowledge, to pass along information regarding transmissions.

The proliferation of criminal trades and networks helps set the stage for further criminality; thus they constitute a threat through their immediately destabilizing effects and their secondary effects of institutionalizing networks of criminality. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime notes that as “networks of corruption and collusion [are] established, they [are] well placed to adapt to flows of other illicit goods, assuming that the price [is] right.”²⁸ As the National Intelligence Council noted in 2011, “Terrorists and insurgents increasingly will turn to crime to generate funding and will acquire logistical support from criminals.”²⁹ Already the lucrative practice of kidnapping for ransom is a tactic shared by terrorist groups and criminals from the Niger Delta to the coast of Somalia. Though claims that all criminal activity has coalesced into a single network are overblown, it is undeniable that there has been convergence between illicit networks seeking to circumvent the state and armed groups seeking to undermine it. As Erik Alda and Joseph Sala note:

cooperation between terrorists and criminal networks takes place when each group determines that their inherent fear of contact outweighs the risks. While collaboration might deliver some mutual benefits and/or satisfy some organizational necessity, there are common disincentives to affecting such partnerships including increased and unwanted attention and surveillance, fear of compromising internal security through infiltration and the heightened prospect of capture. Such contact routinely takes the form of “pay-as-you-go” operations, one-off instances of customer–service provider relationships.³⁰

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The potentially destabilizing nature of these partnerships was highlighted in 2012, when al Qaeda in the Maghreb and Ansar al Dine, both of which are Salafist jihadi sects, partnered with Tuareg separatist groups, which have robust historical connections to illicit trade networks, and declared the independence of northern Mali. Moreover, the development of criminal networks across northern Mali has weakened the already anemic state presence in the region, making it all the more difficult to counter radical armed groups there. The situation in Mali became so dire in 2012 that France was compelled to intervene to restore order and maintain the country's territorial integrity; the expansion of criminality and the deepening of the crime-terror nexus could advance to a stage where the United States is also forced into a similar intervention, if preventive measures are not taken.³¹

Even more troubling than the convergence of terrorism and criminality across Africa are the instances in which the state is complicit. Guinea-Bissau is a frequently cited example of a "criminal state" in which the highest rungs of the government's leadership have been drawn into criminality. Clearly such complete criminalization represents a challenge to American security as it reduces the number of eligible partners in the region. Furthermore, even the incorporation of lower levels of government into criminal networks (whether they participate directly in criminal networks or merely accept bribes to allow for the functioning of these groups) undermines the rule of law, erodes citizens' trust in their governments, and increases the odds that the area will be a source of instability and grievances.³²

Governance Challenges

Africa is a young continent. The median age of its population is in the teens. Development economists speculate that the demographic characteristics of the region could result in a "demographic dividend" that could jumpstart economic growth. Unfortunately, however, the sort of economic infrastructure (from jobs and emerging industrial sectors to educational opportunities and technical training) necessary to absorb this youth bulge does not exist. Given a UN survey that found 40 percent of those who joined rebel movements did so because of a lack of jobs, this youth bulge seems poised to contribute to instability and violence rather than economic development.³³ The events of the Arab Spring could very well be repeated in Sub-Saharan Africa if disaffected youth also take to the streets.

In general, African youth feel distant from their political systems, which have often been stagnant for generations. The table gives the

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Table. Africa's 10 Longest Serving Leaders: Median Age and Length of Current Term in Office (in Years)		
Country	Median Age of Population	Leader's Term in Office
Cameroon	18.3	40
Equatorial Guinea	19.4	36
Angola	17.9	36
Zimbabwe	20.2	35
Uganda	15.5	29
Sudan	19.1	26
Chad	17.2	24
Eritrea	19.1	24
The Gambia	20.2	21
Republic of the Congo	19.8	18

median age and length of the current term in office of Africa's 10 longest-serving leaders. The lack of economic opportunities, coupled with unresponsive, static political systems, could contribute to an increase in rebel movements and violent conflict. Recent reversals in term-limit restrictions, particularly in the Great Lakes region and East Africa, could further such destructive dynamics.

