The African Security Intersection

Pathways to Partnership

Greg Mills

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Strengthening Africa's economic performance

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Executive Summary

Africa is projected to double its population numbers to 2.5 billion by 2050. The consequences of failing to change current aid practices in Africa are moot. The combination of rapidly increasing populations plus fragile and often corrupt systems of governance producing insufficient and elite-focused economic opportunities, can only end badly – an outcome which is worsened if climate change is thrown into the mix, which could see even larger numbers of people in already climate-stressed areas on the move to greener pastures. A successful donor strategy needs to play to its strengths and values, make tough choices about priorities and countries, make support more contingent on African performance on these shared values and interests and, fundamentally, develop a positive and consistent narrative. It would have to incorporate incentives to encourage African leadership and ownership of problems, national and regional, while at the same time realising the inherent dangers of transactionalism, including with African engagement in regional peace support missions. The answer to African security lies in paradoxically recognising the limits of the role to be played by the military, and rather stresses the need to infuse political and economic content. This demands brutally honest if unpalatable professional advice to political leaders, both among the donors and the recipients.

'[W]ithin the idea of confrontation and conflict, the opponent is both a military and political being – meaning that focusing on and overcoming the resistance of the one without reference to the other will not lead to the desired strategic outcome.' – General Sir Rupert Smith[1]

Introduction

In October 2019, 43 of Africa's 54 heads of state attended the Russia–Africa summit at the Black Sea resort of Sochi, co-chaired by Vladimir Putin and Egypt's president, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi.[2] This occasion was only the tip, it seemed, of a much wider relationship iceberg, underneath lurking a range of military engagements, commercial contracts, and growing involvement in African politics. In his speech at the summit's plenary session, the Russian president told his guests the current level of trade between Moscow and the continent was 'not enough' and that 'In the next four to five years I think we should be able to double this trade, at least'. Putin touted Russia's 'debt-for-development swap' programmes which were not 'contingent', he said, 'upon … preconditions' thereby shackling a country's trade and economic preferences. 'We see how an array of Western countries are resorting to pressure, intimidation, and blackmail of sovereign African governments,' said the Russian.[3]

From a Western vantage, this change of tack is threatening. Russia is viewed as an expert in 'hybrid' warfare, mixing conventional and unconventional weaponry with tactics battle tested in Ukraine and Syria. With an emphasis on rapid pre-emption without long mobilisation, expeditionary movement and electronic warfare, the military aspect is but one of the instruments of national power Russia is now poised to employ. These tools form part of an integrated politico-military 'system' warfare, aimed at de-legitimising and undermining the West's political and social cohesion on which its military strength and steadfastness is founded, including the rules-based, post-1945 global security architecture.

In this environment, the weapons of war are more benign but no less dangerous:

including energy politics (such as the Nord Stream 2 pipeline), bribery and blackmail, corrupt business practices, cyber-attacks, assassination, fake news, and election tampering. In his February 2019 testimony before the Senate Armed Forces Committee, the then head of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) Thomas Waldhauser noted 'the harmful influence of non-African powers on the continent.' Both the General, and his successor Stephen Townsend, spoke of the 'malign' influence of China and Russia.[4]

> China and Russia appear to share the goal of diminishing Western influence on the world-stage, and now in Africa

Yet the challenges presented by Russia to the West in Africa are quite different to those posed by China. Whereas China is the world's largest military force (at least in manpower) and the world's second-largest economy (behind the US) to back up its claims of achieving great power status by 2049, Russia's trajectory is different, based more on its appetite for risk, combat experience, and expeditionary and intelligence capabilities. While on different strategic trajectories, both China and Russia appear to share the goal of diminishing Western influence on the world-stage, and now in Africa. This is unlikely to be good news for Africans as much as it is for human rights given the clear correlation between the quality of African democracies and economic performance.[5] And both are focused on transactional opportunities, hence their appeal to certain African elites, and thus are not interested in strengthening democratic governance. Paradoxically, this puts them at odds with the vast majority of Africans who routinely

prefer democracy to other forms of government in polls, not least since the development record of democracies is much better than the continental alternative.[6]

The result of all of this is, as the UK Chief of Defence Staff General Sir Nick Carter has concluded, 'a global playing field characterised by constant competition and confrontation, with increasingly assertive and aggressive states, utilising techniques below the threshold of what we would have called conventional war, all of which is overlaid by the threat of terrorism from violent extremist organisations.'[7] Rather than simply play to Western paranoia, the increased level of Russian activity and interest in Africa should, however, provoke several wake-up calls for policy teams in the West.

There is more to African engagement than the poles of counter-terrorism at one end or traditional development assistance at the other. The Russians have a powerful if short-term strategy with their incentivisation of African countries in propping up dictators, fiddling elections and selling arms, the West has a more powerful tool in aligning support to democracy.[8]

> Rather than simply play to Western paranoia, the increased level of Russian activity and interest in Africa should provoke several wake-up calls for policy teams in the West

The Kremlin's strategy towards Africa works, Edward Lucas reminds,[9] not because Russia is strong, but because the West is weak – and, also, not especially strategic. The UK is increasingly diplomatically invisible on the continent, except for its attempts to seal post-Brexit trade deals in a hurry; while the US approach risks internationalising local conflicts where they are driven more by intricate domestic issues. And less we forget: Russia's foreign policy direction is often in tune with the views of many African leaders, who still hate to be bullied by the 'suits' visiting the continent on two-day expeditions.

Changing this will demand sustained Western engagement, not neglect.

For Africa, it should provoke thoughts about how to get the most of out all suitors, even as its leaders get to lap up Russian hospitality, play with sidearms in conference venues, and splash around in Sochi's hot springs. Spookery, dogs of war, and arms are not, if the track-record of history is anything to go by, in the interests of the vast majority of Africa's citizens, given the close correlation between African standards of democracy, governance and economic performance.

Several questions arise, in turn, as to the trajectory of African security and the synergy it enjoys (or not) with its partners, which this paper considers: What is the nature of modern security threats in Africa? What role can the military play in African security? Does good governance have a role in dealing with security and insulating Africa from negative external actors? If so, what is the role of Western militaries and other institutions in promoting good governance (if any)? How and on what issues do external partners prioritise – and how might the international community infuse a sense of common political purpose and practical content to its assistance? From an African perspective, how can countries more effectively share lessons learned on similar security challenges? What role can the West play in that? Finally, what is the likely outcome and cost absent a change of direction: by Africa and by its partners?

The Threats We Know About

The African continent, just 14 kilometres from Europe across the Gibraltar strait, is in the throes of a societal and demographic revolution which, absent a shift from the business-as-usual practices of its polity and the policy of outsiders, can only further stress its politics and stability.
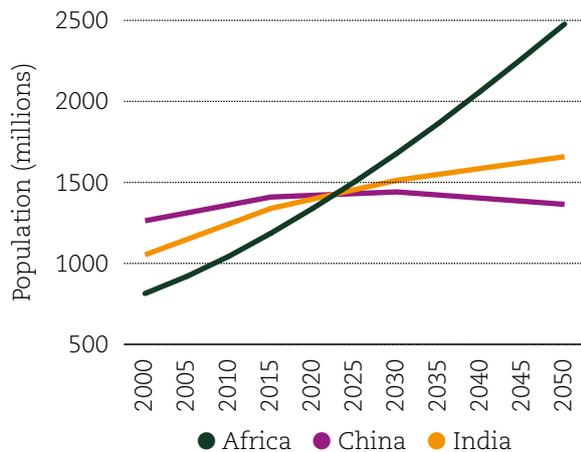
Over a generation, Africa's population is projected to double to 2.5 billion. Most of this increase will take place in its cities, which will

accommodate over half of African citizens by 2030. Sixty years ago, this figure was just 10%.

Today Africa's 420 million young people, aged 15–35, face a daunting future. Only one in six is in stable wage employment,[10] and just 75% of them are literate – the lowest of any region globally.[11] With the number of young people on the continent set to double within the next generation, they will no doubt disrupt, either as an asset to governments or a burden. Today's policy decisions will help to determine which.

Already African governments and their economies are unable to provide for this population, whose average age is under 20, less than half that of Western Europe, resulting in a dramatic increase in migrants from the continent. The Pew Research Centre estimated that more than one million sub-Saharan Africans moved to Europe between 2010 and 2017, with another 400 000 to the US over the same period.[12]

Figure 1: World Population Growth Projections

The push factors are considerable, especially when compounded by the effects of climate change, which endangers livelihoods across the continent.
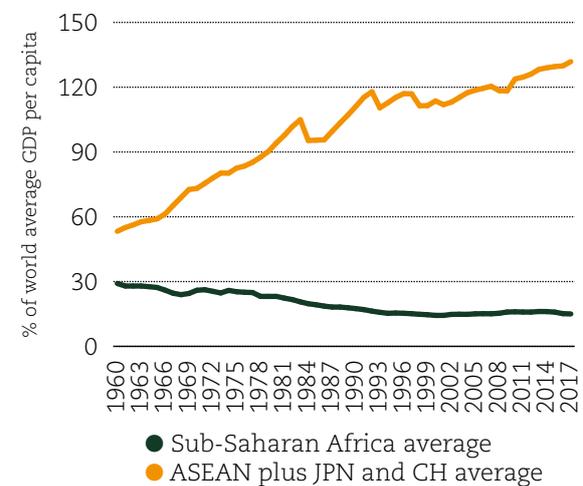
In surveying six of the ten countries that have supplied many of the African immigrants to the US including Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana and Kenya, which are also among the top ten origin countries for sub-Saharan migrants to Europe, Pew found that at least four-in-ten answered 'yes' to the question whether they would go to live in another country. This included roughly three-quarters of those surveyed in Ghana and Nigeria. These findings are consistent with other research. A desire for better economic prospects and improved

political and hence personal stability is the underlying reason so many sub-Saharan Africans say they *plan to move to another country in the next five years.* A remarkable 1.7 million Ghanaians (6% of Ghana's population) applied for the US diversity lottery in 2015, though only 50 000 people *worldwide* gain admission to the US each year through this programme.

The roots to this move of people, within and without Africa, lie in the relative presence of economic opportunity. Africa – and especially sub-Saharan Africa – has not kept pace with the volume of people entering its job market. Investment and thus growth is too low, reflecting conditions of governance and political stability. Africa's share of global foreign direct investment is just 3.5% of US$1.3 trillion; its share of global population is almost 17%. Developing Asia received, by comparison, US$512 billion in 2018 FDI, or nearly 40% of the total, closer to its global population share of 60%.[13]

This is starkly portrayed by the chart, below, which reflects the rise (and fall) of Africa's per capita income relative to East Asia.

Figure 2: Share of World GDP Per Capita (constant)

The presence of more people in the job market can in the current policy environment only suppress wages and further diminish work opportunities. If handled with a fresh approach this rapidly increasing young potential workforce, in a world that is elsewhere becoming older, could become, as was the case in East Asia over the last half century, a demographic dividend. But this will demand

African governments, and their partners, preparing adequately for the change. Such a governance response, fit for purpose and up to the challenge, has hitherto lacked across much of Africa.

A Weak Polity

The quickest way to end a war, wrote George Orwell, is to lose it. But winning it and providing security requires more than military means. It fundamentally requires understanding why African economies have performed so poorly, at least when compared to other developing regions, notably East Asia.

James Robinson and Daron Acemoglu argue in *Why Nations Fail* that development success or failure is down to the difference between extractive and inclusive political-economies.[14] In inclusive institutions there are, they note, secure property rights, law and order, freer markets and the correct type of state support, the upholding of contracts, and the right overall environment for business to prosper. In short, this creates incentives for investment and innovation across a level playing field.[15]

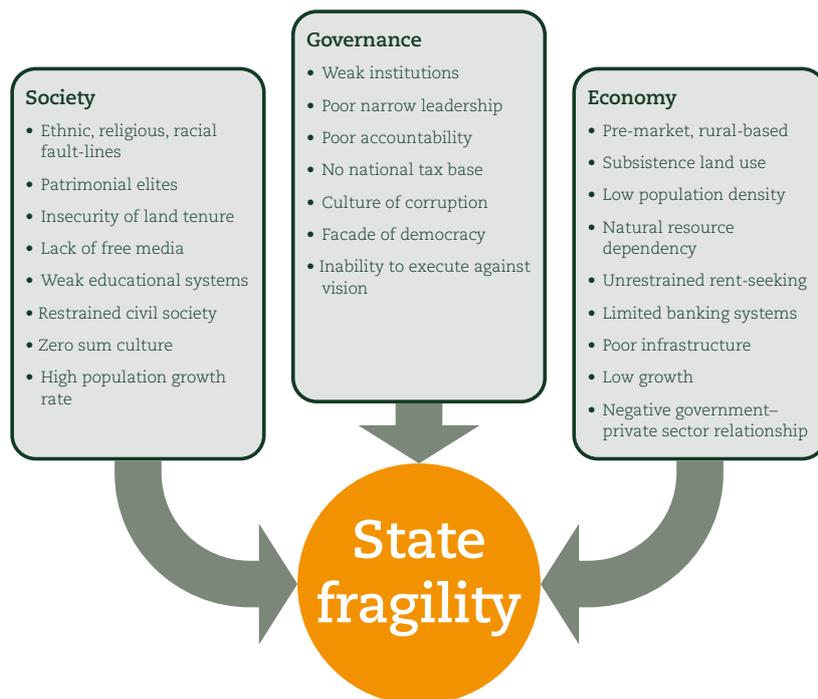By contrast, in the extractive model, politically connected elites have preferential economic access. The playing field is not level, and the checks and balances are not there, with weak and unbalanced political institutions. Overall, there is a lack of pluralism, and an unclear contract between government and the governed. The difference between wealth and poverty, they argue, is in the system characterised by a narrow concentration of power which enables elites to rule at their own benefit at the expense of their populations. It follows that prosperity is more likely where power is more broadly distributed, and where government is accountable and responsive to the needs of citizens. The conditions which fuel instability, and state fragility, are outlined in the figure, below.

More importantly, however, what causes one system to prevail?

Like Africa, East Asia suffered a colonial inheritance of complex ethnicity and undeveloped human and institutional capacity. Yet it has prospered despite this colonial legacy, because it pragmatically built on the past and refused to be a victim.

The unity of purpose pursued relentlessly by the leadership of many Asian counties has helped to dilute tensions around identity. By contrast, the political-economy – essentially the manner in

Figure 3: Conditions which Fuel Instability and State Fragility

which history and politics shape economic policy choices and *vice versa* – of African development has been defined by clientelism, by the management of elite access and preferences in exchange for support, leading to 'rent-seeking' – the creation of wealth not by investment but by the connections of organised interest groups. Finding the institutional and constitutional means to curb such elite predations and open up opportunities beyond a small group has characterised the East Asian development story. Where unsuccessful, as in Myanmar for example, growth and development has suffered.

Where Africa's elites have obstructed economic openings to protect their interests and privileges, from food import licences to trucking contracts, national development has usually suffered. To the contrary, East Asia's development has pivoted on changing the relationship between government and the private sector. By ensuring conditions favourable to investors, East Asia was able to transform the extractive colonial economic model, thereby ensuring the benefits of growth have been spread beyond a thin elite. Real investment growth and long-term capital that diversifies economies and creates jobs, notably in industry, has remained very low in Africa compared to Asia. As figure 2 above illustrates, this reflects hostility to foreign capital and private sector-led growth, something that Asia's leaders realised long ago were intrinsic to inclusive growth.

While differences in the history of nation-building might offer one (partial) explanation, there are other societal dynamics that influence professionalism, continuity and consistency in leaders – in a word, governance.

An advantage of Asia over Africa in this regard is the tradition of bureaucratic capacity. This is what we would, in effect, describe as 'governance'. One proxy measure would be the *Doing Business* Indicators of the World Bank, as this indicates government's readiness to make conditions easier for business. In terms of these standards of governance, Africa is well behind the Asian benchmark, as can be seen in the pie-charts (Figures 4 and 5) below.

The reasons for governance and development failure in Africa seldom, however, reside in single factors alone – geography, leadership, the extent of identity and religious fault lines, ideology, skills levels, the colonial legacy, and so on – but rather how they act in combination. Put differently, it is not one thing; it is everything. Single-issue explanations – and their corollary, magic bullet, one-thing solutions – can thus easily be rebuked.

African countries have, for example, not faced any peculiar structural impediments to their development.[16] Although a lack of human resources is often cited as a constraint, South Korea overcame a capacity shortage, sending bureaucrats to Pakistan and the Philippines for training in the 1970s. Though institutional capacity is similarly

Figure 4: Africa Ease of Doing Business: Number of Countries by Quartile

- ● Quartile 1 (highest scores)
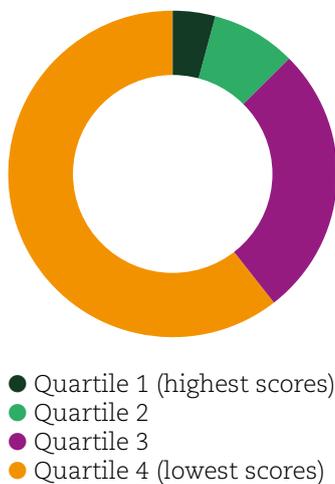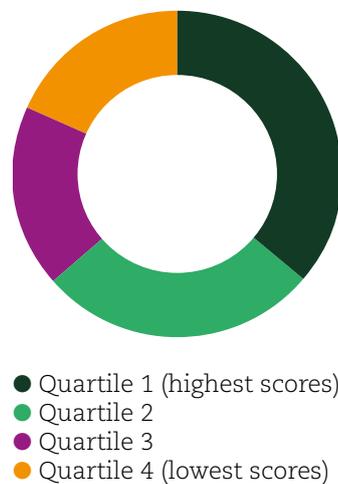- ● Quartile 2
- ● Quartile 3
- ● Quartile 4 (lowest scores)

Figure 5: East Asia Ease of Doing Business: Number of Countries by Quartile

- ● Quartile 1 (highest scores)
- ● Quartile 2
- ● Quartile 3
- ● Quartile 4 (lowest scores)

cited as a structural impediment, some countries (not least some in Southeast Asia) have grown economically with institutions far worse than in Africa. In some respects, not least due to a relative lack of destruction that accompanied the continent's anti-colonial struggle, African countries were better off than their Asian counterparts at independence. Few African countries, after all, can claim the bitter cost and damage wrought by the Cold War era wars in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
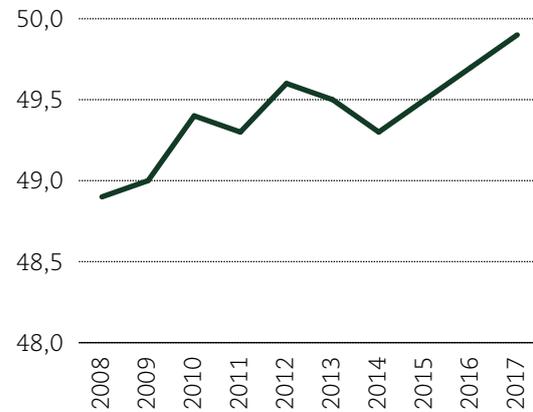
This applies equally to the argument about the 'curse' of natural resources, including the deleterious effect they have on the potential for economic diversification. Yet, such a curse does not apply to countries such as Norway, the US, Canada and Australia, although they possess greater natural resources than most African countries. Problems arise where the systems of governance are *not inclusive* and rather fractured, fragmented or elitist, and characterised by rent-seeking, often along ethno-political or other fault lines.[17]

Noting overall the 'structural handicap arguments' are 'confusing the cause and the symptoms', the Cambridge economist Ha-Joon Chang has concluded that these are handicaps 'only because you are underdeveloped; it is not that they cause underdevelopment'.[18]

Finally, the effect of the self-interest of leadership to retain power whatever the destructive cost should never be underestimated. At an extreme, are the conflict entrepreneurs who profit from continued instability; those for example, who live by the Somali saying, *Maxaa igu jiraa* (literally, 'what is in it for me?'), the equivalent of the Kenyan saying, 'It is our turn to eat'. This effect is also notable among the former liberation movements, which continue to prevail politically across southern Africa, and which consistently feature leadership traits of impunity and entitlement along with a *neo-mercantilist*, zero-sum outlook on trade and investment.[19] This distorts the rationale behind policy decisions, and reinforces elite privileges over any commitment to popular welfare. That citizens have let leaders get away with this political-economy and consequent lack of delivery is down to a lack of democracy in some environments and,

in others, the manner in which the often combustible mix of race, religion and language has been played.