Another troubling pattern that aggravates discontent is security forces' violence against civilians. This pattern has extended beyond the high-profile incidences of state-sponsored killings and genocides that the world witnessed in Rwanda, the Sudans, and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to the point that low-grade predation by security forces is routine in many African countries. Transparency International found that the police are perceived as the most corrupt institution in Sub-Saharan Africa; according to a recent Afrobarometer report, "On average, 42% of citizens say 'most' or 'all' police are corrupt."³⁴ Obviously, a corrupt and ineffective police force reduces security by hampering states' ability to respond to challenges. As the Center for Strategic and International Studies report on police reform in Sub-Saharan Africa noted, "Many of Africa's current and emerging security challenges are more appropriately addressed in the first instance by competent and professional police forces than by military forces." The report suggests that because the police's "interface with the public is far wider than that of the military, effective police forces can play a critical role in public safety, civilian protection, and conflict protection."³⁵ The lack of confidence in African police incentivizes the aforementioned troubling trends of community policing and vigilantism. Reports of rampant torture, corruption, and violence against civilians suggest that security-sector reform, aimed at improving the professionalism not only of African militaries but also of

their police services, must be central to American policy in the region. Such reforms could imbue citizens with greater trust in their governments and ameliorate some of the insecurity in the region.

Refocusing and Improving U.S. Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa

U.S. objectives in Sub-Saharan Africa center on creating an environment in which direct intervention to mitigate conflict and alleviate humanitarian disasters is unnecessary. A corollary to this objective is American interest in preventing criminality and destabilizing factors from expanding beyond Africa's borders. Though African issues are usually on the policy back burner, sound and effective regional policies can reduce the chance that the problems and challenges discussed above will metastasize into direct threats to core U.S. interests. Many have noted that, in the absence of robust American commitment, other countries have expanded their investment activities.

The People's Republic of China, for example, is now Africa's largest trading partner and is deeply engaged in trade, banking, energy, and infrastructure projects. Some 800 Chinese corporations are active in Africa. Chinese-African trade approached \$300 billion in 2015, far more than traditional investors such as France and the United States. Though actual direct foreign investment from China lags behind the West, there is an undeniable increase in China's presence on the continent. The nature of this increasing influence is worth consideration. Direct Chinese contributions to authoritarian regimes, including debt forgiveness, is a genuine concern for those seeking to promote democracy and the rule of law. While Chinese military interest in the continent appears to be low, China's economic engagement with Africa provides useful political as well as economic advantages, especially in the UN, where dozens of African countries are represented. China's rising profile in Africa may not pose an immediate security concern, but these trends are worth consideration within the broader international balance of power and normative system.³⁶

Though the establishment of a combatant command represents a significant shift in American policy toward engagement in African conflicts, USAFRICOM is not designed to act as a frequent or rapid responder to crises. Additionally, it is unclear if it is well-suited to address the softer realms of security that mitigating conflict in Africa will require. The command should make a point of cultivating regional expertise in African affairs. Annual military exercises with African security partners (such as Operation *Flintlock*) should become more frequent and should be complemented by greater bilateral contact. Recognizing African coun-

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tries' importance to American national security and developing effective policies in the region require a greater understanding of national and subnational African politics than currently exists generally within the Department of Defense.

The current policy of relying on a handful of strategic partners is not strategically untenable; however, the current choice of partners in the region is ultimately counterproductive to American policy objectives. Many of our partnerships are dependent upon individual leaders; their countries' trajectories following their departure from power (due to natural causes, coups, or term limits) are uncertain. U.S. objectives in the region can benefit greatly from legitimate institutions. Fortunately, the United States is in a position to help cultivate legitimacy for regional bodies and institutionalize good governance in individual states. This recognition leads us to the first two steps in reforming and improving American policy in Sub-Saharan Africa. First, we should empower regional efforts through increased support to the African Union (AU) and pan-regional security endeavors, improving security sector reform programming and establishing multiyear funding authorities for such programs. Second, we should recommit to democracy promotion, in particular through a rethinking of our current strategic partnerships and enhanced funding for civil society groups and political party training.