Figure 6: Africa: Overall Governance Average Score (2008–2017)

As a result, Africa's record of governance, and its improvement, is patchy at best. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) shows, as illustrated above,[20] that the African average overall governance score in 2017 (49.9 out of 100.0) is just one point higher than in 2008, failing to keep up with population growth and, in particular, the changing youth demographic.[21] Thirty-four countries, home to 72% of Africans, improved their governance performance over the ten years from 2008, while the remainder experienced a decline in governance in some 18 countries. The improvement is driven most notably by 15 countries, home to almost half of Africa's population, including Kenya, Morocco and Côte d'Ivoire which 'have shown particularly large moves in terms of ranking between 2008 and 2017'.

The ability of outsiders to consolidate progress and counter decline is, too, problematic. Take the case of Mali, and the failure of its solution.

Mali: It's About Politics

A Toureg rebellion in the north of Mali had led to an 'accidental' coup in 2012 when soldiers marched on the presidential palace demanding more pay, found that President Amadou Toumani Touré (known as 'ATT') had fled. As a result, the French armed forces launched *Opération Serval* in January 2013, helping to bring some order, bolstered by not

less than 15 000 UN uniformed personnel by 2019. Still, the challenges have not gone away.

A combination of criminality, people and contraband smuggling, tribal enmities and jihadist elements makes this an intractable situation. All of this is exacerbated by the increase in populations and, presumably, climate change. Mali is projected to increase its population from 18 million in 2018 to 44 million by 2050. It's not only about national numbers, but also where people will be living. Mali's capital, Bamako, doubled in size to over two million in just seven years during the early part of the 21st century as a result of political instability, and has been growing at a steady 4% annually. It is not alone. Niger, to Mali's east, will go from 20.6 million today to more than 68 million, a 20-fold projected population increase since independence in 1960, while neighbouring Burkina Faso will increase from 19 million to 43 million by 2050.

This helps to explain the answer by Malian and Niger politicians to the question: What is the greatest economic challenge you face? Their response: 'Security'.[22]

> What is the greatest economic challenge you face?
> Their response: 'Security'

Yet in recent history Mali was a poster-child for democratic transition. It had transitioned to democracy in 1991 after a long period of military rule. In March that year, pro-democracy rallies and strikes, known as *les evenements* ('the events') or the March Revolution, led to riots and violent clashes between students and soldiers. By 26 March 1991, thousands of soldiers had joined the movement, refusing to fire on protestors. The same day ATT, then a Lieutenant Colonel, announced on radio the arrest of President Moussa Traoré. A new democratic constitution, approved by a national referendum, was drafted and, in 1992, activist and professor Alpha Oumar Konaré won Mali's first democratic, multi-party presidential election. Elected for a second term in 1997, he retired in 2002, after which he became the first Chairman

of the African Union (AU) Commission. ATT was elected as president in 2002, and again in 2007.

Mali was a donor darling during this democratic phase. While the toppling of Muammar Ghaddafi in neighbouring Libya is commonly taken as the reason for Mali's subsequent collapse, the reasons are more complex. The depth of corruption was one of the reasons why the Toureg rebellion was badly mismanaged. Moreover, the country was essentially split in terms of the focus of governance; 90% of Mali's population lives in the southern areas. They don't really care much about the north.

As a consequence, there have been three attempts by the north since Mali's independence to fight for succession. Today's troubles in Mali have their direct roots in the civil war in Algeria, and the flight of the Group Islamique Armee (GRA) to Mali where its members took refuge. The embers of an Islamic rebellion were fanned by the collapse of Ghadaffi's Libya, since he had enrolled Malians, Nigerois, Nigerians and others into an Islamic Legion which subsequently broke up and returned to their countries of origin. 'It was handled very differently in each country,' reflects a senior French diplomat. 'In Niger they were disarmed at the border. In Mali, they were met by an envoy of the presidency with suitcases of cash to try and buy their loyalty. This could only be,' he muses, 'a temporary solution. Whereas Niger decided to share power to maintain stability, Mali decided to try and share the country.'[23]

By 2012 the combination of Islamic and Toureg fighters comprised a major threat. This could be discerned in terms of the build-up of the unit of strength in the Sahel, as in the Horn, the number of pick-up trucks. France had just 48 hours to make a decision on intervention, or risk the collapse of the government altogether.

Fast forward seven years, and international policy towards Mali was premised on three pillars. First, to bolster local security through a combination of French military intervention, regional forces (through the so-called G5 comprising Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mauritania) and the UN's 15 000-strong MINUSMA (Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission) force. The European Union provides training to the

Malian army, while the G5 co-ordinates border actions, command and control and intelligence.

The second pillar is the political framework, under the 2015 Algiers Agreement, allowing for decentralisation along with demobilisation and reintegration, and bring about reconciliation. The third pillar is that of development. Through the €9 billion 'Alliance Sahel', some 600 development projects have been earmarked.

Ensuring a multifaceted solution that encompasses political power, economic opportunity, and social development is what is necessary. Far from proving a success, however, there has been very limited progress on the political aspect, as a result of which the state has been unable to re-establish its presence in the form of schools and police posts in large swathes of territory. While around 200 rebel fighters were killed or taken prisoner in 2018, for example, there remains very little in the way of government capacity to fill the governance vacuum. 'We can't do it for the Malian government' reflects the French diplomat. 'We can't act on behalf of the Malian parliament.'

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Mali's challenges are not exceptional. The issues of predatory leadership, governance and weak institutions are today present in the polity of countries where it is least expected.

Old Problems, New Situations

During the apartheid era, the 'old' South African Defence Force (SADF) was feared by some and hated by many. This reflected its role and, too, its considerable capacity for war-fighting, albeit for a purpose and at a cost that was unconscionable.

In the immediate post-apartheid era, the SADF was integrated with the Bantustan armies and other 'non-statutory' forces to form the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). South Africa's 1994 transition to democracy meant, among other changes, adopting a new approach to defence with the creation of the SANDF. More than simply an exercise in institutional integration,

the Defence Force was firmly placed under civilian control, through emboldened parliamentary oversight and the creation of the Defence Secretariat, legislated to 'provide the Chief of the Defence Force with comprehensive instructions requiring the Chief of the Defence Force to issue orders and directives and give commands …'.[24] The ordering of the SANDF into a democratic context was shaped, too, by the issuing of a Defence White Paper ('Defence in a Democracy') in 1996, and a following Defence Review in 1998.[25] The White Paper stresses that 'National security shall be sought primarily through efforts to meet the political, economic, social and cultural rights and needs of South Africa's people, and through efforts to promote and maintain regional security.'

> As Corruption Watch has concluded, 'The massively flawed arms deal is viewed as having set a regrettable tone for government dealings'

These documents were complemented by the White Papers on Intelligence, and another on South African Participation in International Peace Missions, while a National Security Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in 2013, though this document remains classified *Secret*.

The 1996 White Paper and 1998 Defence Review were instrumental in focusing the direction and emphasis of the South African military in a post-apartheid era. On the back of these documents, the SANDF was re-equipped with advanced weapon systems through a highly controversial US$5 billion strategic arms deal concluded in 1999. Perhaps more than the White Papers and the Review, this has provided the clearest indication of long-term government intent with the Defence Force and its budget.

As Corruption Watch has concluded, 'The massively flawed arms deal is viewed as having set a regrettable tone for government dealings ever since'. Andrew Feinstein, a former Member of

Parliament of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) who was fired in 2001 as the chair of the ANC's parliamentary public accounts committee because he appealed to government to launch a commission of inquiry into the deal, notes: 'I describe the arms deal and both the corruption in the deal and the efforts to cover up that corruption as being the point at which the ANC lost its moral compass, and I believe that as the years have gone by that contention has only been reinforced.' Feinstein observes: 'We've seen a whole range of corruption scandals after the arms deal and I think that the arms deal and the corruption in it, if they hadn't got away with it we might have had a very different political trajectory in relation to corruption, so I think the arms deal was absolutely critical in determining the moral fibre, if I can call it that, of the current ANC and government, and that it is the point at which we went badly, badly wrong. I think it's one of the reasons that corruption has become so pervasive in the ANC and in most levels of government.'[26]

If state capture kicked off in the democratic era with the arms deal, then Western companies and interests were there at the start. The deterioration in governance was accelerated, if the Zondo Commission of Enquiry is to be believed,[27] under the Zuma presidency.

> If state capture kicked off in the democratic era with the arms deal, then Western companies and interests were there at the start

Although, according to the Ibrahim Index, there was only a slight decline in governance in the country between 2008 and 2017 (by 0.6%),[28] there were dramatic consequences. The cost of state capture is estimated to have been around R1.5 trillion over the second term of the Zuma administration, or one-third of South Africa's R4.9 trillion GDP.[29] Corrupt procurements included the purchase of 100 locomotives from China South Rail which reportedly cost the state R1 billion more than it should have,[30] along with expensive boilers from

Japan for Eskom's new power stations, all of which were dwarfed by the planned R1 trillion purchase of 9 600 megawatts of nuclear energy from Russia, a contract believed to have been secured with hefty bribes.[31] (While the Chinese Ambassador to South Africa, HE Lin Songtian has been outspokenly critical of the conditions of safety, efficiency and investor security in South Africa which are, in his words, necessary to make investors feel 'safe', 'reassured' and 'comfortable', he has not moved publicly to comment or retrieve the overspend on the rail deal.[32])

> The Defence Review in 2014 produced after three tortuous years of to'ing and fro'ing

As public concern over and thus civil society focus on the Defence Force diminished in the 2000s, there was an attempt to reinstate some serious debate through the re-issuing of a Defence Review in 2014. This fresh Review, produced after three tortuous years of to'ing and fro'ing, noted that the army was unable to meet standing commitments being 'too poorly equipped and funded to execute the widening spectrum of tasks to the desired level.' It warned that 'The Defence Force is in a critical state of decline, characterised by: force imbalance between capabilities; block obsolescence and unaffordability of many of its main operating systems; a disproportionate tooth-to-tail ratio; the inability to meet current standing defence commitments; and the lack of critical mobility.'[33]

To counter this decline, the Review in effect called for a cash infusion, which would amount to a R80 billion budget in 2019 Rands, compared to the current (2019/2020) disbursement of just under R50 billion.

The Review remains, however, strategically irrelevant aside from a superficial public relations function, since it has not yet been able to focus the attention of policy makers on the central problem. Instead, it simply added more tasks to an already unmanageable SANDF agenda, and fails

to address the political impasse underlying the Defence Force's problems. As such, it offers less of a rational analysis and call to political action than a wish-list for new equipment and more funding.

As a result, there remain three essential problems with the SANDF.

The first relates to capacity. Consider some of the following stats about SANDF's state of readiness.

Of the regular force of 76 000 men and women, some 10% are medically fit enough to be deployable. Given the need for rotation and training, this means around 2 000 are available. Yet South Africa has some 15 companies deployed on its borders, and a requirement for 22. The difference is made up by a force of 20 000 Reserves, of which some 15 000 are regularly deployed. With more generals now than during border war years (when the force was, with National Servicemen, Commandos and Citizen Force 'campers', twice as large as today), there are critical shortages in doctors, naval engineers, pilots, and aircraft technicians. As a result, just two of 12 C-130 transport aircraft are flying, as are five each of the Gripen fighter-jets (of 26 expensively supplied under the 1999 arms deal) and Hawk trainers (of 24), and less than one-third of the 35 Oryx helicopters. The Navy is hardly better off. Just one (of three) German Type 209 submarines is fully operational, and one of the four Meko-class corvettes.

To make up critical skills shortages the SANDF has imported foreign personnel and services. There are now thousands of Cubans mainly in technical roles, including the management and maintenance of the ground transport fleet. Russia, too, is playing a role, including training pilots, long viewed as a strategic SANDF deficiency.[34]

The issue around force readiness levels demonstrates a deeper issue: the age of personnel. The SANDF has far too many 'non-effectives', and it cannot get rid of those who cannot fight. This is summed up in the average age of personnel which reputedly is 48 and, ideally, should be 20 years younger.

If it is to safeguard its own future and stop being a waste of precious resources, which it indubitably is in its current state and structure, the SANDF would have to admit its personnel problems,

right-size, professionalise and depoliticise. Of course, any government is fearful of making 50 000 SANDF members redundant, especially when their skill-sets are limited and the level of politicisation high. Politicians hate hard choices. Yet they should not make the consequences of their failing the responsibility of the military, as a result of which the SANDF has become a welfare and not a warfare agency. It is hunkered down, refusing to engage, coming up instead with possibly well-meaning and certainly fine-sounding but entirely aspirational plans such as the 340-page Defence Review.

> If it is to safeguard its own future and stop being a waste of precious resources the SANDF would have to admit its personnel problems, right-size, professionalise and depoliticise

The second problem relates to how the SANDF uses its budget.

One school of thought with the SANDF is that there is insufficient funding to carry out its mandated functions. This argument is often made by those with interests in the defence establishment: serving and old soldiers, militarists, arms dealers, and other fellow travellers. This group routinely points out that the decline in funding which has shrunk by approximately 5% per annum in real terms over the last two decades to around 1% of GDP, is responsible for a loss of defence capabilities.

There is undoubtedly a budget problem. The defence spending breakdown should, in an ideal world, be 40% (salaries): 30% (capital): 30% (operational). Today in the SANDF it is more like 80:5:15. As a result there is now virtually no money for new equipment and operational expenditure is severely limited.

The budget reflects the health of the South African economy, no doubt. This raises a conundrum for the South African government, as elsewhere in Africa and further afield, whether

to attempt to define the role of the SANDF and fund it accordingly; or to carve out an affordable budget and tailor the role around that tranche.

As the circles of debate are kept tight to political insiders only and the spotlight of public scrutiny at best flickering, money is as a consequence used extremely badly, not least on people, but also on new equipment purchases, much of which seem to be motivated less by a concern for defence capability than the need to assuage certain constituencies. For example, the Badger armoured fighting vehicle replacement for the Ratel under *Project Hoefyster*, has so far incurred a cost of R7,5 billion (US$500 million) for the delivery of just three prototypes.[35] Yet more than 2 000 of the RG-31 mine-resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicle developed and manufactured in South Africa have been supplied to the US armed forces alone, and some 2 700 worldwide, and extensively used in combat environments from Afghanistan to Colombia. In 2009, for example, South Africa exported over 500 MRAPs to 11 countries.[36] Why South Africa could not utilise this technology, and refurbish surplus US stock for its own use, speaks to a combination of vested interests, blinded political suspicion and delusional intent.

This reflects perhaps the most pernicious problem in South Africa's polity: whether the military is an instrument of public policy or of a political party and elite? The answer to this may lie in two pieces of legislation promoted by the ANC: the Defence Amendment Bill of April 2017 and the Military Discipline Bill of 2019. The former proposes the following amendment to Section 8 of the 2002 Act: that the Defence Secretariat '… must provide the Chief of the Defence Force' no longer with '*comprehensive instructions* requiring' but instead only with '*specific guidelines* in order to enable the Chief of the Defence Force to issue orders and directives and to give commands …';[37] while the latter transforms military disciplinary issues into criminal acts and subjects civilians to military law.[38]

Neither of these bills, and the frequent extension of the tenure of senior officers, befits a defence force in a parliamentary democracy. Regulating the defence force, and reviewing and moderating

its role and aspirations, is, however, the responsibility primarily of democrats.

That such debates about role, budget and control, which would have been energetic and visibly public in the 1990s, are today largely moribund in South Africa, reflects badly on civil society, the Defence Force, and the political status quo. Rather than an invigorating public discussion on what a 'fit for budget' defence structure could be, and how marine, land and air components could best be integrated, the means to translate regional integration from an ambition to a meaningful channel, and the nature of future threats, the contemporary South African defence debate is at best introspective and backward-looking.

> Regulating the defence force, and reviewing and moderating its role and aspirations, is, however, the responsibility primarily of democrats

There are likely to be considerable costs to such policy autism given, for example, the pace of technological developments and openings for malfeasance.

For instance, 'Without doubt',[39] according to Rodney Joffe, a globally-recognised internet expert, there is likely to be an increase in cyberattacks in Africa. The system is 'primed' for it given levels of corruption and the rapid growth in providers and the absence of regulatory sophistication and capacity. Or, as another specialist has noted, cyber is the 'new arena', only countered 'by much sunlight' – that is, the spotlight of civil society activism and media scrutiny.[40] Yet across Africa, governments routinely keep populations in the dark in this regard, in part because of financial, infrastructure and institutional limitations, and self-interest.

The cyber domain, which is discussed further below, is among those extant threats of which we are aware.

New Challenges We Know About

Africa contains today over half of the world's poorest.[41]

This is in part a result of the rapid growth of the economy of China, which has lifted 680 million people out of misery, reducing its extreme poverty rate from 84% to just 10% in 33 years from 1980. Over one-quarter of Africa's population was classified as severely food insecure in 2016, almost four times as high as any other region, and half (333 million) those afflicted worldwide.[42] There is a link to human development. While undernourishment in sub-Saharan Africa declined from 28.1% in 2000 to 20.8% in 2015, and thus the percentage of children stunted from 49% in 1990 to 35% in 2016, population growth has meant that the absolute number of stunted children increased in sub-Saharan Africa from 45 million in 1990 to 57 million in 2016.[43]

> Over one-quarter of Africa's population was classified as severely food insecure in 2016, almost four times as high as any other region, and half those afflicted worldwide

Absent timeous and appropriate government action, this can only be worsened by climate change, for a number of reasons: Some 95% of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa and 75% in North Africa is rain-fed.[44] Also, the two most extensive land-based end-of-century projected decreases in rainfall anywhere on the planet occur over Africa; one over North Africa and the other over southern Africa. And finally, given the weakness of governance, the 'capacity for adaptation to climate change' in Africa is low, related to the fact that 'poverty equates to reduced choice at the individual level while governance generally fails to prioritise and act on climate change'.[45]

This situation is compounded by agriculture practices and investment opportunities.

Africa has 60% of the world's arable lands, and some 80% of unused arable lands. Yet it uses only around 15% of the global benchmark of fertiliser in crop production, less than half of the Abuja target, which translates into low yields in staples including maize and millet.[46] It is projected that global warming trends could decline the production of major crops by as much as 20% by 2050, which is amplified by low mechanisation levels in African agriculture, especially in maize, wheat and rice.[47]

> It is projected that global warming trends could decline the production of major crops by as much as 20% by 2050

There are encouraging instances of improving domestic fertiliser output and types, driving up usage and yields. This has hinged on international collaboration, and public-private-partnership, for example that promoted by Morocco's OCP fertiliser giant with Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia.