An obvious imperative is closer engagement with the African Union.³⁷ The recent Ebola crisis demonstrated AU capacity to use a security lens when considering the impacts of soft threats to human security, yet it remains unclear as to how the continent will cope with the next pandemic.³⁸ Identifying how and why certain countries were able to stymie the spread of Ebola, as well as coordinating continental public health policies and responses, is critical if we are to develop effective responses to future public health concerns. The AU is well positioned to take on such responsibility. Additionally, the African Union could play a valuable role as a partner in addressing the threats stemming from climate change-related displacement and urbanization. The challenge is moving the AU from a normative body to one that produces tangible policy outputs.³⁹ Additionally, engagement with the African Union requires that the institutionalized impunity for sitting heads of state be revoked and that the United States work with the AU to promote good governance and accountability at the multinational level as a priority.

An improved working relationship with and stronger support of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the African Union, and other regional organizations might also strengthen the many different peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions currently active in Africa. Through 2015, more than 100,000 peacekeepers were deployed on the

continent, including 80,000 in nine different UN missions (principally in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, South Sudan, and Mali), 22,000 deployed under AU auspices in Somalia, and a smaller mission in Guinea-Bissau run by the Economic Community of West African States.⁴⁰ This is far more than a generation ago; despite the increase, there is still some ambiguity as to which countries should bear the burden of arranging and maintaining peacekeeping operations. Given the continent's horrific experiences with genocide and violent conflict, stronger regional organizations backed up by U.S. trainers and enablers make sense as one way to help prevent future recurrences.

Synchronizing U.S. objectives and priorities among agencies will strengthen the efficiency of American partnerships at the bilateral and multilateral levels. At present, interagency communication is lacking; rather than expanding the mandate of military institutions to include developmental objectives (and vice versa), interagency lines of communication should be improved.

Regional interventions to strengthen security systems and promote postconflict reconciliation show particular promise; especially with American support, these efforts could mend relations between governments and their populations.⁴¹ Reforming African police forces in particular has the potential to reap governmental dividends.⁴² These reforms would not only engender greater civilian trust in their military but also facilitate security objectives in general. William Rosenau of RAND, echoing counterinsurgency doctrine, argues that "service-oriented, community policing, intended to protect the public from serious crime, can itself be a powerful counterinsurgency tool by fostering a climate in which the public freely provides the police with information about security threats."⁴³

Security-sector reform, in general, is outside of the mandate of institutions such as the World Bank, despite their endorsement of the results and objectives of such reforms. As a result, American partnerships in the region must promote holistic security-sector reform to cultivate civilian trust and regional stability. At present, Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act requires a waiver for the United States to engage in police training; while it is not an arduous process to obtain such a waiver, even a small hurdle is a disincentive.⁴⁴

Military training and education, bilaterally, regionally, and in pan-continental endeavors, should emphasize respect for the rule of law and ways of cultivating effective civil-security partnerships rather than merely focusing on enhancing the tactical capacity of the units in training. This may require a modification of the current Leahy Law "vetting process." At present, the requirement that military units receiving Ameri-

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can training and support have not committed human rights violations is unevenly applied and frequently waived. As RAND notes, these requirements do not apply to “most drug enforcement and non–Defense Department counterterrorism assistance” or to Federal Bureau of Investigation assistance.⁴⁵ RAND concludes that the “U.S. government needs to improve its vetting practices by making them more consistent across programs and agencies and standardizing them across different types of assistance.” Through this process of review, the definition of military *unit* should be reconsidered, as should the withholding of training in cases of human rights abuses. Training that emphasizes improved civil-military relations and respect for human rights should be considered in instances where strategically important partner nations violate human rights principles.⁴⁶ Revamping American legal restrictions on foreign assistance to improve capacity-building objectives should be a congressional priority.

In addition to rethinking the content of our training programs, we must reconsider their funding. The lack of multiyear funding authorities calls into question American commitment to building partner capacity. Establishing long-term, clearly funded programs telegraphs American commitment more appropriately than episodic engagements. The United States should recalibrate its continental policy to reemphasize the importance of security-sector reform enshrining the rule of law through a revamping of our security assistance programming’s legislative regulation, operational content, and partnering bodies.

While pan-regional efforts deserve more attention than they currently receive, bilateral relationships must also be reformed to promote good governance; American understanding of the political, social, and cultural relationships that contribute to governance patterns across the continent needs significant bolstering. This dearth of information has incentivized one-size-fits-all strategies and has allowed events hundreds of miles away (and often decades later) to dictate contemporary policies.

Reform requires catalyzing change from our regional partners and rethinking our assistance paradigm. Too frequently U.S. assistance (military, humanitarian, and developmental) is co-opted by undemocratic governments to serve their interests and bolster their regimes. Evidence suggests that the assistance levied to the Ethiopian government to ease the suffering from the 1984–1985 famine was used to further the government’s war effort; multiple sources found that “relief supplies were used to pay soldiers and militia and to lure people into locations where they were recruited into the military or subjected to forcible resettlement.”⁴⁷ Natural disasters, famines, and droughts are all too frequently used to deflect attention from the failures of governance that have allowed suffering to be so widespread. International assistance to crises in

Sudan and Rwanda has also been used to bolster oppressive regimes. As David Bayley wrote for the National Institute of Justice, “The question is not whether assistance is political—it all is—but what its likely consequences are for American objectives.”⁴⁸

Reforming our assistance paradigm requires recognition of the distinct political economies of countries with whom we partner. This will require cultivating expertise that is currently lacking within American policy circles. Too frequently Africa is treated as a homogenous bloc and vessel through which American aid can be implemented without being affected by the specific characteristics of partnering governments. Increasing American institutional knowledge about specific African political economies in all sectors of government is critical; increasing the number of American military advisors in the region, bolstering ties between American and domestic development agencies, and enhancing the duration and frequency of training programs (for civil servants and the security sector) are all important for advancing overarching American security interests in the region. As the Overseas Development Institute notes:

*It is useful to draw a distinction between fragile and conflict-affected states that are willing but unable, and those that are unwilling and unable to reduce the vulnerability of populations to disaster risks and impacts. Disaster risk management tends to assume a positive state-society “social contract” exists where the state adopts the management of risk as a public good. But in some states disaster risk management is treated as a benefit available to political supporters. Intervention strategies . . . therefore need to be tailored to suit the context.*⁴⁹

Imposing homogeneity on African states serves no interest other than expediency. American assistance must first abide by the principle to do no harm. This will require a closer examination of how current assistance programs and partnerships have empowered undemocratic actors and oppressive regimes.

Additionally, U.S. assistance to political parties and civil society groups should be considered a means of fostering long-term stability. Democracy and governance programs cannot be disregarded as “soft” politics; improving the political climate and increasing the legitimacy of the political process in African countries are vital for long-term peace in the region.

Ultimately, much of the insecurity and instability in Sub-Saharan Africa is a result of poor relations between African governments and their populations. In order to successfully utilize the “strategic partnerships”

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model of dealing with security threats in Sub-Saharan Africa, American policies will have to strengthen and improve upon the governance patterns of African countries. Too often, strengthening government capacity and bolstering the power of the ruling party have been confused with state-building efforts. Institutionalizing accountability mechanisms and revamping the civilian/ government/military contract are critical to managing African security now and in coming decades.

In short, African stability is threatened by the lack of institutional capacity to manage the threats stemming from migratory patterns and the rise of violent nonstate and criminal actors. Revamping the relationship between African governments and their populations is critical to enabling successful strategic partnerships between the United States and African counterparts. Revising our assistance paradigms and ensuring that our strategic partners share our values and objectives can best achieve American objectives on the continent, but they require rethinking our political assistance and general objectives for promoting democracy, enhancing support to civil society, and considering lending assistance to political parties.

Sub-Saharan Africa will not rise in importance to American national security priorities to match Europe, the Asia-Pacific, or the Middle East in the near term, but the region's size, population, resources, and many challenges will engage U.S. policymakers in important ways. Much can be done to improve the conditions and prospects of its millions of inhabitants without massive increases in development assistance. Already the largest single donor nation, the United States can lead the international community in a sustained effort toward better governance, improved economic performance, and better security for all Africans. These efforts will benefit not only Africa, but also the international community as a whole and U.S. interests particularly.