Such effects are exacerbated by poor management of existing food-stocks, most catastrophically in marine life, driven by increasingly middle-class demands elsewhere, especially of China. For example, abalone, known colloquially in South Africa as *perlemoen*, are large molluscs, highly favoured across Asia, hence an explosion in abalone poaching, an annual trade worth some US$50 million. A 2019 report by the Western Cape's Police Ombudsman notes that this situation is now 'out of control', at one point there being 300 boats on the water in Gansbaai, some 100kms from Cape Town, illegally harvesting what has become South Africa's most threatened and smuggled marine species. Abalone stocks have been reduced as a consequence, to just one-quarter of what they once were, and West Coast rock lobster has dwindled to just 2.5% of its original population.[48]

There is a vicious cycle of poaching and poor governance. In the Western Cape, poaching has been taken over by organised crime syndicates,

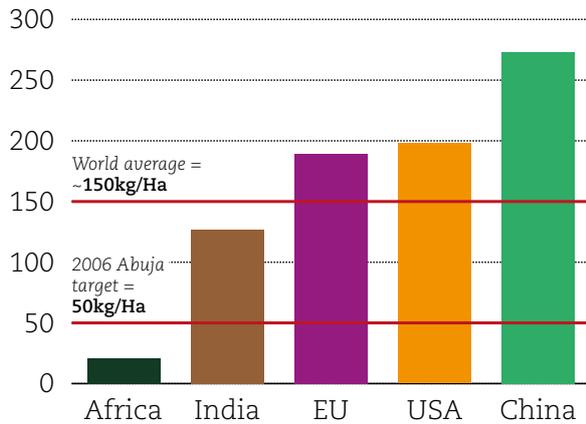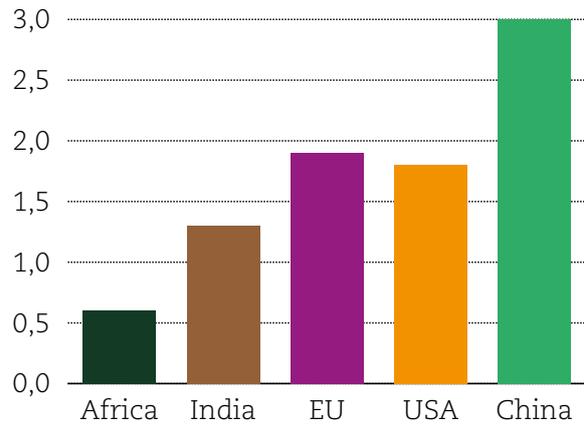**Figure 7: Consumption of Fertiliser Nutrients (in Kg/Ha)**

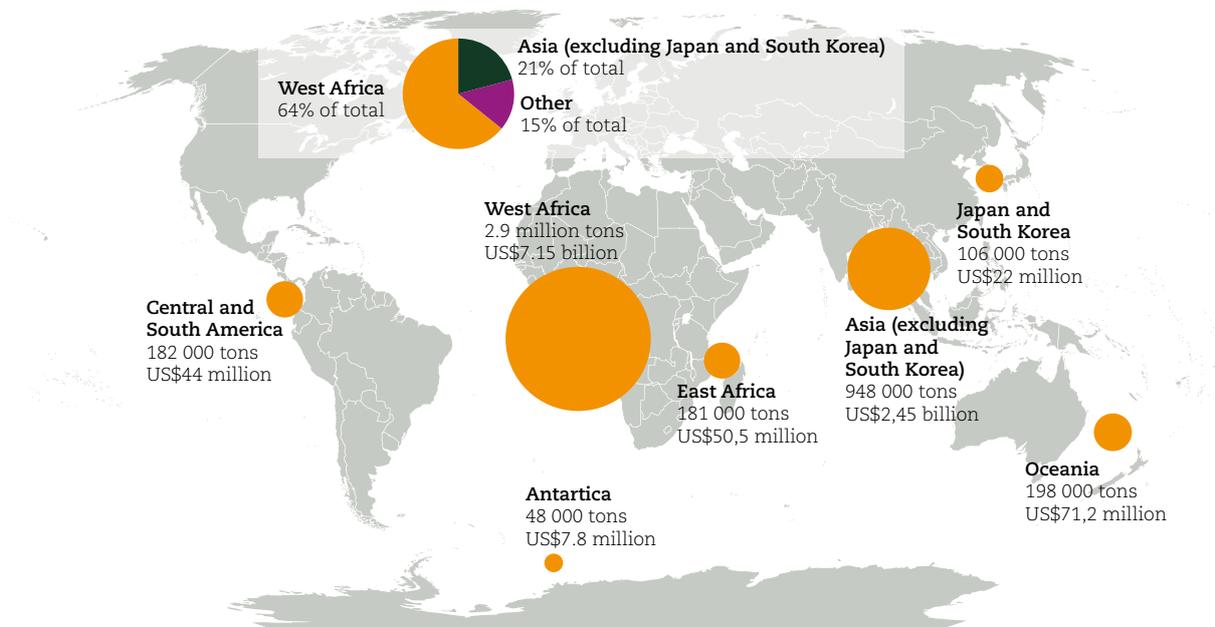**Figure 8: Yields in Millet Production (in T/Ha)**

made possible by poor policing.[49] South Africa is not alone, with systematic and extensive illegal fishing operations reported in West and East Africa, from Mauritania to Somalia. Illegal fishing is estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation to costs some US$2.3 billion in the waters of Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone, where about seven million people depend directly on

fishing as a source of income. This accounts for as much as 20% of the global loss from illegal fishing.[50] Another comprehensive study, undertaken in 2005, calculates that about a quarter of all fishing in Africa was illegal.[51]

Overall, in essence, the weaker the governance, the greater the problem. The same equation holds for other areas of threat.

Figure 9: Where Chinese Vessels Fish

Source: The Pew Charitable Trusts

Digital Promise – and Threat

Cyber security and crime are hardly unknown to Africa. None of us has likely been immune from a '419' scam, professing to be the inheritor of a large fortune, or an astronaut lost in space, both requiring your bank details to assist them on their earthly passage. The '4-1-9' moniker comes from the section of Nigeria's Criminal Code which outlaws the practice, though not all of them are sourced from Nigeria. Simply, if it's too good to be true, it usually is, though thousands still appear to fall for these practices every year, the rewards presenting apparently too great a temptation.[52]

But the format of African cyber-crime is rapidly changing.

> In essence, the weaker the governance, the greater the problem. The same equation holds for other areas of threat

While African security issues tend to feed off the lack of institutional maturity and frailties in the economic and social landscape, and while mobile subscriber penetration is just 45%, there have been rapid changes in telephony and broadband which have and will continue to change continental connectivity and the opportunities, thus, for cyber-malfeasance. In the mid-1990s, for example, Africa's telephone density was at just 5%. Today one-third of African mobile users, some 250 million people, already have a smartphone, and this is projected to double by 2025, when over half of the continent will subscribe to mobile services, and when one-quarter will have access to 4G or 5G.[53]

This rapid growth of infrastructure has obviously allowed (or required) the introduction of equipment from China (Huawei, and ZTE) and management and Open Source Software (OSS) from Russia. This is, according to one expert, laying 'the groundwork for what I believe is a perfect storm – the ability for foreign countries to control the political process across Africa, much as we saw

in the 1960s and 1970s, but this time achievable from thousands of miles away, with very little risk of bloodshed. So,' he concludes, 'I think that there will be an increase in attacks, but because of the low standards of living, and the effort required, the most damaging attacks will be political in nature.'[54] There has, so far, been little stake by elites in strengthening oversight and regulation, given that there is always an angle, from contracts to families, personally vectored revenue streams, and political manipulation or suppression. This lack of interest may be changing, however.

For one, the rapid growth in competitive providers and regulatory unsophistication has seen the line between criminals and nation/state actors in Africa as no longer blurring but 'wishful thinking'.[55]

For another, as is noted above, Russian military and political engagement with Africa posits a likely increase in cyber-security activities, commercial and otherwise. There is already much to guard against. Africa has been the site of widespread digital election manipulation in recent years, some of it crude (manipulation of voter rolls, old fashioned gerrymandering, intimidation, fake news and the switching off of the internet) and allegedly some more sophisticated electronic manipulation of votes cast. Some is apparently foreign-led (including the media activities of Romania's Majoritas company in Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe),[56] but increasingly much of it is locally run and generated, though foreigners inevitably (and conveniently) attract the most attention. In 2013 a new slang word had come to be popular in Zimbabwe: to be *Nikuv'ed*, as in 'to be done over' or 'screwed'. In Hebrew the word means poking a hole or punching, as in a punched card, but Zimbabweans were referring to their country's elections, when an Israeli IT company of the same name reportedly played a part in ensuring Robert Mugabe's re-election.[57] According to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), this role was assumed in the 2018 election by a Belarussian firm.[58] In 2019 Zimbabwe blocked the web for six days, while Congo did the same for 20 and Sudan for an entire month. While India, the world's largest democracy, has switched off the internet more than any other country (mainly it would appear to

do with issues around Kashmir)[59] with 159 disruptions between 2016 and 2019 and more than 95 in 2019 alone,[60] there is a correlation between African regime type and its prevalence to interfere with the internet. A 2019 study by the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) shows that the less democratic a country is, the higher the chances of state-initiated shutdowns. Of the 22 African states that have disrupted connectivity over the past five years, 77% are classified as dictatorships, while 23% are considered partial democracies. The study also finds that internet shutdowns are correlated with the length a leader has stayed in power.[61]

There are other, no less pernicious aspects. There is reported evidence of foreign-led influence operations in Africa.[62] And there similarly appears to be a sophisticated campaign to drive a counter-reform narrative in South African public opinion on the reform of South African Airways and Eskom, each with discernible sources, sockpuppets, and amplifiers. The twitter debate on Eskom, for example, has a distinct pro-coal, pro-trade union, pro-nuclear and anti-independent power producer – in essence, anti-reform – element. As South Africa's *Business Day* reports, 'By far the most active and vitriolic in the [anti-IPP] group is Zak Madela, the South African business development manager of Russian state nuclear operator Rosatom.'[63]