Notes

¹ U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa (Washington, DC: The White House, June 2012).

² U.S. Agency for International Development, "Power Africa Info Sheet," available at <www.usaid.gov/powerafrica>.

³ The African Growth and Opportunity Act, "About AGOA," available at <<http://agoa/about-agoa.html>>.

⁴ Stephen Watts, *Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa's Fragile States* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2015).

⁵ Michael Werz and Laura Conley, *Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict in Northwest Africa: Rising Dangers and Policy Options Across the Arc of Tension* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, April 2012).

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⁶ Jeffrey Mazo, *Climate Conflict: How Global Warming Threatens Security and What to Do About It* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009), chapter 3.

⁷ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Darfur: The International Community's Failure to Protect* (Washington, DC: ICG, 2006).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ World Health Organization, "A Fast-moving Ebola Epidemic Full of Tragic Surprises," available at <www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/ebola-6-months/surprises/en/>.

¹⁰ The fall of Muammar Qadhafi in 2012 led to an outpouring of weapons across the Sahel as Libyan armories were looted and fighters returned to their home countries.

¹¹ Ryan Miller, "The Rise of Terrorist Groups in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Boren Magazine*, May 19, 2014.

¹² There is an interesting interplay between local grievances and aspirations to a global brand at play among African jihadists. Jakkie Cilliers observes that "violent jihadism is increasingly regionalized . . . the ability of either the Islamic State or al-Qaeda to manage a terror network with affiliates in Africa, Asia and the Middle East is limited. The schisms and infighting within and between these groups reflect this reality, which should not detract from the motivational impact of local groups seeking to associate themselves with a global brand." See *Violent Islamist Extremism and Terror in Africa*, ISS Paper 286 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, October 2015), available at <www.issafrica.org/uploads/Paper%20286%20_v3.pdf>.

¹³ Andre Le Sage, *Africa's Irregular Security Threats*, INSS Strategic Forum 255 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, May 2010).

¹⁴ British Broadcasting Corporation, "DR Congo Country Profile," October 2, 2016.

¹⁵ "Who Are the Anti-balaka of CAR?" *IRIN News*, February 12, 2014.

¹⁶ Neil Mitchell, Sabine Carey, and Chris Butler, "The Impact of Pro-Government Militias on Human Rights Violations," *International Interactions* 40, no. 5 (October 2014).

¹⁷ Eric Y. Shibuya, *Demobilizing Irregular Forces* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

¹⁸ The South Africa-based Institute for Security Studies notes that the expansion of criminality in Sub-Saharan Africa can be partially explained by "a more sustainable state-building path." The group explains that the "weak capacity for governance in state institutions and their inability to provide stable regulatory frameworks and deliver services to marginalized populations mean that Africa's economic growth in the last decade has often occurred despite the state." See Mark Shaw and Tuesday Reitano, *The Evolution of Organised Crime in Africa: Towards a New Response*, ISS Paper 244 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, April 2013), available at <www.issafrica.org/uploads/Paper244.pdf>.

¹⁹ Le Sage.

²⁰ Shaw and Reitano.

²¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa: A Threat Assessment* (Brussels: UNODC, 2013).

²² *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, Fixing a Fractured State* (Brussels: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2015). Legal drugs too, such as tobacco, are smuggled in West Africa and generate an estimate \$775 million per year. According to the UNODC, in 2010 a "series of larger seizures were made indicating that large volumes of Afghan heroin were entering the region by sea from Iran and Pakistan. Between 2010 and 2012, more heroin was seized than in the previous 20 years. . . . It was not that the number of seizures were increasing, but those that were being made were far larger than ever before." The drug trade has fundamentally transformed the political economies of the regions in which they operate, particularly in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, where the state has become complicit with (and may even benefit from) the drug trade.

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Enhancing drug policies globally will do little if African states remain a weak link in the system aimed at stemming the flow of drugs.