With fake news and an emboldened and unregulated 'commentariat' increasingly part of 'normal' political discourse, there are considerable economic as well as political costs to such interference, however, fuelling of a vicious cycle of unaccountability, illegitimacy, suspicion and national division, a paucity of investment and lack of economic diversification, and overall poor governance performance.
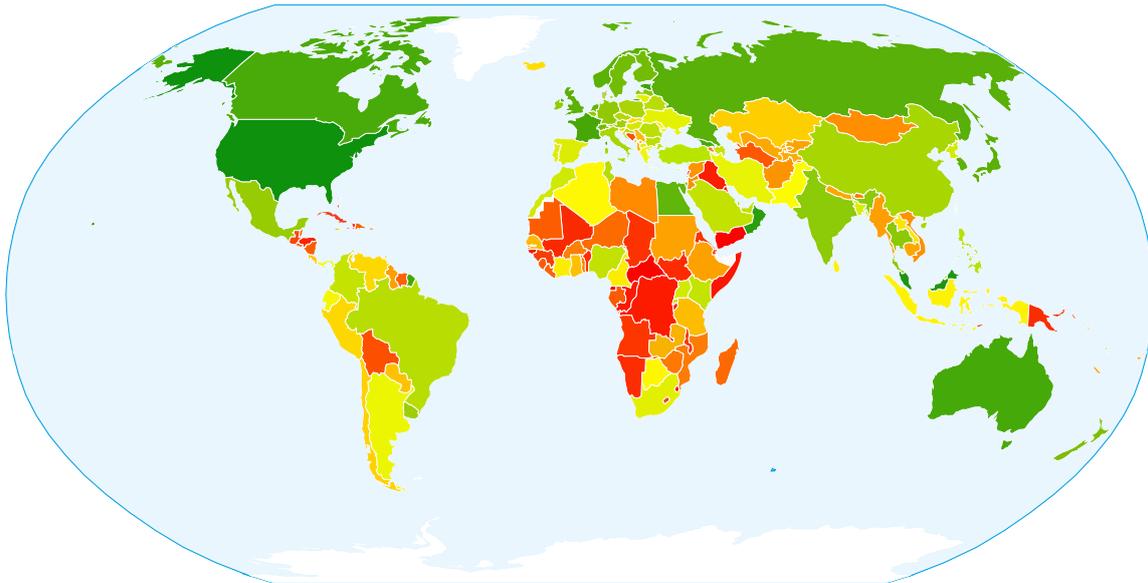
Figure 9: The African Countries that have Disrupted the Internet in the Past Five Years

Source: Quartz | qz.com Data – Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa

In terms of the impact of wholesale internet shutdowns, the Brookings Institute estimates that these cost the global economy annually some US$2.4 billion. One study by Deloitte suggests countries can lose up to US$23.6 million every day in this way per 10 million inhabitants. As the *Washington Post* notes, 'Nations jockeying for attention in the digital economy will have less success in the long term if their markets are open for business one day and closed the next.'[64]

Brookings notes in a May 2018 report,[65] that the average cost of cyber-crime for businesses throughout the world has increased 22.7% since 2016, and data leaks by 27%. 'As cybercrimes are threatening companies all over the world, the risk is even higher for African businesses' writes Brookings. Africa's low level of cyber security has made it a prime target of cyber criminals, with one study suggesting nearly 60% of software installed in Africa and the Middle East was pirated, with as much as 80% of African computers being infected.

Figure 10: Global Cyber-Security Index 'Heat' Map[66]

Note: Level of commitment ranges from green (highest level) to red (lowest level)
Source: GCI Global Report 2017, ITU

This raises the question as to how civil society in particular could guard against election and other national narrative manipulation, and whether heightened cyber-threats in general can best be countered through partnerships with commercial or state-centred agencies outside of Africa.

> 'As cybercrimes are threatening companies all over the world, the risk is even higher for African businesses'

In the West, the answer has been to attempt to secure the supply-chain for electronic systems, and to forge a path to near-universal identity resolution and authentication. Those two things 'provide a fighting chance' even though SS7 (that is, Signalling System No 7)[67] is compromised. In Africa, however, there are deep-rooted challenges of identity authentication given financial and other limitations from infrastructure to governance. Moreover, 'the bulk of the technology providers are suspect out of the gate'. The model used effectively in the West is based on encouraging public/private partnerships, establishing joint task forces that encourage sharing of information between trusted parties, sometimes funded by the private sector;[68] or that illustrated by the US Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA),[69] which provides the structure for physical interaction on a joint watch-floor where the private sector (carriers, Internet Service Providers, and security organisations among them) can work together, including a focus on elections on which CISA leads the US national task force.

The African answer to cyber concerns will thus vary from country to country. Until now there has been very little evidence across Africa that national leadership has any real awareness of, or interest in, protecting cyberspace for the good of citizenship. Regardless, there could be useful help provided by external organisations including voluntary assistance from geek communities who care about the world order, the first modern example being the group who happened to be meeting in Tallinn in 2007 when the Russian-based cyber attack isolated and paralysed Estonia. That event led to the establishment of the NATO Co-operative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence.[70] The challenge, of course, is that even within the geek

community, the 'second oldest profession in the world' is also the most developed, and there is every likelihood that the 'good guys' will be indistinguishable from the 'bad' ones, especially in this day of false internet-enabled data.[71]

In sum, international public-private collaboration is going to be a central part of any solution to Africa's cyber-security challenge. And Africa will have to pick its partners carefully.

Current External Governance and Security 'Solutions'

Mali reflects one key strand in the current Western focus towards Africa in attempting to improve the conditions in African countries by more focused aid expenditure on private sector growth, essentially the thinking behind the German-led G20 'Compact with Africa'.[72]

On the security front, the Western approach has focused on combining anti-terrorism operations with limited capacity building. The notion behind this is little different to that of the military's civilian counterparts: If you can teach the person to fish, they can manage their own lifestyle. And this offers more of a multiplier in both capability and influence than simply carrying out the tasks for the locals, even if that was possible. This explains the presence of US troops in 33 African countries during 2018, for example, or that the UK had more than 100 training missions across the continent in 2017.

This approach is, however, insufficient for the task.

First, the current Western resources available are insufficient to the task and are most often spread too thinly to achieve a real and lasting effect.

Second, the various intents are often not aligned or even properly understood, by both sides. Africans will gladly take whatever training is on offer, and especially goods and money, while not necessarily aligning their policies and overall

direction with Western interests or, in fact, developing robust domestic capacity. The rapid collapse of Mali's army in 2012 despite two decades of external military assistance is a case in point.

Mali is not the only example. Somalia, which remains a keystone to the aid strategy of a number of Western countries, including the UK, is an extreme example of this tendency. Despite large volumes of external assistance amounting to US$240 million annually from the European Union alone for just the monthly allowances to the 19 600-strong AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) peacekeeping contingent, so far there is little evidence of the country being able to work out of its clan- or sub-clan-based units, save opportunistic alliances. In this, outsiders are essentially seen as resources. This is why some groups of Somalis are prepared to do things to keep the donors in there, including denying food aid and carrying out atrocities. While Somalis have a ruthless sense of solidarity in some ways to their group, they too possess an equally ruthless sense of self-preservation to the exclusion of nationalism.

> Africans will gladly take whatever training is on offer, and especially goods and money, while not necessarily aligning their policies and overall direction with Western interests

By contrast, the breakaway Somaliland to the north west, which has had a succession of democratic elections and is relatively stable has not been recognised and receives very little aid.

Any sense of common interest is difficult in this situation, which means that outsiders who arrive with an idea of building something, of training people to act in certain ways, run counter to the Somali instinct which views them from within

their narrow clan and not national prism, fuelled, too, by the realisation that the outsiders are just temporary.

The problem is not, despite the aid-bashing fad, external assistance per se. Asia, to take that example again, has utilised external assistance comparatively well.

It has worked where recipients and donors understood that foreign aid should be a supplement to recipients' own efforts, and where social integration was prioritised, good infrastructure was used as tools for social and political cohesion, and skills development, through formal and informal education, took precedence. And more recently, the value of institutions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum and continuous first- and second-track dialogue in securing regional peace and stability is clear.

Principles for a New Security Approach

A new approach to providing effective security assistance to Africa rests on five key principles:

First, *there is a need to hear and understand the way in which Africa sees the world*. This will take time and dedicated expertise. This fundamentally needs to be a top-down, strategic undertaking, not a bottom-up tactical one as is overwhelmingly the current approach. Put differently, these dialogues have to be led by Africans in Africa.

Second, *outsiders have to convince Africans to work with them whilst accepting their circumstances*. Again, this is strategic, not tactical, and top-down. This requires abandonment of the notion that you can change a leadership's political and policy direction by building a technical solution to problems. The challenge in South Africa, for example, is not the absence of good plans and policy: see, in this regard, the National Development Plan to various White Papers on Defence and Security as well as the contemporary New Dawn. The challenge remains that the necessary dose of courage and conviction to ensure their implementation has not consistently overcome a paralysing cocktail of insufficient political will and private

financial self-interest stirred into the burden of the country's liberation mythology and racial history. Unaddressed, this situation ultimately, if the rest of Africa is any guide, lends itself to a circular firing squad in the calamity of populist solutions. The problem, and the solution, is therefore inherently political, and this has to be tackled with donors if their aims are well-intended and their intent generational.

Third, *where it can be achieved, donor success demands a long-term, generational approach*. Until now African security engagement has been a scrappy process, driven by personal ties or opportunism, less strategy and long-termism. Famously Tony Blair's interest in Sierra Leone, the apogee of his Africa security engagement during his time as Prime Minister, was supposedly pricked by his father's tenure as a law professor in Freetown's university. Similarly, the existence of various British military advisory or peace support teams have been motivated in part by colonial connections and a need to be seen to help.

Fourth, *this requires a highly differentiated and realistic outlook by donors*. Africa is not one thing. It defies stereotypes. In some cases, even if there is an external strategic or personality-driven imperative 'to be places', the goals have to be limited.

> The necessary dose of courage and conviction has not consistently overcome a paralysing cocktail of insufficient political will and private financial self-interest stirred into the burden of the country's liberation mythology and racial history

It does mean not helping some states, no matter the immediate urge, or personal interests, or the need to kick aid out of the door in so doing. Commitment of some Western countries to the 0.7% aid-to-GDP benchmark risks the logic of supply trumping demand in spending. Too much

foreign aid is on 'auto-pilot' with funds spent regardless of what the leadership of the country is doing/not doing, such as with Kabila's Congo, to take an extreme example, where he flouted political and governance niceties while the United Nations (mostly) kept the lid on violence at a cost of over US\$1 billion a year this century.

The core issue is usually not the extent of external aid, however, but the nature of governance, which relates to the leadership of the country and its focus on maintaining power and wealth. Countries start to work better with leaders who prioritise the national development over their personal interests.

Thus, fifth, *donors have to be prepared to 'let some places go'* in more carefully calibrating assistance based on the record of reform rather than the promise of delivery, thereby reinforcing success rather than rewarding and effectively sponsoring governance failure.
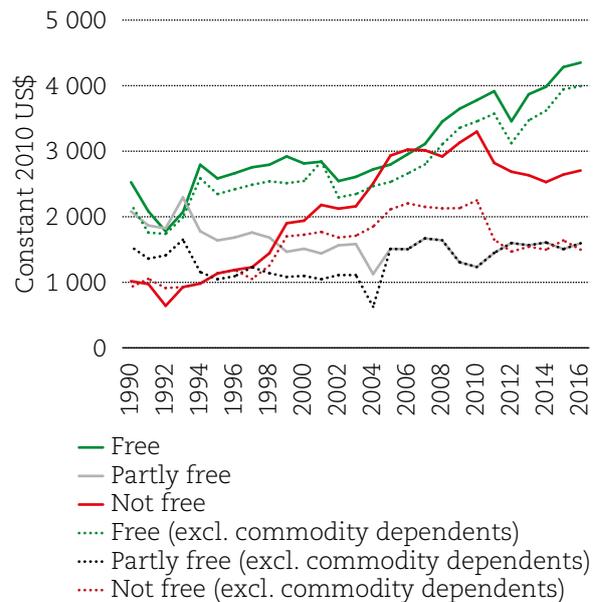
Ancient History: Limits to the Impact of Outsiders

America's involvement in Vietnam illustrated two clear limits to the role of outsiders. While the United States could do everything in its power to assist the (South) Vietnamese government, it could not win the conflict for them. That was both a function of determination and legitimacy, both of which Saigon lacked by comparison to the North and its allies. This experience, while extreme, also pointed to other failings of external aid, in that the providers remain prisoners of their own experience. Moreover, the metrics are very difficult to discern, then as today. In Vietnam, when the US could not count the things that were important (such as influence or legitimacy), it made those it could count (such as bodies or the metrics of expenditure) important.

These were not new lessons. The French collapse at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 was not surprising. It was true to form. Even though the head of the French delegation had told a representative of the Viet Minh early on in the war that 'We only need an ordinary police operation for eight days to get all of you out',[73] by 1952 the Viet Minh controlled an

estimated one-quarter of the South's population, three-quarters of those in the central parts, and half in the North. Its 'liberated zones' were steadily and seemingly unstoppably expanded, while French casualties continued to mount. By 1954, the Eisenhower administration was footing no less than 80% of the cost of the war, some US\$1 billion annually.[74]

Figure 11: Official Aid Received by Region, Normalised by Population (US\$ per capita)

Similarly, the American intervention in Vietnam is a case-study in hubris and, ultimately, humility. It teaches many lessons, not least the importance of seeing the military aspect as but one component of any struggle, and any security solution.

By January 1961, when John F Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35th president of the United States, the security situation in Vietnam was spiraling towards chaos, at least for America's southern ally, with around 20 000 Viet Minh operating in the South, building up political support and military capacity. By September 1961 alone, there were 450 attacks, some involving hundreds of guerrillas. The aim of the guerrillas, christened the 'Viet Cong' by President Diem, was to follow the same combined diplomatic, military and political strategy that had defeated the French.

As the guerrillas tightened their grip on the countryside, the South Vietnamese army grew increasingly defensive, despite the presence of some 900 American advisers by 1961. By the end of

that year, with 1 000 deaths from guerrilla actions every week, Saigon clearly faced an all-out war. Despite a reluctance to be draw into an Asian war, fearing the impact of Chinese and Soviet support, in November 1961 Kennedy agreed to an increase in funding and advisory support to the South, upping the numbers to 3 000, including 300 helicopter pilots. It proved the thin end of the wedge.

It was not as if Washington was not warned, or did not realise itself. President Charles de Gaulle warned Kennedy in 1962 that 'I predict you will, step by step, be sucked into a bottomless military and political quagmire'. It was a war that Washington was drawn into out of fear of the impact on the rest of Southeast Asia and, less directly, the perception of America's power and standing in a Cold War environment. 'Now we have a problem in trying to make our power credible, and Vietnam looks like the place,' said Kennedy in a June 1961 interview with the *New York Times*. 'We don't have a prayer of staying in Vietnam,' Kennedy, however, confided to a friend in April 1963. 'Those people hate us. They are going to throw our asses out of there at any point. But I can't give up that territory to the communists and get the American people to re-elect me.'[75] Or as Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, put it two years later, 'I feel like a jackass caught in a Texas hailstorm. I can't run, I can't hide and I can't make it stop,' he says in Ken Burns' brilliant documentary series, *The Vietnam War*.[76]

> The American intervention in Vietnam is a case-study in hubris and, ultimately, humility. It teaches many lessons, not least the importance of seeing the military aspect as but one component of any struggle

The pretext for a massive increase of American involvement was the Gulf of Tonkin naval encounter in August 1964, the outcome of which saw the US Congress pass the Tonkin resolution, granting

Johnson the authority to assist any Southeast Asian country considered to be jeopardised by 'communist aggression'. That was to lead, what President Barack Obama described as one of the 'dumb wars',[77] ending with the collapse of the South Vietnam government on 30 April 1975 and the reunification of the country.

The American experience in Vietnam reminds us of the importance of establishing a political and social order. A failure to do so, will result in, well, just that: failure.

As Robert Kennedy put it, 'a military answer is the failure of counter-insurgency … any effort that disregards the basis of social reform, and becomes preoccupied with gadgets and techniques and forces, is doomed to failure and should not be supported.'[78] LBJ remarkably, after a 1961 trip to Vietnam, stressed the importance 'of responsible political institutions … there must be simultaneous, vigorous and integrated attack on the economic, social and other ills of the Vietnamese people. The leadership and initiative of this attack must rest with the Vietnamese leaders.' He then went on to virtually entirely disregard and circumvent this leadership, however, with catastrophic circumstances for his presidency and, indeed, the US and the South Vietnam 'mission'. Instead, the mission became, in Westmoreland's words, 'like trying to push spaghetti', much of it in the style of colonial governments through the ages, where force might suffice to inflict tactical defeats on the insurgent, but contributed ultimately astonishingly little absent the cultural and social aspects to the contest.

In America's Vietnam misadventure there is another salient lesson: Don't misread struggles. America saw Vietnam as a Cold War issue, related to the rise of China and the threat posed by the Soviet Union. It should have seen it for what it was: a decolonisation struggle.

Vietnam's decolonisation war occurred during a different Cold War time. But it still has relevance today. Such a catastrophic failure despite the obvious advantages of money and technology should raise questions about the contemporary role of the armed forces in countering non-military threats along the increasingly fuzzy seam between peace and war and that between states and the

'non-state condition'. The same lesson applies to other more modern misadventures, including the war in Iraq. As the opening quote from General Rupert Smith reminds, in that instance the analysis and planning should have started with a clear understanding of the strategic objectives, in this particular case concerning 'the will of the Iraqi people and their leaders'. This should have defined the success, or not, of that mission before the invasion. As he concludes, 'The lead agency for this planning should therefore not have been the military specifically but rather those responsible for reaching the desired outcome and conducting the occupation.'[79]

> In America's Vietnam misadventure there is another salient lesson: Don't misread struggles

This begs the question: if success demands forming a strategy at the state level (and not just among military components) linking and mobilising technical, political and economic capabilities, is it possible to create a sense of common strategic purpose from without? This can only derive from a shared understanding about the security threats facing Africa and its capacity to respond. This requires building long-term networks and partnerships through personal associations and credibility to differentiate security providers from the opportunists, just as it seeks to distinguish African partners between like-minded leaders and states from those which only say they are.

A More Careful Calibration of Assistance

The headline figures are impressive, as is the generosity of the taxpayers behind them.

Europe spends more than €21 billion in development aid in Africa every year. It is responsible for more than half of all aid globally. There's more. In addition to seven civilian and military European

missions deployed across sub-Saharan Africa, the EU has committed no less than €1.4 billion to educational programmes in Africa over the last five years.

Yet there is also frustration in the giving. Much is apparently wasted on the multiplicity of the sources and methods of institutional facilitation.

A report from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on aid effectiveness published at the end of 2018 showed that while there has been some progress in terms of donor performance since the last report in 2012, things are far from perfect.[80]

In part, as the OECD report highlights, Europe's problems spring from its aid approach. Much is sprayed around by too many institutions into too many countries and projects, driven by institutional interests and the preferences of its (for the moment) 28 member-states. The use of geographic and thematic instruments, bilateral and multilateral 'funnels', and bodies which have different (developmental and commercial) mandates all incurs overheads and poses challenges of coherence.

No matter how much is learnt about aid best practice, and there is a great volume of literature and learnings in this respect, it is easily trumped by expediency, by national interests and politics, and by hero worship in the desperation to identify success stories. This explains why substantial aid flows continue to some of the least democratic countries in Africa.

But those are the supply side issues. These problems pale by comparison to the environment into which this money is inserted.