²³ Not all trafficking funnels people out of the continent. The UN notes that “general trends within the Economic Community of West African States . . . include trafficking from rural to urban and industrial areas for employment and sexual exploitation.” *UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, Human Trafficking: An Overview* (New York: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008).

²⁴ Tom Maguire and Cathy Haenlein, *An Illusion of Complicity: Terrorism and the Illegal Ivory Trade in East Africa* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 2015).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Le Sage.

²⁷ Shaw and Reitano; Franz Stefan-Gady, “Africa’s Cyber WMD,” *Foreign Policy*, March 24, 2012., Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria have become major hubs for cyber crime and the global revenue derived from such activity is estimated to near \$600 million.

²⁸ *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*.

²⁹ James Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, “Statement for the Record: Threat Assessment,” available at <www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/testimonies/194-congressional-testimonies-2013/816-statement-for-the-record-worldwide-threat-assessment-of-the-u-s-intelligence-community>.

³⁰ Erik Alda and Joseph L. Sala, “Links Between Terrorism, Organized Crime and Crime: The Case of the Sahel Region,” *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 3, no. 1 (September 2014).

³¹ Research has demonstrated that though criminal networks and narcotics trade may not necessarily catalyze new conflicts, these activities are connected to the elongation of conflicts. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this has particular significance as the continuation of existing conflicts would preclude the sort of infrastructural and human development projects necessary for sustainable growth, development, and peace-building. American national security policy in Africa must recognize the development of mutually beneficial relationships between criminal networks and terrorist groups. Cooperation between these groups weakens the rule of law and problematizes the cultivation of effective strategic partnerships in the region. See Francesco Strazzari, “Captured or Capturing? Narcotics and Political Instability along the ‘African Route’ to Europe,” *The European Review of Organised Crime* 1, no. 2 (2014), 5–34, available at <http://sgocnet.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Strazzari_2_5-34.pdf>.

³² Le Sage.

³³ Kingsley Ighobor, “Africa’s Youth: A ‘Ticking Time Bomb’ or an Opportunity?” *Africa Renewal*, May 2013.

³⁴ Pauline M. Wambua, “Police Corruption in Africa Undermines Trust, but Support for Law Enforcement Remains Strong,” Dispatch #56, Afrobarometer, 2015.

³⁵ Richard Downie and Jennifer Cooke, *Policy Reform in Africa* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011).

³⁶ See Hilary Matfess, “Should You Worry about China’s Investments in Africa?” *Washington Post*, September 9, 2015; Deborah Brautigam, “5 Myths about Chinese Investment in Africa,” *Foreign Policy*, December 4, 2015.

³⁷ One of the most obvious mechanisms to support this initiative is through the provision of funding. It has been estimated that \$1 billion is needed to make the force operational.

³⁸ The mobilization of a Military-Civil Humanitarian Mission, led by the African Union and consisting of medical and military personnel and coordinating domestic,

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regional, and international volunteers and donations, suggests that partnerships are possible to plan for similar disasters.

³⁹ John L. Hirsch, “Africa’s Challenges and the Role of the African Union: Q&A with Aisha Abdullahi,” IPI Global Observatory, October 7, 2014.

⁴⁰ Danielle Renwick, “Peace Operations in Africa,” Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, May 15, 2015.

⁴¹ William Rosenau, *Low-Cost Trigger-Pullers: The Politics of Policing in the Context of Contemporary “State Building” and Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2008).

⁴² *Ibid.* Rosenau argues that many African police forces have been drawn into a military role as “low-cost ‘trigger pullers,’” rather than serving their primary purpose of “protecting the public from serious crime.”

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Downie and Cooke.

⁴⁵ Seth G. Jones et al., *Securing Tyrants or Fostering Reform? U.S. Internal Security Assistance to Repressive and Transitioning Regimes* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2007).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Katie Harris, David Keen, and Tom Mitchell, *When Disasters and Conflicts Collide: Improving Links between Disaster Resilience and Conflict Prevention* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2013).

⁴⁸ David H. Bayley, *Democratizing the Police Abroad: What to Do and How to Do It* (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 2001).

⁴⁹ Harris, Keen, and Mitchell.