Those recipients who need the aid most are not well placed to use it well. It's a terrible tautology. Given that the recipients who really need development assistance most are, by definition, weak and lacking governance, they will likely waste it, otherwise they probably would not need it in the first instance.

The outcomes of any failure are more than academic, or even institutionally constrained. Europe's geographic position means that failure in Africa means more refugees, inevitably, trying to enter the European Union.

At the same time, there is growing frustration in European capitals. While it generously spends taxpayers' money, others profit. China, Israel, and, now, Russia are, among others, seen as net beneficiaries of European largesse, gaining a great deal more in terms of commercial contracts than they give. As noted in the introduction to this paper, that they are apparently unfussed with democratic or governance niceties invariably makes them attractive partners to some elites. Hence the uphill struggle of some donor partners in attempting to infuse better, even good governance into African decision-making and spending.

Yet such values could be a strength.

> Democracies are a more competitive testing ground for ideas and usually have more transparent and thus efficient systems of accountability

In part Europe's poor aid performance also reflects its inability to get the politics right and in so doing to play to its strengths. With more, as noted, than two-thirds of Africans preferring democracy to any other system of government, and given that this system is – with occasional national variations – the basic building block of modern Europe, it makes sense to work with those like-minded in Africa. This would place those with concerns about democracy and governance – simply, how money is spent – at a distinct advantage over the *transactionalists*, and also place them on the right side of history.

Today ten African countries classify as 'free' according to the US NGO Freedom House, which has ranked democracies worldwide for several decades. Another 22 each fall into the 'unfree' and 'not free' categories.

Empirically, despite the appeal to some of a 'big man' who supposedly gets things done despite (or perhaps because of) a lack of democratic niceties, the evidence – as below – clearly shows that the better the democracy, at least in Africa, the better the economic growth and development record. The reasons for this performance premium relates, fundamentally, to the relatively open nature of democracy. Democracies are a more competitive testing ground for ideas and usually have more transparent and thus efficient systems of accountability. They also offer the peaceful means to get rid of leaders when they (and their ideas) are tested and rejected by an electorate.

Entrenching democracy, rather than authoritarianism or even opportunistic transactionalism, requires supporting the systems and institutions that enable it. This demands calibrating aid accordingly.

Instead of giving more to those which are failing, the better the democratic performance, the better should be the donor rewards. The democrats should get the free trade deals and top-end educational exchanges, for example, while the authoritarians are relegated to food and humanitarian aid along with assistance as to how to run a free and fair election.

Supporting democracy also demands shaking the Shibboleth that donors should not be involved in supporting political parties. To the contrary, they must openly be, not least since many already are, and since without money political competition is virtually guaranteed to be dominated by the incumbent. The use of transparent trust structures disbursing funding according to a pre-agreed formula is one way around this conundrum. Democracy also requires extensive donor support for local media, a critical governance tool, as South Africa showed again in the fight to unseat the *Zuptas*.[81]
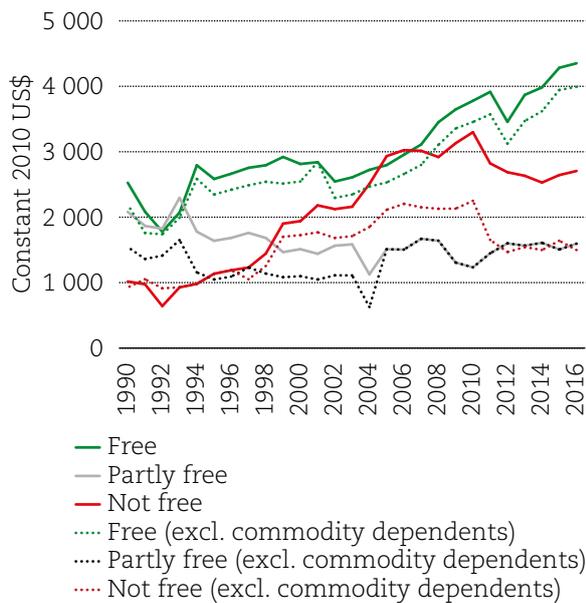
African governments will likely resist such support on the grounds that such 'conditionality' smacks of neo-colonialism or sovereign interference. But African governments cannot claim such interference when they take aid.

Just as some African leaders such as Presidents Paul Kagame and Yoweri Museveni have leveraged considerable international appeal by presenting themselves as allies of the West, and poles of stability in their role in regional peacekeeping

missions, why should democracies not benefit disproportionately?

For the donors, the rewards are, too, obvious. Not only would such an approach assist in institutionalising democratic governance, but it would reinforce a link with African citizenry over authoritarians and their international supporters. It would also successfully differentiate the necessary conditions of success from failure.

Figure 12: African GDP per Capita Across Freedom Indicators

- ── Free
- ── Partly free
- ── Not free
- ····· Free (excl. commodity dependents)
- ····· Partly free (excl. commodity dependents)
- ····· Not free (excl. commodity dependents)

The greatest challenge facing donors in making such a step-change is courage. It is not always in institutional abundance. The failure of the donors to see Mali as it was, in 2012, rather than as the once poster-child of democratic transition, contributed to the catastrophe which followed. It is important to avoid heroes and darlings. That tendency usually always leads to subjective and highly personalised evaluation, and inevitable disaster.

The starting, stopping and clear calibration of aid not only would send important signals but can reinforce better practices and resect bad ones. Supporting democracy, and aligning aid to do so, is in everyone's best interest.

Conclusion: Truth to Power

Africa faces a moment of seismic demographic change. The continent is projected, as is noted above, to double its population to 2.5 billion people by 2050. This has staggering implications. At current rates, in just 30 years, the same amount of time since the Berlin Wall fell, Nigeria's population will increase to over 400 million, while Tanzania's, currently 53 million, will grow to the same size as that of Russia, at 137 million. Kenya's will more than double to 95 million, while Uganda will balloon from 43 million to 106 million according to the United Nations.[82]

The implications of this rapid expansion are not only in terms of absolute numbers, but also concerning where people will be living. The anticipated pace of growth of African cities is even greater than the rate of population increase, being projected to remain at over 4% for the next three decades, twice the global average. Africa's share of global urban residents will as a result mushroom from 11.3% in 2010 to 20.2% by 2050.[83]

To develop Africa's economies at a rate fast enough to keep pace with this fast-growing population, the continent requires large injections of foreign and local direct investment. And long-term, permanent capital, of the sort that will create the jobs that Africa desperately needs, will depend on reducing risk and improving governance, as illustrated by the continent's performance on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance.

Despite the scale and extent of such changes, the nature of external engagement with Africa proposes much of the same. Traditional donors attempt to improve governance conditions, but are reluctant to calibrate assistance out of fear of a combination of diluting local ownership and accusations of neo-colonial conditionality. There is also very limited spending on democracy assistance, despite its positive record in delivering governance and economic results. All of this is exacerbated by a propensity to pick winners among African states, based less on values than their ability, it seems, to 'play' donors. The incentive (and disincentive) structures to improve governance and ensure the focus of policy and assistance is shifted away from elite-channels, are consequently lacking.

Financial assistance from non-traditional donors, for which read Russia and China among others, tends to be highly transactional, and (at least in the case of China) focused more on loans than grants, presenting a long-term issue around fiscal sustainability. It is moreover unfocused on strengthening systems of governance and capacity outside of hard infrastructure; indeed, it is often precisely the absence of such human and institutional software that permits such openings and opportunities in the first instance.

> Western militaries continue
> to prepare overwhelmingly
> for one task – a war

In the African security domain, the role of Western actors remains also much of the same: a mix of local capacity building, direct counter-terrorism operations, increasingly indirect (that is, effectively financial and materiel rather than personnel) support to peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian relief. In part this reflects the attention of Western nations elsewhere. As was the case in the Cold War, Western militaries continue to prepare overwhelmingly for one task – a war, indirect or direct with a big foe, such as Russia or China – a low probability, high risk event. In part, too, it relates to the need for local, African-led solutions, and a lack of appetite in outside capitals to commit and risk the lives of serving personnel in these situations. The sort of small wars and insurgencies and peace support missions that characterise African conflicts requires also less of high tech electronically-driven capacity than more traditional soldiering, challenging logistics, light infantry, and special forces. Resolving the patterns of economic, social and political activity and marginalisation that drive such conflicts is limited by a lack overall of strategic-level political alignment between donors and recipients and a focus thus overwhelmingly on lower-level tactical programmes on which it is easier to obtain agreement.

The consequences of failing to change assistance patterns to Africa are moot. The combination of rapidly increasing populations plus fragile and often corrupt systems of governance producing insufficient and elite-focused economic opportunities, can only end badly – an outcome which is worsened if climate change is thrown into the mix, which could see even larger numbers of people in already climate-stressed areas – the Sahel for example, with its projected 200 million people in 2050, four times the number in 2008 – on the move. The effects are unlikely, too, to remain in Africa, given the proximity of burgeoning populations to the Mediterranean basin. Just three countries – Burkina Faso (from 18 million to 42 million), Mali (18 million to 43 million) and Niger (21 million to 59 million) – will have over 140 million people between them by 2050.

Any successful donor strategy needs to play to its strengths and values, make tough choices about priorities and countries, inevitably make support more contingent on African performance on these shared values and interests and, fundamentally, develop a positive and consistent narrative. It would have to incorporate incentives to encourage African leadership and ownership of problems, national and regional, while at the same time realising the inherent dangers of transactionalism, including with African engagement in regional peace support missions.

All of this requires a level of joined-up government which the West professes, yet, unlike China for example, seldom exhibits, possibly because the same goals and institutional interests are not shared, for example, between aid, the military and foreign affairs.

The answer thus to African security lies in paradoxically recognising the limits of the role to be played by the military, and rather stresses the need to infuse political and economic content. This demands brutally honest if unpalatable professional advice to political leaders, both among the donors and the recipients. It also demands possessing a strategy to engineer that alignment among partners, current or future. In the face of an increasing number and range of contenders, for the West establishing this point of intersection may be the toughest task of all.

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